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Between Deference and Self-Assurance:

Reconciling Realism and Response-Dependence

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy, The University of Auckland, 2005
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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.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep gratitude for the constructive criticism, advice and encouragement provided by my supervisors, Dr Jonathan McKeown-Green and Dr Denis Robinson during the development and completion of this thesis. I would also like to thank Associate Professor Fred Kroon, who was my supervisor in the summer of 2003/4, and my colleagues from the Department of Philosophy, University of Waikato, Dr Justine Kingsbury and Dr Cathy Legg, who read and commented on sections of the thesis.
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Chapter I - Varieties of Response-Dependent Concepts

§1 Introduction: Response-Dependence in Context

Something is exhilarating just in case it tends to exhilarate us; annoying just in case it tends to annoy us, disappointing just in case it disappoints, amusing just in case it amuses, boring just in case it bores, attractive just in case it attracts, disgusting just in case it disgusts, poisonous just in case it poisons, nauseating just in case it nauseates, yellow just in case it looks thus and so, bitter just in case it tastes thus and so, acrid just in case it smells thus and so, delicious just in case we deem it to be so, and pious just in case we judge or feel it to be so, and so on. These and other concepts appear to exhibit a dependence upon subjects’ responses to instances of the property they determine and it is tempting to invoke this dependence when attempting to analyse the concepts.

Secondary quality concepts are often thought to be especially amenable to this kind of treatment. This should not be surprising given that it is usual and reasonable to think of secondary qualities thus:

A secondary quality is a property the ascription of which to an object is not adequately understood except as true, if it is true, in virtue of the object’s disposition to present a certain sort of perceptual appearance: specifically, an appearance characterizable by using a word for the property itself to say how the object perceptually appears. McDowell 1985, p. 111

So a ripe banana’s being yellow seems to be closely connected in some way with our experiencing a yellow sensation when observing the banana under certain conditions of observation. Its sweetness seems to be similarly connected with its eliciting a sensation of sweetness when eaten and its banana scent connected to the olfactory response elicited when sniffing the banana. By contrast, many other concepts such as those associated with so-called primary qualities appear to exhibit no such dependence. While our responses might be implicated in our detection of features
such as squareness, roundness, triangularity, tallness and deepness, they do not play an essential role in determining whether an object satisfies the associated concept.

Over the past decade and a half, theories of response-dependence have emerged as a strategy for determining more precisely the nature and status of this dependence and the metaphysical and epistemic implications for practices incorporating concepts that turn out to be related to responses in the appropriate manner. Response-dependence theories elucidate concepts by means of a biconditional claim, known in the relevant literature as a basic equation. Basic equations claim an a priori dependence between a concept’s extension and the response its instantiation tends to elicit in appropriate subjects under appropriate conditions. They take the following form:

For any concept, F, Basic Equation for F

For any object X: X is F iff X is such as to elicit R in Ss under C

where R is the typical response, Ss are appropriate subjects and C appropriate conditions under which those subjects’ responses occur. Although S usually holds a place for ‘subjects’, the account I develop below takes it to stand in for ‘respondents’. This nomenclature makes more explicit the relationship between being a patient with respect to the effects of something and being a respondent and my account draws attention to the distinction between actor concepts and patient concepts. Also, it is usual in the literature for the S and C placeholders to be qualified by specifying that relevant responses are limited to those elicited from normal, favourable, suitable or ideal subjects under normal, favourable, suitable or ideal conditions. The issue of which of these qualifications best suits which concepts is a substantive one that I address in Chapter II. In the interim, then, I use ‘appropriate’ as a default to cover all and any of these qualifications.

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1 Mark Johnston, whose response-dependence account will be considered in Chapters III and IV claims that the dependence is between properties and responses, Phillip Pettit, whose account is considered in Chapter V, between reference-fixing practice and responses. The account I am about to set up takes the dependence to be between responses and the determination of a concept’s extension.
Response-dependence theories evolved from a strand of meta-ethical debate that aimed to demonstrate an analogy between values and secondary qualities which would support an objectivist understanding of evaluative judgements. They are part of a wider, fundamental and long-standing tradition of debate concerning the relationship between thought and the world. As Huw Price elaborates:

…one excellent motive for seeking a general characterisation of the kind of subjectivity in play in the case of the secondary qualities is to equip oneself for an assault on one of the most fascinating issues in philosophy: How much of the conceptual framework we apply to the world is simply taken over from the world itself, and how much of it ‘comes from us’? Price 1991, pp 46-7

More specifically they are part of a strand of that debate whose earlier development is represented in the work of Locke, Berkeley and Hume and which finds its contemporary representation in work by (among others) John Mackie, Colin McGinn and Michael Smith.

This wider discourse is also the locus of debates concerning realism and its opponents, and response-dependence theories’ investigation of the role of human responses in the determination of concepts’ extensions leads quite naturally to discussions regarding the realist status of practices in which those concepts occur. Indeed, a number of those who have developed and adopted response-dependence strategies have done so in an attempt to harness their resources in the service of an, albeit qualified, realism with respect to a particular conceptual practice. If successful, a response-dependent realism project would serve to vindicate practices, such as those involving secondary quality concepts, that manifest intuitions about the role and status of the features they posit and the judgements they make that are best described as ‘realist’.

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2 See McDowell 1985; Wiggins 1987, and for an opposing view, Blackburn 1985; Pargetter 1988
3 An attempted ‘assault’ on this issue appears in Chapters VII and VIII.
In an elegant and helpful summation of the intuitions that motivate realism, Haldane and Wright emphasise a ‘fusion’ of contrasting components of deference and self-assurance:

The deferential kind of thought concerns the independence of the external world; for example, that it exists independently of us, that it is as it is independently of the concepts in terms of which we think about it, and that it is as it is independently of the beliefs about it which we do, will, or under the most favourable circumstances would form. A full-fledged deference will have it that human thought about the external world is, as it were, at best a map. Maps can represent better or less well the terrain which they concern. But nothing about that terrain will depend for its existence, or character on the institution of cartography, or on the conventions and techniques employed therein. The self-assured component in realism is, by contrast, the idea that, while such fit as there may be between our thought and the world is determined independently of human cognition, we are nevertheless capable, at least in favourable circumstances, of forming concepts suitable for the depiction of the real character of the world and, often, of knowing the truth about it as thereby described. Not merely is there a good measure of fit between the external world and our thoughts about it, but we are capable of knowing that this is so, or at least of justifiably taking it to be so. The external world is, as it were, there for us to engage with, our proper cognitive territory. Haldane and Wright 1993, pp 3-4

It is often argued that in the case of secondary qualities, deference should be considered to diminish; that secondary qualities be recognised as partly dependent on our conceptual practices and perceptual responses.4

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4 See for example, Locke 1975, p. 135; McGinn 1983, pp 5-17
Where successful, the response-dependence project offers a framework for accommodating a certain kind of self-assurance, or subjectivity, within judgements that remain deferential to the way the world is. With respect to secondary quality concepts, then, response-dependence holds out the promise of a middle way between a retreat into the projectivism found in Galileo’s and Descartes’ accounts of secondary qualities, whereby secondary qualities are no longer considered part of the manifest world, but merely as part of the manifest image of a world in which they play no causal role, and recourse to an Error Theory such as that favoured by Mackie. Response-dependence may offer a route to the reconciliation of a Galilean worldview with the possibility of knowledge gained via perception.

In a paper in which he addresses the values/secondary quality analogy, Mark Johnston, pioneer of the response-dependence project and the philosopher who first coined the term ‘response-dependence’, notes that debates about the status of a number of different types of concepts can be investigated within its framework:

Many pivotal issues in philosophy, for example, issues about linguistic meaning, essence, personal identity, free will and the nature of similarity, can be cast in terms of whether and in what way the central concepts in those areas are response-dependent. So the central issue in the philosophical discussion of colour, the issue as between the so-called subjectivists and objectivists, is an issue over the response-dependence of colour concepts. And the place to begin, though not to end, in explicating the primary/secondary quality distinction is with the response-independent, response-dependent distinction. Johnston 1989, pp 147- 48

Others have identified further practices that can be usefully investigated via response-dependence analyses. Some of the candidates considered within the literature include moral concepts - whether or not a situation or action is moral or good is dependent upon our moral responses to it under certain conditions; the concept of cause -

5 See Mackie, 1977, Ch. 1
whether or not X is a cause of Y is dependent upon our dispositions under certain conditions to manipulate Xs in order to bring about Ys and the concepts of modality - whether or not something is possible is dependent upon our dispositions under certain conditions to conceive it to be the case.⁶

While Johnston’s ambitions for response-dependence extend to the question of the realist, or otherwise, nature of practices involving response-dependent concepts, Philip Pettit, his fellow pioneer in the area of response-dependence, argues that the implications of work on response-dependent concepts run yet deeper: ‘If we are to make sense of thinking…’, he claims, ‘…in particular if we are to resolve Kripke’s version of the Wittgensteinian problem of rule-following, then we must acknowledge a global form of response-dependence.’ (1991, p. 588). In addition to these far-reaching ambitions, it is plausible to expect that response-dependence accounts of concepts will also extend our understanding of dispositional concepts more generally and of the primary/secondary qualities distinction.

In the remainder of this chapter I propose a general account of the response-dependence approach to explaining concepts, according to which the basic equations are tools for demonstrating the way in which concepts’ extensions are determined. By presenting a taxonomy of response-dependent concepts, I consider the different sorts of concepts that can plausibly be claimed to be response-dependent, highlighting significant distinctions between them. The distinctions and axes identified via this taxonomic exercise enable us clearly to distinguish a variety of categories of response-dependent concept. Chapter II tidies up some matters arising from the taxonomic exercise: I consider issues concerning the status, form and content of the basic equations for these types of response-dependent concepts: a prioricity, the meaning of ‘appropriate’ (as applied to the respondents and conditions placeholders) and rigidification. The account I propose in these first two chapters attempts to abstract from the details of the influential accounts presented by Johnston, Pettit and

⁶ On Moral concepts see McDowell 1985 and Johnston 1989; on modality see Menzies 1998; on causation see Menzies & Price 1993.
Wright, whose work is fundamental to the body of literature on response-dependence. Nevertheless, in order to evaluate the success and usefulness of my taxonomy and to locate it within that literature, I follow up with a detailed discussion of each of those three authors’ response-dependence accounts. In Chapter III I consider Johnston’s version of a response-dependence account of properties - his response-dispositionalism. In Chapter IV I deal with arguments he has developed to show that this version of response-dependence cannot fulfil the hopes he initially had for response-dependence. I go on to argue that those hopes were not epistemically realistic and that the best hope for a response-dependence project is to develop it as a project that deals with the determination of concepts’ extensions. Chapter V is a detailed analytical exegesis of Pettit’s global response-dependence and in Chapter VI I turn to the four realism relevant distinctions Crispin Wright uses to determine the marks of a more-than-minimal truth predicate for a set of judgements. The fourth of these distinctions, order of determination, can be understood as a type of response-dependence account. Consideration of Wright’s distinctions provides a bridge to Chapter VII in which I undertake a detailed analysis of realism, arguing that it should be understood as an array of commitments organised within three distinctive and largely independent clusters: semantic, ontic and epistemic. Finally, in Chapter VIII we are able to effect an engagement between response-dependence and realism, the former elaborated in accordance with the account developed in Chapters I and II and the latter understood according to the account given in Chapter VII. This discussion will result in a more fine-grained and sophisticated analysis of the prospects for the reconciliation of response-dependence and realism than has yet appeared in the literature.

Obviously, since our focus is on response-dependent concepts, issues about concepts, what they are, how they should be individuated, and so on, have some relevance here. My starting point is that we have concepts such as ATTRACTIVE, SWEET, GOOD,
POISONOUS, DOG, CAMEL AND MAN. I do not necessarily take these to be identical with or fully determined by the words used to name them – ‘attractive’, ‘sweet’, ‘good’, ‘poisonous’, ‘dog’, ‘camel’ and ‘man’, because consistent with the line taken here on response-dependence, one can imagine beings that have such concepts but have no words for expressing them. Also, for the purposes of this project, we need not rule on matters of concept identity, whether, for example, LORRY is identical with TRUCK. Johnston, Pettit, and to a lesser extent, Wright, employ particular views of concepts as part of their response-dependence accounts. Where appropriate, these are identified and considered in the course of my critical exegeses thereof. It is not necessary, however, to take a position on the extremely controversial issue of what concepts are in order to carry out the project on which I am about to embark.

Moreover, concepts, whatever they turn out to be, are employed in an extensive web of practices made up of various cognitive behaviours including perception, language, intentional action in general and thought itself. I will often talk about the practice(s) in which a concept is employed, particularly in the context of features posited by concept use as well as by the other behaviours that make up a practice. For instance when we employ the concept ATTRACTIVE, we posit the feature of things being attractive. Within the same practice, we make comparisons using words and concepts, we perceive features that constitute attractiveness, we take action in pursuit of the attractive, we remember that something was attractive, and so on, and in so doing, we posit the feature of something’s being attractive.

Now to the business of identifying and classifying response-dependent concepts.

§2 Towards a Taxonomy of Response-Dependent Concepts

Although the secondary quality and other concepts considered at the outset are (among others) similar in so far as they exhibit a dependence upon subjects’

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7 I will follow the convention used in (at least some of) the literature on concepts and use small capitals to indicate that I am talking about a concept and speech marks for the mention of a term.

8 For an overview of competing accounts of concepts see Laurence and Margolis 1999.
responses to instances of the properties associated with them, there are numerous respects in which they differ. One important difference flows from the distinction between an actor – a thing that acts on others – and a patient – a thing acted upon. Suppose the small child bullies the tall child. Smallness is a feature of the actor, tallness a feature of the patient. Some putatively response-dependent concepts are concepts of features attributed to an actor. Others are concepts of features attributed to a patient. In some cases the actor is animate; in others it is inanimate. In some the patient is an inanimate object, in others it is a person or animal. In the nomenclature adopted here, then, the respondents whose responses determine concepts’ extensions will be patients. The things that fall under the extensions of those concepts will usually be actors, but not always, hence the need for a distinction between actor and patient concepts.

There are also differences in the type of response implicated in the practices under consideration. In some cases it is a cognitive response, in others an involuntary, physical one. In some cases the response is directed outwards towards some feature of the object causing the response, in others it is directed inwards towards some feature of the respondent from which the response is elicited. In some cases the relevant response is entirely inaccessible to others, in others it is to a greater or lesser degree publicly accessible. In some cases the response has normative force, in others none. In what follows, I work through these distinctions attempting to categorise concepts that can plausibly be thought to be response-dependent, and locating them among other sorts of concepts, by investigating the extent to which these distinctions line up with and crosscut each other. In addition I show that there are two important axes in relation to which response-dependent concepts can be usefully positioned. The first axis is an axis of relativity: it plots the extent to which the response that determines a concept’s extension varies relative to the target population of users of that concept. The second plots the extent of self-assurance or deference of the practice involving a concept. Employing these alongside the other distinctions outlined, I demarcate six categories of concepts that can plausibly be taken to be response-dependent in the
sense that responses under appropriate conditions play an essential role in the determination of their extensions.

§2.1 Actor Concepts and Patient Concepts

A major distinction between categories of putatively response-dependent concepts demarcates concepts that ascribe a feature to an object on the grounds that respondents respond to it thus and so - actor concepts - from concepts that ascribe a feature to an object on the grounds that it responds thus and so to agents - patient concepts. The concepts listed at the outset all ascribe a feature to an object or event that elicits a particular response in appropriate respondents; that is they ascribe features to something on the basis of the effects it has on those respondents. For example, if something is annoying, its annoyingness is being ascribed to that thing - someone’s habit of interrupting others, say. If something is annoying, it must tend to annoy people. The concept ANNOYING, then, is the concept of an actor’s tendency to annoy some or other respondents. In this case the actor could be animate (an annoying colleague) or inanimate (an annoying computer), or it could be an event (an annoying decision). On a response-dependence account, the relevant response to instances of annoyingness - appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions feeling annoyed - determines the concept’s extension. Similarly, on a response-dependence account if something - an act, a person, a state of affairs - is good, it must tend to be judged or felt to be good. Its goodness is ascribed to the thing itself - it is considered to act upon respondents.

POISONOUS is similarly a concept of a property ascribed to actors, rather than to patients. If something is considered poisonous, its being poisonous is ascribed to it on the basis of the response it elicits in appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions. If the concept is response-dependent, as it can plausibly be taken to be, its extension is determined by these responses. In this case, the range of potential actors is narrower than that for ANNOYING. Objects, both animate and inanimate may be poisonous, but it is not a property ascribed to events. In the case of many of the
concepts considered here, there will be a single class of appropriate respondents. POISONOUS, however, is a concept that is usually relative to species or aggregations thereof. A substance is poisonous-for-a-species. Thus chocolate is poisonous-to-dogs (at least in large quantities), but harmless to humans. Our practice is such that the species-relativity of the concept’s extension is clarified by attention to the context of its use. In many contexts, it is implicitly taken to default to humans unless the context makes explicit the concept’s relativity to some other group or species. This feature of POISONOUS impacts upon the way in which the ‘appropriate’ placeholder in BE POISONOUS is cashed-out. This question is dealt with in Chapter II.

The concepts located on the other side of the actor/patient distinction are concepts of properties that lend themselves to traditional dispositional analyses: Something is malleable just in case its shape tends to change without its cracking or breaking; soluble in water just in case it tends to dissolve on immersion in water; fragile just in case it tends to break when struck; inflatable just in case it tends to increase in size when filled with gas; flexible just in case it tends to bend easily. A patient could be an animate or inanimate object (though, actually, in most cases it is the latter). That which is malleable is the object that is acted upon; that which is fragile is the object that’s struck, inflatable the object that enlarges when filled with gas. In common with actor concepts, the extensions of these patient concepts are determined by the responses of appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions. By contrast, however, the extension of such a concept is related to a patient’s tendency to respond thus and so, whereas the extensions of actor concepts are related to the tendencies of acting objects and events to cause the typical response in appropriate respondents. So a concept such as FLEXIBLE is a concept of a tendency of a patient to issue the response that determines the extension of that concept. This is made clear by the basic equations for these concepts. For example, the basic equation for FRAGILE:

For any object X: X is FRAGILE iff under appropriate conditions, X is such as to break when struck.
Whereas, a concept such as ANNOYING is the concept of a tendency of an object to bring about a typical response, that, if the response dependence account is correct, determines the extension of that concept.

As noted earlier, it is often thought that concepts of secondary qualities are handled well by a response-dependence account. Where do they sit in relation to this distinction? When a ripe banana is judged to be sweet, a feature is ascribed to the object acting on the respondent to whom the banana tastes thus and so; that is, to the banana. If the response-dependence account is correct, the responses of appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions guide the determination of the extension of SWEET. Likewise, the concept YELLOW is used in ascribing a feature to an object on the basis of its eliciting a certain response - its appearing thus and so - to appropriately equipped and placed respondents. Secondary quality concepts such as SWEET and YELLOW, then, are actor concepts. In this respect, they have more in common with ANNOYING than with FRAGILE.

§2.2 Responses and Concepts Thereof

If the response-dependence account of SWEET is correct, the following basic equation holds true a priori:

BE SWEET

For any object X: X is SWEET iff X elicits R in appropriate Ss under appropriate C

The concepts of the dispositions to issue the responses (R) that are thought to be relevant in determining the extensions of secondary quality concepts might themselves plausibly be thought to be response-dependent, but they are patient concepts rather than actor concepts because the relevant response – having something taste sweet (and not bitter, sour, salty, etc.) to one is elicited from the thing acted upon, in this case the respondent, rather than from the thing acting, in this case a ripe
banana, or a toffee, or a crème brulée, or….\textsuperscript{9} The concept of the disposition to issue the relevant extension-determining response, then, has, in this respect, more in common with FRAGILE than with SWEET, as can be seen from the basic equation for the concept of the response typically associated with instances of sweetness:

For any appropriate subject S: S is able to taste sweetness iff when tasting sweet things under C, S is disposed not to taste bitterness, sourness, saltiness, etc. instead. \textsuperscript{10}

\section*{2.3 The Nature of the Relevant Response}

It is important to bear in mind that the relevant response is not the \textit{tendency} to respond itself, but the \textit{manifestation} of that tendency. The manifestations relevant to these putatively response-dependent concepts differ (i) in terms of their type and (ii) in terms of the direction of the response. The response associated with the concept ANNOYING is a mix of emotions that might best be described as a ‘feeling’ - the cancellation of the appointment left her \textit{feeling} annoyed. Similarly something is exhilarating when it provides us with a feeling of exhilaration - a rush of the emotions and physical sensations that constitute pleasure - a high, if you will. The response associated with the concept NAUSEATING may also be captured as a ‘feeling’, but it is more purely a physical response than that of becoming annoyed or exhilarated. In the case of POISONOUS, the response is clearly purely physical - vomiting, discomfort, maybe death. DIGESTIBLE is similar in this respect, but is an example of a relevant physical response of which we are often not even aware. Something is DIGESTIBLE, let us say, just in case it is such as to be digested by appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions.\textsuperscript{11} In the usual case, respondents are unaware that the response is being elicited - they are unaware that their stomachs, intestines, enzymes and so on

\textsuperscript{9} This issue is relevant to that of the privacy of responses, discussed later in this chapter, and to Johnston’s claim of response inter-dependence, dealt with in Chapter II.

\textsuperscript{10} The nature of typical responses for secondary quality concepts is such that we cannot elucidate them in a non-circular way. We can, however, clarify concepts of these responses by means of the basic equation that employs \textit{surrogate} responses. In the case of colour concepts, this would involve not being colour-blind – not confusing red and green, for instance. I discuss the particular nature of secondary quality responses in a later section of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{11} Note that DIGESTIBLE is species specific, like POISONOUS.
are in the process of breaking down food substances, absorbing nutrients and processing waste.

Competing meta-ethical theories of moral psychology mean that there are (at least) two available accounts of the nature of responses relevant to moral concepts. If one takes a non-cognitivist line, then the relevant response is (variously) a manifestation of a disposition to express one’s emotional reaction to something’s (putative) goodness, or a pro- or anti-desire invoked by and directed towards the act, person or situation that is the object of the ascription. From a non-cognitivist point of view then, moral concepts are similar to concepts such as ATTRACTIVE and DISGUSTING in respect of the nature of the response relevant to determining their extensions. If one takes a cognitivist position, on the other hand, the responses associated with moral concepts are (arguably) not served by any of the categories identified thus far. They are not properly summed up as emotional feelings, they are not desires, they are not purely perceptual, we do not think of them as being physical, rather they are judgements or beliefs. Take the case of PIOUS. Following a response-dependence line, we can say that something or someone is included in the extension of PIOUS just in case it/they are such as to elicit a particular response in appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions. The response in question is a judgement about the piety of the actor in question. An (albeit controversial) example used by Mark Johnston in setting up his version of response-dependence follows a similar pattern: Johnston’s example is that of a US state law being constitutional. This, he claims, is the concept of the Supreme Court’s not being disposed ultimately to regard the law as unconstitutional. A law, then, is constitutional, just in case the Supreme Court does not (or would not) judge it to be unconstitutional under appropriate conditions.

In the case of most of the concepts I have termed ‘patient’ concepts, the response in question is typically not a human one, but the reaction of an inanimate material object to a customary trigger. The breaking response in the case of fragile objects, then, is typically not a human one; likewise the flexing of an object under certain forces.
There are exceptions to this pattern, however; human bones may tend to break under certain stresses, while joints ought to flex under certain forces. These responses are similar to those associated with actor concepts in that they are responses elicited from humans, but they determine the extensions of concepts that make attributions to the patient, rather than to the actor. The respondents’ response is the basis of the attribution of the relevant feature to the patient itself. Whereas in the case of actor concepts, the respondent’s response is the basis of the attribution of the relevant property to the object or action acting upon the respondent. If I break my leg falling onto a concrete pavement, my bone’s fragility is triggered, not that of the pavement.

Assuming this response-dependence account is correct, what types of responses are associated with secondary quality concepts and could be considered as extension-determining? As we have seen, secondary quality concepts are actor concepts: the response in question will be a response triggered on the part of a respondent apparently as a result of the presence of the relevant secondary quality feature. Thus the relevant response in the case of BITTER will be having a bitter taste sensation, in the case of YELLOW it will be having a visual sensation of yellow; in the case of ACRID it will be having an olfactory sensation of acridity. While these responses are not dissimilar from those implicated in the cases of other actor concepts such as ANNOYING, EXHILARATING and POISONOUS in that they occur in the form of human feelings/sensations, they are distinctive in that they are wholly perceptual and each is specific to a single sense modality.

§2.4 Accessibility of Response

When discussing our concepts of the responses relevant to the determination of secondary quality concepts’ extensions, we noted in passing the difficulty of elucidating them in a non-circular way. This stems from the completely private and publicly inaccessible nature of the sensations that are the relevant responses in the

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12 Further exceptions occur when these concepts are applied metaphorically: a person who is fragile, malleable, or flexible does not count as so on the grounds of a response that is the same as that of a glass that breaks easily or of a piece of metal that is easily reshaped.
case of secondary quality concepts, which means that we don’t have separate words for the response and the concept whose extension it determines. Among the class of actor concepts there is a range of degrees of privacy of response and examples considered here suggest that these degrees appear to be correlated with a further distinction - the direction of the response. The sensations identified as determinants of secondary quality concepts’ extensions sit at one end of this range in that they are accessible only to the respondents themselves. An example of a concept that is positioned at the other end of this range is POISONOUS. Something is poisonous (for humans) just in case it tends to elicit vomiting, discomfort, death in appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions. Thus the relevant response is publicly accessible; the community at large can, in principle, witness that the relevant response has occurred. Contrast this with the secondary quality case: in the case of SWEET the relevant response - a sensation as of sweetness - cannot be witnessed, and is certainly not shared, by those who (putatively) share the practice of using the concept. If the relevant response is indeed a sensation that is sufficiently similar in the case of each appropriate respondent who experiences an object under appropriate conditions, then conceptual practices involving taste (and mutatis mutandis, other secondary quality concepts) must be underpinned by assumptions concerning the similarity of these sensations both between respondents and across an individual respondent’s experiences over time. Sitting between these extremes there appears to be an intermediate position occupied by concepts for which the typical response has both inaccessible and accessible aspects. AMUSING is one such concept. Something is AMUSING just in case it tends to cause appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions to be amused. As discussed above, the response of being amused is often labelled a ‘feeling’ and this is shorthand for a combination of emotions, which are inaccessible, and their behavioural aspects - laughing, a wry smile, uncontrollably shaking with mirth - which are accessible beyond the respondent who is amused. However, the necessity of the private aspect of the relevant response is brought into focus when we consider that it is possible to fake being amused, in order to fit in with the crowd, say, or when required for acting a part in a play or film. In almost all cases
the question of whether or not something counts as AMUSING is determined by responses that are only privately accessible. Publicly accessible elements of the typical response are not, in most cases, part of the relevant, extension-determining response even though they might be part of the response that we take to be elicited typically by things that are amusing.\textsuperscript{13} The inaccessibility of the responses taken to be extension determining for certain response-dependent concepts might be thought to generate a worry about how practices in which they are incorporated can be guided by any identifiable criterion of correctness; how, it is famously put, we can be confident that our use of a concept constitutes \textit{going on in the same way}. This issue is dealt with in Chapters VII and VIII.

\textbf{§2.5 Direction of Response}

When we consider the phenomenology of responses relevant to determining the extensions of response-dependent concepts, a further, bipartite, distinction is revealed. On the one hand, respondents’ tendencies to respond thus and so are manifested by responses that turn outwards towards something in the actor, on the other, the responses relevant to other of the concepts in which we are interested involve respondents turning their attention inwards towards their own response. In the case of POISONOUS and PIOUS, for example, the respondent’s attention is drawn outwards towards the apparent feature of the actor.\textsuperscript{14} Whereas, in the case of NAUSEATING and ANNOYING, for example, attention is drawn away from the actor and inwards towards the physical or emotional response. In the secondary quality case, attention is directed outwards towards the apparent bitterness, yellowness and acridity of the actor, rather than inwards towards the sensations that constitute the relevant responses.\textsuperscript{15}  

\textsuperscript{13} This is complicated somewhat by the fact that amusingness comes in degrees. If someone finds something completely amusing, then it is maybe implausible to suppose that they won’t manifest the publicly accessible aspects of the typical response such as laughter, so in a small number of cases, such as that of EXTREMELY AMUSING, it is a necessary condition for something to fall under its extension that it elicit some publicly accessible response in appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions.

\textsuperscript{14} In the case of PIOUS and other moral concepts, this is grist to mill of error theories. The phenomenology of moral practice is claimed to mislead respondents into \textit{projecting} their non-cognitive responses onto the objects of their moral ascriptions: the error allegedly consists in ascribing to things features that they do not really have.

\textsuperscript{15} This distinction is also discussed by Michael Smith in a pair of papers on colour and colour concepts (1993a) (1993b). In (1993b) he motivates the distinction via consideration of differences between the phenomenology of colour experience (outwardly directed) and pain experience (inwardly directed).
At the ends of the spectrum of privacy/publicity of response the examples considered suggest a correlation with this phenomenological distinction. Where the relevant response is a sensation or emotion and is entirely private, respondents’ attention is directed outwards towards the actor that is the apparent cause of the sensation and the object of the ascription of the relevant feature. Where the relevant response is physical and entirely public, as it is in the case of POISONOUS (for humans), respondents’ attention is directed away from the actor and apparent cause of the response and towards the response itself; that is, to the physical symptoms of poisoning.

16 Berkeley’s argument (1975, pp 138-42) to the effect that great heat is equivalent to great pain, pain is in the mind therefore heat is (all) in the mind is an example of thinking that neglects the distinction between inwardly and outwardly directed responses. In the case of the pain response respondents’ attention is directed inwards towards the sensation itself. In the case of the heat response, respondents’ attention is directed towards the apparent cause of the response – the red hot poker, say.
§ 2.6 Normativity

By their very nature, response-dependent moral concepts have a normative element. If something or someone is good, it/they ought to be found so and approved of by appropriate respondents. A further point to note, moreover, is the way in which other sorts of response-dependent concepts pack some normative force, but are not specifically moral concepts. DISGUSTING is one such concept. Something is DISGUSTING just in case it disgusts appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions. In our practice of ascribing this feature, it is inferred not just that a thing is thus and so, but also that most (appropriate) respondents would also be disgusted by it, and, further, anyone (appropriate) who encounters it ought to find it so. Our use of AMUSING follows a similar practice. In ascribing the feature of amusingness to something, an anecdote, say, we are not merely claiming that we find it amusing, but are suggesting that most (appropriate) respondents would also be amused by it and that anyone (who counts as appropriate) should also find it so. This normative aspect can also have a proscriptive impact in that there are certain things that appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions ought not to find amusing. Thus torture is not something by which an appropriate respondent ought to be amused.\textsuperscript{17} The normative force implicit in practices involving concepts such as these is reflected in the way in which they are used to recommend or counsel against various actions - a purchase, seeing a film, ordering a meal, and so on.

Of course identifying just which respondents are supposed to be the target of these normative forces is crucial to a proper analysis of these concepts and, importantly, this question is related to two, wider, questions. Firstly, the question of what is meant by 'appropriateness': what does the reliance of a response dependence account on notions of appropriate (normal, suitable, favourable) respondents and conditions of response amount to? Secondly, a question about relativity: how large is the population of concept users (call it 'the target population') for whom the concept's extension is

\textsuperscript{17} Indeed, the negative impact of the normative force of concepts such as AMUSING most likely plays an important role in demarcating what it takes to be included in the class of subjects whose responses under appropriate conditions count as extension-determining for that concept. This question is taken up in detail later in this chapter.
determined by the response? The appropriateness issue is discussed in chapter II. Relativity is the topic to which I now turn.

§2.7 Relativity

To launch the discussion, I’ll consider a sub-class of groups of two or more distinct but related response-dependent actor concepts, which typically find linguistic expression in the same locution. These concepts display contrasting degrees of relativity to the respondents whose responses determine their extensions. The locution they share is the root of a systematic ambiguity surrounding the meanings of the terms associated with these concepts and is possibly the reason for confusion as to the ontic status of the features they posit and the epistemic status of judgements in which they are employed. A number of the concepts listed at the outset are members of this sub-class. Something is ATTRACTIVE, for example, just in case it attracts appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions. Yet ATTRACTIVE appears to have different uses in different contexts. In some it seems to mean that something is attractive-to-me, in others that it is attractive-to-us, where ‘us’ implies appropriate respondents interacting with the thing in question under appropriate conditions. The first use occurs when someone is simply reporting their individual response to something or someone to which they are attracted. So that thing or person is ATTRACTIVE in the attractive-to-me sense. An individual’s response to that thing may be a one off occurrence, the thing is not attractive to them on future occasions and hasn’t been in the past, or their responses may be repeatable and reliably produced and hence, perhaps, stable over long-ish periods. Properly understood, then, we have two distinct deeply agent-relative concepts. Something may be ATTRACTIVE-TO-X if it elicits the relevant response in x, that is, x tends to find it attractive under appropriate conditions. Something may be ATTRACTIVE-TO-X-AT-T if it elicits the relevant response in x at that t. These concepts’ extensions overlap, something that is ATTRACTIVE-TO-X, will be included in the extension of ATTRACTIVE-TO-X-AT-T on each occasion that it elicits the relevant response in x.
The third use, which I call the *simpliciter* use is illustrated by the following: imagine someone attempting to describe a third party to a friend who has not encountered the third party – ‘He’s tallish, blond, smartly-dressed, attractive’. Here they use a concept whose extension is not determined solely by the individual respondent’s response, as those of the deeply agent-relative concepts are. And in so doing they ascribe a feature that they believe their interlocutor would also identify if they were to encounter the person in question. For here ATTRACTIVE is the concept of a feature to which appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions are or would be attracted. The ascriber and their interlocutor need not even be included in that group of respondents. The ascription merely recognises that the person in question is such as to be found attractive by some authorising group of respondents.

Although the first two concepts ascribe features that have higher degrees of agent-relativity than that ascribed by the third, the former kinds of ascription still communicate information about the person in question. They say that the person to whom attractiveness is ascribed is such as to be found attractive by the ascriber. There may be certain features of the ascriber that underlie their disposition to be attracted to certain features of the person in question, and those underlying features will not necessarily be shared by others. Different people are differently disposed to find things attractive and thus the concept ATTRACTIVE-TO-X ascribes a different feature according to who occupies the x placeholder. The information communicated by an ascription using the simpliciter concept says that the person in question is such as to be judged, and found, attractive by a group of authorising respondents under appropriate conditions. In this case the features of respondents that dispose them to

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18 I will demarcate the distinction between simpliciter concepts such as ATTRACTIVE and their deeply agent-relative counterparts by making explicit the relativisation of the latter (as above).

19 That observation that the extension of ATTRACTIVE could be determined by a group of respondents that need not necessarily include all those who can competently use the concept perhaps captures what we mean when we describe someone as ‘conventionally attractive’.
make the appropriate response will be shared by members of the group of appropriate respondents.\footnote{There will, of course, be different extensions of ATTRACTIVE simpliciter depending on which population, or which population in which epoch, is the object of consideration. So an indexical element remains in the simpliciter use of ATTRACTIVE.}

The concept EXCITING is a further response-dependent actor concept that has counterparts that determines more agent-relative features of something’s being exciting for an individual or for an individual at a particular time, or for a much more limited target group than that supposed by EXCITING. Events that have only a limited excitement value for the majority of a target population are nevertheless presented as EXCITING when they are in fact EXCITING-FOR-X, where x is merely one individual. Suppose a global organization such as the United Nations managed to put in place a series of measures that began to rescue millions of people all over the world from a life of poverty. That would seem to be a development that would count as EXCITING, where the concept is understood to apply to all and only those things that excite appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions. Used in certain contexts, the concept also packs normative force. In such contexts, EXCITING carries the injunction that right-thinking people should find the thing or event in question exciting. But it does not pack this normative force in all contexts. I can say, for instance, that roller coaster rides are exciting without thinking that there is anything wrong with people who are not excited by them.

By way of contrast, consider an event such as Smith’s receipt of an email message from a distant and much-missed friend. The email message’s arrival will no doubt excite Smith, but it by no means counts as EXCITING in the simpliciter sense. Rather, it is EXCITING-FOR-SMITH-AT-T. It would be a mistake to claim that the arrival of the email message is exciting unless this relativity to an individual and a time was made explicit or was mutually understood. Indeed when used in this mistaken way, the normative force of EXCITING is misdirected. It is implausible to suppose that anyone but Smith should find the email message’s arrival exciting, although not implausible
to suppose that a few others, Smith’s partner, say, share Smith’s excitement. Like that of ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X-AT-T, the extension of EXCITING-FOR-X-AT-T is unlikely to be stable, shifting according to a subject’s experiences and whims. As the concept's extension is constantly in flux, it should be properly understood as relativised both to an individual respondent and to temporal context of response. 21

Less obviously, NAUSEATING is also a member of this category of response-dependent concepts. This is demonstrated by an example cited by Johnston in his discussion of NAUSEATING. Johnston cites juicy apricots as an example of something that is NAUSEATING. It is surely counter-intuitive to say that when they encounter juicy apricots under appropriate conditions, appropriate respondents are nauseated by them. What Johnston ought to mean is that juicy apricots are nauseating-for-him, not that they are nauseating in the ordinary sense. Johnston’s narrative is elaborated upon by his explanation of how he came to find apricots nauseating - he once tried to eat some on a particularly rough ferry voyage (1996a, p. 197). So we see that underlying Johnston’s disposition to find juicy apricots nauseating is his unfortunate experience at sea. And this is clearly not an experience shared by most appropriate respondents and therefore not something underlying their disposition to find certain things (but not juicy apricots) nauseating. On the other hand, there will be a range of other things, rotting meat, for example, which, when experienced under appropriate conditions, appropriate respondents will respond to by becoming nauseated and, according to our response-dependence account, these responses will be the ones that determine the extension of the concept NAUSEATING.

It is illuminating to locate these triplet concepts on points along an axis upon which all response-dependent concepts are positioned. The axis plots the size of the target population and the range of contexts relative to which a concept's extension is

21 Formally, the context of response is best thought of as determined by factors such as respondent, time and location. Since the size of the population of respondents is of independent interest here, and since a time of response suffices in most cases uniquely to specify a context of response, I move freely between talk of times of response and contexts of response.
determined. The practices involving any response-dependent concept will be relative to some target population and/or context of response, but the size of the population and/or the number of contexts varies from concept to concept. The position of any concept along this axis represents just how relative the practices involving that concept are. At the maximally relative end of the continuum we find concepts the users of which, and the population for which the concept has normative force (if it has any), is a single subject. ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X, NAUSEATING-FOR-X, DISGUSTING-FOR-X, ANNOYING-FOR-X AND EXCITING-FOR-X are all positioned towards this end of the axis. Right at the limit of maximal relativity are their extremely agent and context relative counterparts: ATTRACTIVE-FOR-ME[-AT-T], DISGUSTING-FOR-ME[-AT-T], ANNOYING-FOR-ME[-AT-T] or EXCITING-FOR-ME[-AT-T]. The concept of one’s being in pain is also positioned here. The question of whether or not something is ATTRACTIVE-FOR-ME[-AT-T], DISGUSTING-FOR-ME[-AT-T], ANNOYING-FOR-ME[-AT-T] or EXCITING-FOR-ME[-AT-T] is settled only by appeal to my own responses. Whether one is part of the extension of the concept expressed by the locution ‘I am in pain’ or by ‘the cut on my leg is painful’ is determined only by one’s own pain response at-t.

At the other end of the axis are concepts for which the relevant response is relative to a considerably larger population group, but which, it is important to bear in mind, are still relative. Secondary quality concepts are positioned at this extreme. The target population of users to which the extension determining response for SWEET is relative - appropriate respondents experiencing a sweet sensation under appropriate conditions - is all rational agents. The group of appropriate respondents will not be identical with the total relevant population of users, but in the case of secondary quality concepts, it might reasonably be supposed that they will represent a majority of that population.22

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22 Notice that a target population might not actually include the respondents whose responses are relevant to determining a concept’s extension. Although appropriate respondents are almost always drawn from a concept’s target population, there are exceptions. Take PIOUS for example: suppose something is PIOUS just in case it would be valued by the Gods. The Gods, then, are the appropriate respondents in the determination of the extension of PIOUS, but they are not necessarily part of the target population – the human race or a cultural sub-group thereof. Such a concept would still be our concept, but its extension would be determined by their responses. It could also be a concept used by the Gods themselves, but need not be.
Between these minimal and maximal positions are intermediate cases that consist of those concepts for which the target population is culturally, socially or genetically delineated and usually includes at least more than one member, but not the totality of all rational agents. Concepts such as ATTRACTIVE, DISGUSTING and AMUSING occupy these intermediate positions. For instance, whether or not something is DISGUSTING is dependent (in some way to be elaborated further) on the responses of appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions. One might conclude that the concept is relative to the population from which those respondents are drawn. That is, that something that is disgusting is merely DISGUSTING-FOR-THEM, but possibly not for other possible target populations. The target population, then, comprises, at least, people like me (the user). In the case of DISGUSTING, at least part of what determines relevant similarity to the target population is culturally based. Certain foodstuffs, say, may qualify as DISGUSTING relative to some culturally-delineated groups, but are perfectly acceptable, indeed, delicious, to others. The normative impact of such a concept implicitly applies only to those who are relevantly similar and this is a further illustration of the degree of relativity of concepts of the type exemplified by DISGUSTING, ATTRACTIVE and so on. They are relative to a culturally determined target population that is likely to include a far smaller proportion of the entire human population than the group of subjects that constitutes the target population for secondary quality concepts, say. So on the axis of relativity from something’s being, say, attractive-to-me-at-t to its being sweet-to-almost-everyone, DISGUSTING, ATTRACTIVE, ANNOYING and so forth occupy intermediate positions that will vary according to the size of the target population relative to which their extensions are determined. This does not mean that the extensions of concepts such as DISGUSTING vary completely between target populations, and therefore that they are entirely different concepts. It is likely that their extensions will overlap to some extent so that,
rotting flesh, say, is included in the extension of DISGUSTING relative to almost all population groups. 23

In some cases the question of a concept’s correct position on the axis is contested relative to the positions theorists take within related debates about the relevant practices. Response-dependent moral concepts are actor concepts that provide such cases. Consistent with some accounts of moral practice, we might place concepts such as GOOD in the same position as secondary quality concepts on the grounds that their extensions are determined relative to at least the entire human species and at most all rational agents. However, consistent with less absolutist accounts of moral practice, while maintaining a response-dependence account of moral concepts, those concepts might be appropriately placed with concepts such as AMUSING, DISGUSTING and ATTRACTIVE on the grounds that responses that determine their extensions are relative to a narrower population such as a cultural or spiritual sub-group of the human race, rather than relative to the total human population in the way that the responses relevant to secondary quality concepts are.

§2.8 Deference and Self-Assurance

There is a second axis upon which we can locate all concepts, response-dependent and response-independent according to the extent to which the practices in which they are involved should be seen primarily to be a matter of self-assurance or of deference. At the maximally deferential point will sit those concepts whose posits we can truly say are found in rather than imposed upon the world. Actor concepts of primary quality features such as shapes - SQUARE, ROUND, TRIANGULAR, and so on - provide plausible exemplars of such concepts. Patient concepts of dispositional features FRAGILE, MALLEABLE, FLEXIBLE and so on are also located towards this end. At the maximally self-assured point are those concepts whose posits we can truly say are

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23 Overlap between populations is probably more obvious when we consider the negations of relevant ascriptions. While there may not be extensive overlap in the extensions of AMUSING, we may well find greater convergence on what is unamusing. Torture and incest for instance, are activities that fail to amuse (and ought not to amuse) appropriate respondents in almost every target population.
imposed upon the world by our practices rather than found there. Deeply agent and context relative actor concepts such as ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X-AT-T provide exemplars of such concepts. However, as we will see in Chapters VII and VIII, it would be a mistake simply to assume that the axis of degree of relativity is isomorphic with some region of the axis of degree of self-assurance and deference.

§ 2.9 Summary
In this chapter I have identified and discussed a number of distinctions and axes. Of the multi-dimensional variegation of concepts that emerge, six categories are of sufficient interest to note. These are the categories from which our examples of response-dependent concepts have been drawn and they are of interest because they manifest the variety of response-dependent concepts. The following cases exemplify these categories:

1. **SWEET** exemplifies secondary quality concepts. They are actor concepts whose extension-determining responses are relative to the totality of rational agents and thus such concepts display a minimal degree of relativity. These responses are perceptual, private and outwardly directed. Further examples of this type of response-dependent concept include YELLOW, ACRID, SMOOTH and SHRILL.

2. **POISONOUS** is an actor concept that is similarly situated with respect to its relativity. Its extension-determining response is relative to species or aggregations thereof and they need not be the human species. This response is physical, public and inwardly directed. Further examples of this type of response-dependent concept include NAUSEATING, EDIBLE and DIGESTIBLE.

3. **ATTRACTIVE** is an actor concept whose extension-determining response is relative to a culturally and/or socially delineated population that is narrower than that of the totality of rational agents. It is therefore more relative than SWEET and POISONOUS. This response is a combination of emotions and desires and, sometimes, physical responses; it typically has both private and public aspects, but in most cases only the private aspects are relevant to
determining the extension of ATTRACTIVE. The response is inwardly directed. Further examples of this type of response-dependent concept include DISGUSTING, EXCITING and DISAPPOINTING.

4. **ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T]** exemplifies a point at the extreme of the axis of relativity. Its extension-determining response is relative to a single subject [at a particular time.] Like that of its (simpliciter) counterpart, its response is a combination of emotions and desires, it typically has private and public aspects, but only the former are relevant to extension determination and it is inwardly directed. Further examples of this type of response-dependent concept include DISGUSTING-FOR-X[-AT-T], EXCITING-FOR-X[-AT-T] and DISAPPOINTING-FOR[-X-AT-T].

5. **GOOD** (in its moral application) exemplifies response-dependent moral concepts. These concepts are actor concepts and they have an essential normative element. With respect to the distinctions and axes that structure our taxonomy, they occupy different positions depending upon the position taken with respect to a pair of meta-ethical distinctions: cognitivism vs non-cognitivism; absolutism vs relativism. Strictly speaking, their proper location will depend upon which theory turns out to be correct. These possible meta-ethical positions generate four possible response-dependence accounts of moral practices:

   i. Cognitivist and absolutist: relevant responses are judgements and are outwardly directed; they are publicly accessible. The target population for moral concepts is at least the entire human population (and perhaps all rational agents). In the latter respect, they are therefore similar to secondary quality concepts.24

   ii. Cognitivist and relativist: relevant responses are judgements and are outwardly directed; they are publicly accessible. The target population for moral concepts is a culturally

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24 And in the former respect if we think that perceptual responses are not wholly non-conceptual.
determined sub-group of the human population. In the latter respect they are similar to concepts such as ATTRACTIVE.

iii. Non-cognitivist and absolutist: Dependent on the version of non-cognitivism in play, relevant responses are either expressions of feelings or are desires, and (notwithstanding error theories) they are outwardly-directed. In this respect they share some similarities with ATTRACTIVE et al and with ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T]. If feelings, they may be publicly inaccessible, if desires, they are publicly accessible on the basis of behaviours that can reasonably be taken to manifest them. The target population for moral concepts is the entire human population (or that of all rational agents). In this respect they are similar to secondary quality concepts.

iv. Non-cognitivist and relativist: relevant responses are feelings or are desires. If the former, they may be publicly inaccessible, if the latter, they are publicly accessible on the basis of behaviours that can reasonably be taken to manifest them. They are outwardly directed. The target population for moral concepts is a culturally determined sub-group of the human population. In this latter respect, they are similar to ATTRACTIVE et al.

6. **FLEXIBLE** is a deferential patient concept the extension of which is determined by the responses of appropriate patients to certain causes visited on them. Further examples of this type of response-dependent concept include MALLEABLE, SOLUBLE-IN-WATER, FRAGILE and INFLATABLE.

And by way of contrast, a response-*independent* concept:

7. **SQUARE** is an actor concept, it is deferential. Its extension is determined independently of the responses of respondents upon which the feature posited
by the practice in which it is incorporated acts. Further examples of response-independent concepts include ROUND, TALL, TREE and WOMAN.

Through this taxonomic exercise, we have identified distinctions and axes that have enabled us to demarcate 6 categories of response-dependent concepts. In Chapter VIII these categories are employed when response-dependence accounts are brought into productive engagement with realism, resulting in an analysis of the varieties of realist-response-dependence relationships. In Chapter II, I further develop my response-dependence account by considering issues relating to the form and content of basic equations for each of the 6 categories of response-dependent concepts identified here.
Chapter II – The Basic Equation

§ 1 Introduction

In this chapter I will consider issues associated with the form and content of basic equations for each of the categories of response-dependent concepts identified in Chapter I. I begin by asking how we should refine the constraints on which respondents and conditions are capable of producing the relevant response. I go on to consider the a prioricity of the basic equation. I then deal with the question of whether or not we should rigidify on any of the terms in the basic equations for each category of concepts with the aim of restricting the relevant response to that of actually appropriate respondents under actually appropriate conditions.

§2 Appropriateness Unpacked: Normality, Suitability and Ideality

A brief consideration of our experiences within practices involving response-dependent concepts reveals that some respondents and some conditions of response are discounted as not likely to produce the response relevant to determining those concepts’ extensions. Someone with a hearing difficulty will be discounted as an appropriate respondent in respect of SHRILL; someone who perpetually suffers from blocked sinuses will be discounted in respect of SOUR-SMELLING; darkness is considered to provide inappropriate conditions for the perceptual experiences that are relevant to determining the extensions of colour concepts; a ship in a rough sea provides conditions inappropriate to producing the response relevant to determining the extension of NAUSEATING, and so on. These first-come-to-mind criteria include a
conception of a *generic* respondent responding under generic conditions for each concept – a respondent who, in the particular conditions in which she responds, has certain paradigmatic features derived from facts about how entities (respondents) of that type figure in laws and causal explanations. (For this use of ‘generic’, consider the everyday remarks that ‘dogs have four legs’, or ‘a dog has four legs’. Obviously there are exceptions to these claims, but we set them aside. We could explicate these remarks by saying: ‘A generic dog has four legs’.) But those respondents who are deemed appropriate in respect of determining a concept’s extension may not necessarily include all and only those respondents who would count as generic. Someone who is colour blind might count as a generic human, but is not an appropriate respondent with respect to determining the extensions of colour concepts.

Thus far we have used ‘appropriate’ to constrain the S and C placeholders in our basic equations. In the literature different types of constraints are favoured and the placeholder consequently filled out by a variety of terms. These include ‘normal’, ‘favourable’, ‘suitable’, ‘standard’, ‘typical’, and ‘ideal’. This section addresses the question of the best way to fill out the placeholders for each of the categories of response-dependent concepts identified via the taxonomic exercise carried out in Chapter I.

The above remarks show that in the cases of all but one of the types of concept discussed, it would be counter-intuitive if just anybody’s response under any
conditions were relied upon to be extension determining. In practice, an (at least) implicit process of ruling respondents and conditions in and out occurs. For example, in the usual context, something is nauseating just in case it is such as to elicit a certain response – vomiting or the feeling that vomiting is imminent – in appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions. So in respect of NAUSEATING (which is taken to imply NAUSEATING-FOR-HUMANS unless otherwise disambiguated) a respondent will be appropriate if she has a normal digestive system and constitution (is not unwell, has no unusual health conditions, and so on) and the usual human capacity for reacting to and resisting that which is vomit-inducing. So, when confronted with the smell of a rotting carcass, say, such a respondent will experience feelings of nausea, induced by the smell. Someone who is not nauseated by the carcass – after years as a pest controller, they have become inured to the smell of rotting rats – will not be regarded as appropriate in this respect. Similarly, someone whose digestive and nervous system was such that they were physically unable to vomit or to even feel that they were about to vomit could not count as an appropriate respondent in this regard. On the other hand, someone who is over-disposed to vomiting would also be discounted as an appropriate respondent. Someone who is induced to vomit merely at the sight or smell of food – a pregnant woman in the throes of morning sickness, for instance, is also (temporarily at least) excluded from the class of appropriate respondents with respect to extension-determining responses for NAUSEATING.
An effect of constraints such as these is the maintenance of a gap between something’s merely seeming to be included in the extension of a concept (either because it elicits the relevant response in someone who turns out not to count as appropriate, or because it elicits the relevant response under inappropriate conditions) and something’s being included in the extension of a concept. Once an is/seems gap is in place, the possibility of error is maintained and not all responses are taken as detections of the presence of the feature determined by the relevant concept. Someone might be wrong in thinking that something really is NAUSEATING, say, because, although nauseated by it, they were feeling the affects of having consumed large amounts of alcohol at the time. So despite the thing in question having elicited the relevant response in someone who is (let us suppose) an appropriate respondent, the conditions of response are not appropriate, thereby disqualifying the response as extension-determining. The thing in question could, however, be NAUSEATING-FOR-X[-AT-T].

Although such constraints ensure that not just anyone’s response in any conditions is taken as extension determining, a concept’s extension might still be determined by the responses of just one respondent. For it may turn out that there is only one respondent who is deemed appropriate. An obvious case is that of deeply agent-relative concepts such as ATTRACTIVE-FOR-ME[-AT-T]. But further cases will exist if there are concepts for which the relevant response is that of ideal respondents under ideal conditions (that is, where the ‘appropriate’ place-holder stands in for ‘ideal’) where perhaps only
one respondent, or no respondents at all, count as ideal. Suppose the responses of an
infinite, omniscient, omnipotent being determined the extension of GOOD, then, only
that being’s responses would count as extension determining. However, the process
by which respondents and conditions are ruled in or ruled out both allows for and
reflects inter-subjective convergence concerning which responses are appropriate for
extension-determination.\footnote{Generally, the constraints deliver and are a reflection of inter-subjective convergence, but we can envisage situations where that issue, and hence the concept itself, is contestable: suppose that something were evil iff under appropriate conditions, George W. Bush judged it to be so. George W. Bush, then, would be the appropriate respondent in respect of the determination of the extension of EVIL. However, even though we might inter-subjectively converge on the question of what is included in the extension of EVIL, we might fail to converge on the question of the identity of the appropriate respondent(s). That is, we might not agree that George Bush is the appropriate respondent. In such a case, the ruling in/ruling out process would be incomplete.

There is a sense in which the basic equation should be regarded as a priori and the idea that it is a mere theorist’s tool might seem at odds with this. I will deal with the sense in which the equations are a priori later in the chapter. Similarly, then, the inclusion of placeholders for constraints on respondents and conditions of response is not intended to represent beliefs that participants form about respondents and conditions. Rather they represent the practices used to discount and accept respondents and/or conditions of response as appropriate for producing responses that

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We should bear in mind that basic equations are tools constructed and used by
theorists (a Quinean rational reconstruction, perhaps) to elucidate the way in which
responses are involved in the determination of the extensions of certain concepts.
They should not be regarded as representations of beliefs that ordinary participants in
the practices involving those concepts might form about elements of those practices;
nor are they intended as rules that might be employed for the application of those
concepts.\footnote{There is a sense in which the basic equation should be regarded as a priori and the idea that it is a mere theorist’s tool might seem at odds with this. I will deal with the sense in which the equations are a priori in §4 of this chapter.}
can be taken as extension determining. Participants need not be aware that they engage in these practices as such. An explicit filtering out process has little role to play in actual folk practices, rather the background knowledge required for a priori knowledge of the basic equation (see below) will include the knowledge that certain conditions are disregarded as appropriate for enabling the extension-determining response.

In traditional discussions of secondary qualities the placeholder filled by ‘appropriate’ is taken to be filled by ‘normal’; and many, but not all, discussions of response-dependent concepts follow this model, constraining the relevant response to that of normal respondents in normal conditions. In addition to the obvious methodological difficulty of specifying just who and what count as normal respondents and conditions in respect of instances of a particular concept, a further issue that arises is how exactly we should interpret ‘normal’ in order best to capture the respondents and conditions that come to be counted as reliable for detecting things that will be included in a concept’s extension. Although many writers on response-dependence favour normality as the constraint on responses and conditions, ‘normality’ takes on different meanings in different hands. Moreover, some of the other locutions that appear in the literature, such as ‘suitable’, ‘favourable’ and ‘typical’ are also captured by certain interpretations of ‘normal’. In what follows I begin by considering how the meaning of ‘normality’ might be cashed out and the different senses of ‘normality’ that this produces. I’ll go on to consider exemplars of each of the types of response-dependent
concepts identified in Chapter I and ask which understanding of normality is used in
the ruling in/ruled out practices employed for each.

Recall that when filling out the placeholder with ‘normal’, the theorist is giving their
best account of what constraints on respondents and conditions make the basic
equations true. Following this route, respondents and conditions that are unlikely to
produce the relevant extension-determining response for a concept are ruled out,
while respondents and conditions that have the highest probability of producing the
relevant response will be ruled in. In cashing out normality in this way, we would not
be saying that the responses relevant to a concept’s extension cannot be achieved by
abnormal respondents or under what would be abnormal conditions. Rather, the basic
equation identifies a response-dependent concept as a concept whose extension is
determined by the responses elicited from normal respondents under the conditions
specified as normal.

In order to clarify the two most significant understandings of ‘normal’ that appear in
basic equations, I briefly consider two examples from the literature of how to interpret
‘normal’. In the analyses of examples that follow, we see that in the cases of some
categories of response-dependent concept, one interpretation trumps the other.
However, we can, with hindsight, see the motivation for that which is trumped. Once
we see which interpretation best fills the ‘appropriate’ place-holder, we see that
‘normal’ no longer has a significant role to play in signalling constraints placed on
respondents and conditions of response.

§2.1 ‘Normal’ as ‘Suitable’

Crispin Wright narrows down normal respondents and conditions to a set that are \textit{most likely} to produce the extension-determining response. In respect of colour concepts, for example, he offers the following as a description of ‘normal perceptual conditions’.

\begin{quote}
Conditions of illumination like those that typically actually obtain at noon on a cloudy summer’s day out of doors and out of shadow. 1988, p. 16
\end{quote}

Wright says that such conditions are ‘optimally’ suited for colour appraisal.\textsuperscript{27} So the sense of normality that is in play here is one that is captured by ‘most suitable for the extension-determining response to occur’, and the set of conditions that are ruled-in by a process that employs this interpretation of normality will be relatively narrow. They are not the conditions that we might say \textit{usually} prevail, not normal conditions in the sense of ‘the conditions that we most often experience around here’. Indeed, conditions that don’t meet the criteria set by this understanding of normality could still be close enough and good enough to enable the extension-determining response. Of course, the response can and will be enabled in conditions that are far-from-normal – at dusk for example - but such conditions won’t guarantee the response in the way that ‘normal’ conditions will (all other things being equal). Wright rules out ‘the conditions which actually usually prevail during winter in Spitzbergen’, but it is

\textsuperscript{27} ‘Typically’ is used in Wright’s description to allow for the exclusion of rogue conditions – ‘solar eclipses, nuclear explosions, dust storms and volcanic discharges.’ (\textit{Ibid})
implausible to suppose that during winter in Spitzbergen coloured objects consistently fail to elicit the responses – looking red, green, yellow, and so on – that reliably indicate that they fall under the extensions of the appropriate colour concepts. Spitzbergians presumably aren’t subject to widespread error in respect of their colour judgements for 3 months of every year. On Wright’s interpretation, conditions and respondents deemed to count as normal conform to a standard or a norm determined by the extent to which they are suitable for producing the relevant response; they are ruled-in or out according to how closely they conform to those norms. Abnormal respondents and conditions are those that don’t manage to meet the standard.

§ 2.2 ‘Normal’ as ‘Usual’

By contrast, David Lewis cashes out normality in a way that rules in a different range of conditions, some of which would be ruled out according to Wright’s interpretation and some of which will appear in both sets. On his interpretation, ‘normal’ is closer in meaning to ‘usual’ than it is on Wright’s. For example, discussing the folk psychophysics of colour, Lewis says that normal illumination (and mutatis mutandis, normal capacities and normal surroundings) can be explained in terms of the range of lighting conditions that ‘most people – actually, nowadays, and hereabouts – mostly encounter’ (1999, p. 335). So if ‘now’ and ‘here’ happen to be Spitzbergen in winter, say, then so long as conditions are as they mostly or typically are in winter, they will not be discounted as abnormal, and responses that occur against their background can be treated as extension determining for the relevant concepts. Conditions ruled out as
abnormal according to this interpretation will be unusual or untypical ones. Lewis’ own list of examples comprises:

- sodium vapour light; eyes adapted to sodium vapour light; a room with purple walls, floor, and ceiling, filled with purple furniture, with purple curtains over the windows. 1999, p. 335

In some locations the conditions that would count as normal (suitable) according to Wright’s interpretation, might be so unusual that they would not be deemed to be normal according to Lewis’ interpretation. Conditions that are especially suitable or ‘optimal’- conditions that approach the ideal - would certainly be unusual and so likely to be ruled out. Consider for example the conditions considered normal, or optimal, for eliciting the responses relevant to determining the extensions of concepts of the olfactory qualities of things. The laboratory environment in which perfumers, or ‘noses’ as they are known, design new fragrances might plausibly be considered to provide optimal conditions for smelling the scents of roses, lavender and lemon, say, but they are far from usual and the conditions under which the responses relevant to concepts such as SWEET-SMELLING, ROSE-SCENTED, and so on, are usually elicited in normal respondents fall far below the standards set by the laboratory environment. Yet, unless there are other reasons to discount usual conditions - the respondent is suffering from a cold, is downwind of the source of some more powerful odour, a sewage plant, say, the temperature is unusually low or high, and so on – in practice we do not rule out less than optimal conditions as normal in respect of producing the responses relevant to the determination of the extensions of our concepts of how
things smell.

§2.3 Appropriateness: Category by Category

We’ll now turn our attention to considering the best account of appropriateness for exemplars of the categories of response-dependent concepts identified via our taxonomy. In the cases of actor concepts, considerations of appropriateness are used to constrain both respondents and conditions. In the case of patient concepts appropriateness constrains the respondent, which, as the patient, is the thing to which the feature is being attributed, and conditions of response. As our task is not to produce lists of conditions and respondents that are as a matter of fact ruled in, but rather to ascertain the constraints that govern that process, a productive way of approaching this task is to consider what types of respondents and conditions are ruled out. Whatever respondents and conditions remain beyond that process are those that are taken to be appropriate in respect of eliciting the response relevant to the concept in question.

§2.3.1 Secondary Quality Concepts

SWEET

In the course of our earlier considerations we saw that in respect of the constraints on respondents and conditions considered appropriate for the production of responses relevant to determining the extension of colour concepts, ‘appropriate’ can be understood as ‘not unusual’ or as ‘not unsuitable’. On the former understanding the
conditions ruled in will not necessarily include all of those ruled in by the latter because conditions and respondents that are eminently suitable may turn out to be unusual. We also saw that conditions that are usual in some locations may be deemed unsuitable in others and vice versa.

In the colour case, we needed to consider constraints on the respondent and on the environment in which the response occurs, so the first come to mind constraints involve lighting, the presence of other colours, and so on. What are the first come to mind conditions that would be ruled out in respect of responses that determine the extension of SWEET? A number of the constraints that spring to mind are constraints on the condition of the respondent’s tasting abilities and apparatus. The respondent needs to be physically equipped for tasting and the equipment needs to be undamaged. A person who had lost their taste sensitivity, through neurological damage, say, would be ruled out; as would someone who lacked sufficient sensitivity to distinguish between tastes, to whom everything tasted sour, say. Such impediments to being counted ‘in’ as a competent taster are correlates of blindness and colour blindness respectively. We should also rule out temporary conditions that might affect the ability to taste: the respondent should not have recently tasted very strong flavours that may affect taste sensitivity, or have drunk excessive amounts of alcohol, or be under the influence of drugs that affect taste sensitivity, or have insufficient saliva present in their mouth in which the substance tasted can be dissolved if it is not already (for substances’ tastes can only be detected when they are in water solutions.)
Constraints on other conditions would include ensuring that the substance tasted is neither extremely hot nor extremely cold, as extremes of temperature can produce temporary taste insensitivity.\(^{28}\)

The situations that would be ruled out seem to be ones that would be *unsuitable* for taste detection, ones that seem prima facie likely to result in mistaken ascriptions of taste properties.\(^{29}\) This suggests that the right understanding of appropriateness in respect of constraints on respondents and conditions for the issue of the relevant response for taste concepts should be that of suitability. Reflection on our practice, however, suggests that we don’t systematically rule out responses made in all situations that don’t meet the standards of suitability. Unless a respondent is a taste specialist (wine expert, coffee or tea importer, etc.) their oral environment is rarely completely free from the residues of substances that affect taste sensitivity and we don’t systematically rule out usual taste responses made under such conditions as unreliable indicators of the presence of features relevant to the tastes of things. What we do question, though, are rogue or unexpected responses made under such conditions. Suppose a banana eaten after drinking coffee tastes bitter, we are less likely to treat our response as reliable and to conclude that the banana is really bitter. Rather we question the reliability of the response given the conditions. An analogue in the case of colour would be that the banana looks bluish, but the lampshade gives the light a slightly green tint and this causes us to doubt the reliability of our colour experience as a guide to the banana’s colour, rather than to conclude that the banana is

\(^{28}\) Sugar sensitivity increases with temperature rise, salt and bitterness sensitivity decrease and acid sensitivity is relatively unchanged. Cf. [http://80-search.eb.com/eb/article?eu=117502](http://80-search.eb.com/eb/article?eu=117502) accessed 8/10/02

\(^{29}\) They may also be unusual, but it is their unsuitability that is our present focus.
really blue. These cases suggest that notions of both suitability and usualness are in play in our practices. I would argue, however, that usualness is merely taken as a reliable indicator of suitability. When its reliability comes into question – when apparently rogue responses are generated – the standard of normality to which we appeal is that provided by suitability.

Consider a community in which the youngest through to the oldest members customarily chew a particular leaf, so that, all other things being equal, the residue of the leaf is usually present in their mouths, thereby potentially affecting their sensitivity to the tastes of other foods that they experience. For members of this community, bananas taste sour (but the sourness isn’t unpleasant and it hasn’t put them off bananas). The conditions under which appropriate respondents respond to bananas are usual by the local standards and appropriate in the normal-as-usual sense. But suppose that members of the community notice that when they are away from the community and the customarily chewed leaf is unavailable, bananas (among other things) appear to taste different, in fact, they taste sweet and this experience is replicated in different locations over different occasions. They ask other people who are considered appropriate respondents in those locations how ripe bananas taste to them and they (generally) find that they taste sweet to others too. Discounting the possibilities that bananas in their part of the world are of a sour variety or that they are systematically mistaken about whether the bananas are ripe, the conditions under which they usually taste bananas come to be recognised as inappropriate on the
grounds that they are unsuited to the production of reliable taste responses. Although at first it may appear that the understanding of appropriateness in play in practices involving concepts such as SWEET is that of usualness, consideration of cases where things go awry and responses that are usual turn out to be inappropriate shows that despite the fact that responses under usual conditions are taken to be and often are reliable indicators of the instantiation of a concept, suitability trumps usualness as the determinant of appropriateness and thus provides the standard by which respondents and conditions are constrained.

It is tempting, and, indeed, common in the literature on response-dependence generally and secondary qualities specifically, to consider concepts associated with just one type of secondary quality feature, almost always colour concepts, and to omit any discussion of other secondary quality concepts. To avoid that temptation and to shed some light on these issues as they pertain to other types of secondary quality concepts, we’ll briefly consider constraints on respondents and conditions of response for the generation of the responses relevant to determining the extensions of concepts of smells (odours and aromas), textures and sounds.

ACRID

In the case of our concepts of the smells of things, the responses relevant to determining their extensions will be the olfactory sensations experienced by

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30 For example: In his discussion of secondary quality concepts at the beginning of ‘Realism and Response-Dependence’ (1991), Pettit mentions smoothness and blandness in addition to redness, but only the latter remains the focus of any of the arguments and theory that follow. Similarly, red provides the exemplar for Wright’s discussion in his ‘Moral Values, Projection and Secondary Qualities’ (1988) and while in ‘Explanation, Response-Dependence and Judgement-Dependence’ (1991) Johnston considers response-dependent candidates other than secondary quality concepts, the secondary quality concepts selected as exemplars are RED and CANARY YELLOW.
appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions. Given that smelling involves nerve endings in the upper part of the nose and that smells reach those sensors either via the nostrils or via the throat, some first come to mind constraints on the conditions of respondents and response will include that they are not suffering from any temporary change that might affect their sensitivity to smells - colds, sinus infections, and so on; nor from any permanent changes such as damage to the olfactory nerves or neurological damage affecting the ability to process olfactory sensations. First come to mind constraints on the environment in which relevant responses can be produced would rule out extremes of temperature, the presence of other smells that may be sufficiently strong to affect respondents’ sensitivity to acridness and conditions that affect the direction of smells – fans, extractors, wind direction and strength. The ruling in/ruling out practice seems to be similar to that employed in the case of concepts of tastes. That is, we attempt to discount respondents whose smelling apparatus is less than suitable and conditions that would make respondents or the environment in which responses are produced less than suitable. In the case of basic equations for concepts of how things smell, then, the ‘appropriate’ placeholder is best filled-out by ‘suitable’.

SMOOTH

Although the textural properties of objects’ surfaces are sensed through the single sensory modality of touch, the sensory cells sensitive to texture are located in more than one part of the body. We may experience something’s smoothness with our
hands if it is the pelt of an animal, say; with our feet if it is a pebble; with our tongues if it is a chocolate mousse; with our lips if it is someone’s skin. Thus the range of respondents and conditions that are ruled in/ruled out by the constraints signified in the basic equation by ‘appropriate’ will be more varied and wider than those posited for the secondary quality concepts already considered here. Something will be smooth iff it feels smooth to appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions. The relevant response – the thing’s feeling smooth – might occur at the fingertips, on the feet, the mouth, lips, cheeks. So a respondent needs to be free of impediments to their sensitivity to texture at (at least) some of those locations. Someone without hands could still count as an appropriate respondent in respect of SMOOTH if the sensitivity of their feet, lips and cheeks, say, were in tact. The multiplicity of opportunities that present for textures to be experienced all over the body mean that there will also be constraints on which parts of the body are appropriate for the occurrence of the relevant response. Elbows and knees, for example are less sensitive to smoothness than fingertips and tongues and would be ruled out as appropriate sites of response. Constraints on conditions would include changes to the environment in which the response occurs that seem likely to impede sensitivity to texture, such as that the site of the response should not be clothed, it should not be extremely hot or extremely cold, it should be dry, the surface of the object in question should be free of other substances that might cause a rogue response. It should not be sandy, for instance, or dusty, or wet. Following the pattern of the secondary quality concepts already considered, we see that, even bearing in mind the variety of different opportunities for
the occurrence of the response relevant to determining the extension of SMOOTH, the types of respondents and conditions that are ruled out suggest that the determinant of appropriateness here is again that of suitability.\footnote{There are uses of ‘smooth’ which do not express the kind of response-dependent concept we are discussing here – as for instance, in ‘a smooth road’, which may be smooth comparative to other, rougher, roads, but will still feel rough and bumpy to the touch compared to a smooth leather sofa, say. I here set aside any attempt to discuss their relations with uses of the kind which here interest us.}

SHRILL

SHRILL is the concept of a feature of the sounds issued by things as a result of their interactions with each other. Thus constraints used to rule out/rule in respondents and conditions of response will focus on the parts of the body where sound receptors are located and factors affecting the environment in which sounds are produced and experienced. As far as respondents are concerned, a respondent should not have their ears blocked or muffled by foreign bodies – their fingers, or those of others, ear plugs, ear protectors and warmers, a hooded garment. They should not be temporarily deafened by some other sound – an explosion, the blast of a klaxon, someone shouting in their ear. They should not have an ear infection or other temporary condition that affects their sensitivity to sound. As for conditions on the environment of response, distance will be a factor in detecting the shrillness of sounds, for higher frequencies of sound cannot travel as far as lower ones. The presence of other sounds that might muffle, drown out or otherwise affect either respondents’ sensitivity to sound and/or frequencies to be detected will also be ruled out. In parallel with the secondary quality cases already considered, these criteria have the effect of ruling in respondents and conditions that are appropriate in the sense of being suitable for producing the response relevant to determining the extension of SHRILL.
§2.3.1.1 Local Differences

As the examples discussed by Wright and Lewis suggest, in the case of colour concepts, where environment has an effect on responses, differences in geographical location will affect which conditions count as normal. Suppose that once various ‘rogue’ conditions have been ruled out, conditions of illumination at noon on typical cloudy summer days are what constitute appropriate conditions for extension-determining responses for colour concepts. \(^{32}\) Conditions fitting this description will differ between locations: A cloudy summer day in London may (in respect of the available natural light) be the same as a sunny winter day in Auckland. Local conditions are considered normal in the sense of being usual, but are trumped by suitable conditions, the criteria for which are almost invariant. Suppose Spitzbergians treat conditions that are usual in Spitzbergen in the winter as usual, and hence appropriate. They rule out unusual conditions – fog, say – as inappropriate. This seems to provide a reliable guide, things that look red in winter still look red in summer when conditions are such that they approach suitability. Now suppose that ripe tomatoes always look brown to Spitzbergians during winter, but red during summer. Aware that the lighting conditions available during summer are better suited to colour perception, they discount usual winter conditions from appropriateness (at least for RED). In this discounting process, the standard appealed to (albeit tacitly) is a standard of suitability that overrides locally set standards of usualness. Analogues of the colour case can be set up for other secondary quality concepts: usual conditions in the Arctic may turn out to be less than suitable for producing the response relevant to

\(^{32}\) As Wright has suggested, Op cit.
determining the extensions of concepts of tastes and of smells and they may also render respondents too cold to be properly sensitive to textures. There may also be local variations between what counts as suitability in respondents. For instance, the perception of sweetness by the average American’s palate is 30% - 40% lower than that of the average New Zealander’s palate.\textsuperscript{33} Something that tastes sweet to a respondent who counts as suitable in the New Zealand context, then, may not taste sweet (enough) to a respondent who would count as suitable in the US context. For example, tomato ketchup produced in New Zealand may require extra sugar if it is to taste like the \textit{real thing} to suitable US respondents.\textsuperscript{34}

As we are able to use such concepts effectively when moving between locations, suitability criteria seem to determine the same extension across the wider population. The practice of using secondary quality concepts includes not only a grasp of which respondents and conditions are unusual in one’s own location, but also, the expectation that all participants share a common understanding of suitability which they bring to bear when determining which respondents and conditions of response will produce the relevant response for a concept. This need not mean that the conditions that turn out to be suitable in one location are exactly identical with those that are actually suitable in every other location. Rather, the set of suitable conditions has fuzzy boundaries and this means that as one moves from place to place, it is possible for different sets of conditions to qualify as suitable, or as more or less suitable.

\textsuperscript{33} Research reported by Wine writer, Oz Clark, interviewed on \textit{(NZ) National Radio’s Nine to Noon}, November 2004.
\textsuperscript{34} This difference is also a reflection of the way in which sweetness (and other tastes) occurs in degrees.
§2.3.2 Concepts of the Category exemplified by POISONOUS

As the response relevant to determining the extension of concepts of the type exemplified by POISONOUS is a purely physical one, the constraints used to rule respondents and conditions of response in or out can be more straightforwardly sketched. The understanding of appropriateness in play in respect of respondents will result in the ruling out of conditions that are likely to affect the usual poisoning process. Respondents who have built up immunity to the toxic effects of a substance, then, will not count as appropriate. Additionally, respondents who are not properly physically equipped would be ruled out as inappropriate. As far as conditions are concerned, any perturbations that would be likely to affect the usual reaction of appropriate respondents to the toxic elements of the substance would be ruled out. These might include extremes of temperature, the presence of other substances that might mitigate the toxins’ effects, damage or other changes to the substance itself.

In these practices ‘appropriate’ has the sense of ‘generic’. When we claim that something is poisonous (for a species) we make a ceteris paribus claim. We say that that thing will poison appropriate respondents under appropriate conditions. The constraints heralded by the ‘appropriate’ placeholder aim to keep things constant so that the typical response is likely to occur. This requires that respondents and conditions be generic, which is the way that they were taken to be when a law-like connection between the things covered by the concept’s extension and their effects on normal respondents was established. In this case, however, their being generic is no
different from their being suitable. All other things being equal, we are suited to being poisoned under suitable conditions if we are generic respondents rather than in some unusual condition that protects us from the effects that poisonous things would normally cause in generic respondents.

As noted earlier, unless otherwise disambiguated, POISONOUS is relative to a species or a sub-group thereof and is treated as defaulting to humans. Where it is disambiguated and specific to non-humans, constraints on respondents and conditions of response will differ from those on humans. Given the entirely physical nature of the poisoning process and of the relevant response, though, it is likely that they will follow a framework similar to that of those imposed in the case of POISONOUS-FOR-HUMANS; that is, they will include constraints on the physical state of respondents and on the environment in which the substance and the respondent come into contact. Suitability, then, should also be understood as disambiguated relative to species or aggregations thereof. Where not explicitly disambiguated, it defaults to suitable-in-respect-of-humans.

§2.3.3 Concepts of the category exemplified by ATTRACTIVE

We have seen that, in contrast to their deeply agent-relative counterparts, the extensions of concepts of the type exemplified by ATTRACTIVE are determined by a response that is relative to a target population that is a culturally-determined sub-group of the total human population. As a result, the practices involving these
concepts generate a degree of inter-subjective resilience within their culturally
determined target populations concerning which response counts as appropriate and
hence as relevant to determining the concepts’ extensions. It may turn out that for
some communities there are only one or two arbiters of whether or not something falls
within a concept’s extension, but the appropriateness of those respondents and the
relevance of their responses under appropriate conditions to determining the concept’s
extension will be inter-subjectively agreed upon (albeit tacitly.) Consider a concept
such as PHAT. Something is PHAT iff it is deemed so by appropriate respondents
under appropriate conditions. Now an analysis of practices by which appropriateness
is determined may demonstrate that, contrary to what users of PHAT may like to think,
the respondents whose responses are in fact relevant to determining what falls under
the extension of PHAT are a couple of record company executives and the marketing
director of a multi-national corporation that produces sportswear. In such a case, in
which only a very limited pool of respondents’ responses counts, there is still inter-
subjective convergence upon which responses of which respondents under which
conditions are relevant to extension determination. (Recall here that we are speaking
of convergence in practice, rather than in opinions.)

In common with secondary quality concepts and with response-dependent actor
concepts for which the relevant response is entirely physical, such as POISONOUS,

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35 While the community inter-subjectively converges on which respondents and conditions count as appropriate,
they need not themselves make the same response to the items those respondents deem attractive. That is, they
may not find them attractive at all. This consideration also serves to demonstrate the difference between
ATTRACTIVE and ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T].

36 PHAT is used by current teenagers in some English-speaking cultures in a similar way to that in which COOL has
been used by recent cohorts of teenagers (and still is). So it is ascribed to things that are nice and are or ought to be
desired. Given the vagaries of fashion and global marketing, it is unlikely that it is exactly co-extensive with COOL.
For a similar case, see Pettit’s discussion of u (1993, pp 205-9).
inter-subjective resilience is maintained by the application of constraints on respondents and conditions of response. Although conditions of response that are ruled out as inappropriate overlap with those that are ruled out for ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X (below), in this case they are ruled out with the aim of preserving inter-subjectivity in addition to intra-subjectivity. Thus respondents who are under the influence of alcohol or of certain other drugs that affect cognition or under external influences such as blackmail, bribery, etc. are not likely to be considered well placed for the detection of attractiveness. Given that attractiveness is generally assessed in the first instance via perception, some more general constraints on the conditions of perception are also in place: inadequate light, odd angles and distance from the object under consideration (too close and too far away) will affect vision; background noise, poor amplification and reproduction (where relevant) and inadequate volume will affect hearing, and so on.

Earlier we noted that in certain contexts concepts in the category exemplified by ATTRACTIVE have a normative element. When ATTRACTIVE is used in certain contexts, the user implies that others (who are sufficiently similar to them in relevant respects) ought also to recognise the attractiveness of the object in question. So constraints are also in place to rule out the responses of those respondents whose responses are consistently strange relative to those of the majority of the target population. These would rule out someone whose attractiveness detectors are just not very well honed, they are too indiscriminate or too discriminate, they just don’t get attractiveness; they
have perhaps remained unaffected by any of the myriad influences on taste and desire.

As ATTRACTIVE is relative to culturally determined sub-groups, different conditions and respondents may be ruled out or ruled in by different groups. A respondent whose responses are deemed inappropriate because they are consistently inconsistent with those of the majority of the sub-group to which they (supposedly) belong (or with whomever that sub-group counts as the appropriate respondent(s)) may find aesthetic solace and acceptance in another sub-group in which their responses count as those of an appropriate respondent. Constraints on conditions that impinge upon straightforwardly perceptual abilities are likely to be shared across a larger population; although constraints on what constitutes suitable lighting for judging something’s attractiveness, say, would rule-in a range of conditions thereby allowing for temporal and geographical variations.

‘Appropriate’ has a similar meaning in the basic equations for concepts of the category exemplified by ATTRACTIVE to that which is employed in those for secondary quality concepts. That is, for some target populations usualness might serve as a reliable guide to appropriateness until things go awry, then suitability trumps it. ‘Appropriate’, then, should be understood as ‘suitable’ in these cases. The gap between suitability and usualness is at its widest in those possible cases in which appropriate respondents in respect of ATTRACTIVE are a very small set of the population (such as in the PHAT case above). Many members of the target population
may count as usual, but if only a very small number, perhaps only a single respondent – the Editor of *Vogue* magazine, say – are deemed suitable, then a respondent’s not being unusual cannot reliably be taken as an indication that they are suitable. Indeed, suitability would be an unusual trait. As *attractive* is relative to culturally determined sub-populations, ‘suitable’ is accordingly relative. The criteria by which suitability is determined may well, but need not, differ from group to group.

§2.3.4 Deeply agent-relative concepts exemplified by *attractive-for X*-[-AT-T]

In the case of deeply agent-relative response-dependent concepts an expectation of inter-subjectivity would be misplaced. The appropriate respondent just is whichever respondent fills the *x* placeholder. Conditions, however, are constrained by considerations of intra-subjectivity. Although only *x*’s responses (and nobody else’s) are relevant to the concept’s extension, *x* can still be mistaken about whether something or someone is really attractive-for-him/her. So respondents and conditions must meet criteria of appropriateness in the sense that they shouldn’t depart too radically from how they usually are. Suitable conditions are those under which certain mechanisms of response are invoked; so, for instance, responses made when *x* is drunk, drugged or under external pressures such as threat of blackmail or bribery or the promise of reward are ruled out. As in the case of concepts such as *attractive*, conditions that would hinder veridical perception of the features in question are also discounted as unsuitable. Suitability has a normative element, then: It allows for proper pathways that determine facts about what’s attractive-for-*x*, and rules out
aberrant pathways. Aberrant pathways will lead to responses (or to an absence thereof) that disrupt intra-subjectivity, proper pathways are ones leading to responses that preserve intra-subjectivity.

In the case of deeply-agent relative concepts for which the relevant response is indexed to a particular time, such as ATTRACTIVE-TO-X-AT-T, there are no constraints on the conditions on respondents or environment under which a response must take place if it is to count as extension determining. If something seems attractive to x at t, if he finds it attractive at t, then it is ATTRACTIVE-TO-HIM-AT-T. If I am desperate for instant gratification and find the dress attractive, and buy it, say, then it is and was ATTRACTIVE-TO-ME-AT-T, even though it is UNATTRACTIVE-TO-ME-AT-T when I receive my credit card statement (and try to get my money back).

§2.3.5 Moral Concepts: GOOD

The first-come-to-mind constraints on appropriateness of respondents and conditions in respect of the response(s) relevant to determining the extensions of moral concepts mainly concern criteria of appropriateness for respondents. These include the requirements that respondents be rational and have reached a certain stage of maturity – young children are not reliable moral respondents. In addition, we should rule out of contention respondents who are not capable of recognising when situations are such that they require a moral response, that is, respondents who are morally blind, who just don’t ‘get’ morality. Further, just as in the case of SWEET, we rule out respondents
who consistently mis-respond to the tastes of things, we should rule out respondents who are consistently mistaken in their moral responses. To count as an appropriate respondent, it is not necessary that a respondent be motivated to act or to refrain from acting in every situation recognised as moral, only that, in a majority of cases, they recognise the moral features of the situation.\textsuperscript{37} Although most of the criteria relevant here pertain to respondents, some first come to mind criteria that conditions should meet would include the absence of pressures that might lead to rogue responses. Respondents may not be capable of the relevant response if under the influence of a totalitarian state; if they are being tortured; if they are living in a state of war; if they are subject to extreme poverty and hunger; if they are under occupation; in a state of siege, and so on. If one takes an absolutist view of concepts such as GOOD, there will be just one set of criteria used to rule respondents and conditions in and out of contention. If on the other hand, one takes a relativist stance, one must keep open the possibility of different sets of criteria for different culturally-determined target populations.

In the moral case, to count as appropriate, a respondent must meet certain standards of response and capability that are fleshed-out by the criteria identified above. The placeholder, then, carries a certain normative weight and is best cashed out in terms of suitability. To count as suitable in respect of the response relevant to determining the

\textsuperscript{37} Although, it is plausible to suppose that the truly moral person does act/refrain from acting whenever presented with a situation they recognise as so requiring, the point here is to delineate criteria by which respondents are deemed capable of issuing the response relevant to the extension of concepts such as GOOD. Someone might be perfectly capable of recognising that a situation is immoral, without feeling motivated to act in any way. Provided they meet other relevant criteria, such a person is capable of the relevant response, even though on some views, they may not count as (perfectly) moral. One might argue, as for example McDowell does (1978, 1981), that if one fails to be motivated, one hasn’t properly recognised the moral features of the situation. These issues link with the debate in meta-ethics, about the so-called ‘internalism constraint’ a debate that we cannot pursue here
extension of concepts such as GOOD, a respondent need not be an especially moral person. Unlike some of the other practices considered above, moral practice does not seem to be such that usualness is treated as evidence of suitability.

§2.3.6 FLEXIBLE

The sixth category of response-dependent concepts identified in the taxonomy – concepts of objects’ propensities to respond in certain ways under appropriate conditions (concepts of features that comfortably lend themselves to a traditional dispositional analysis) potentially provide an interesting contrast to the five categories considered thus far as they are patient, rather than actor concepts. That is, they are concepts that attribute a feature to an object on the grounds that it responds thus and so to agents as opposed to concepts that attribute a feature to an object on the grounds that appropriate respondents respond to it thus and so. Basic equations for patient concepts, then, don’t require a placeholder for respondents. Something is flexible just in case it responds in a certain way under appropriate conditions. Any process of ruling in/out, then, will place constraints on conditions and constraints on the patient will be included in those placed on conditions of response.

It is reasonable to suppose that conditions ruled out are those that are likely to affect patients’ ability to respond in the manner typically expected of flexible things - such things would be flexible if not for the factors that prevent them from changing their shape in the manner expected of flexible objects. The set of conditions will include
factors affecting the environment of the response and factors concerning the object itself; for the object itself needs to count as an appropriate exemplar of its class. A generic eraser, for instance, can be expected to bend in response to certain pressures under appropriate conditions, so it falls under the extension of FLEXIBLE. But an eraser that has changed in some way such that it does not meet the norm may not respond in the manner typical of flexible objects and so would not be included in the extension of FLEXIBLE.

The types of conditions ruled out are by now familiar: the object should not be affected by extremes of temperature. It should not have been altered in any way that temporarily prevents it from flexing. How is ‘appropriate’ best cashed-out here? Our ruling-out practices in cases such as this are similar to those we have seen in play in the case of concepts of the type exemplified by POISONOUS. The claim that some thing is flexible is a *ceteris paribus* claim. So constraints heralded by the ‘appropriate’ placeholder aim to keep things constant so that the typical response is likely to occur.

This requires respondents and conditions to be generic, which is the way that they were taken to be when a law-like connection between the things covered by FLEXIBLE and the effects of their interactions with other objects and forces was established. Their being generic, moreover, is no different from their being suitable. All other things being equal, things are suited to flexing under suitable conditions if they are generic exemplars of their type (a generic eraser, say) rather than in some unusual condition that prevents them from responding in the manner typically expected of
things that count as FLEXIBLE.

§2.3.7 Summary

As we saw, the ‘appropriate’ placeholder has traditionally been cashed-out by ‘normal’ and we began Section 2 by considering two attempts to analyse normality in the context of extension-determining responses for secondary quality concepts. One of these (Wright’s) interprets normality in terms of suitability, the other (Lewis’s) in terms of usualness. However, we find that in conceptual practices associated with the types of response-dependent concept identified in our taxonomy suitability sets the criteria by which respondents and conditions of response are ruled-in as appropriate. In some cases usualness serves as a reliable indicator of suitability, but when things go awry, we look to suitability to determine appropriateness of respondents and conditions. In the case of actor concepts exemplified by POISONOUS and patient concepts exemplified by FLEXIBLE, respondents and conditions taken to be appropriate are those that count as generic. Being generic in these contexts, however, amounts to the same as being suitable. In the course of this analysis, we see that ‘normal’ is redundant as a way of filling out the ‘appropriate’ placeholder; for all the categories of practices we have considered the task of constraining respondents and conditions to those which are extension-determining is in practice performed by criteria of suitability in the sense of ‘suitability’ specified above.
§2.3.8 Maximal Suitability

In the cases of some of the types of actor concept considered – secondary qualities, concepts such as ATTRACTIVE and, assuming we accept that morality can be learned, moral concepts – respondents who meet the criteria of suitability can train their sense of awareness in order to make better responses. In the case of SWEET and YELLOW, such responses will be better in the sense that they are more intense or distinguish more finely between different tastes or different shades, arguably, detecting additional tastes and shades. The responses of the professional wine taster, the visual artist, the editor of Vogue magazine and the priest may be taken to be more authoritative in the relevant context than those of the ordinary, suitable, but untrained respondent. This suggests that suitability admits of degrees: with training, or perhaps merely with luck, some respondents can be more suitable than others and their responses relied upon in difficult cases where less suitable respondents are unable to make finer distinctions. In contexts where precision is important: choosing wine for an important function, ensuring that one’s shirt doesn’t clash with one’s tie on the day of an important interview, choosing the face most likely to sell a million copies or, less ephemerally, when solving moral dilemmas, our practice is such that we appeal to the responses of more suitable respondents.

The recognition that suitability is a matter of degree offers us a way to cash out another candidate for the ‘appropriate’ placeholder role – ‘ideal’. Once we recognise that suitability is a matter of degree, we can cash out ideality as maximal suitability.
Given that response-dependent concepts’ extensions are successfully determined via the responses of suitable respondents under suitable conditions, it does not seem necessary to employ criteria of maximal suitability when ruling in/out respondents and conditions in the course of our usual practice. There are, as we have seen, occasions when we appeal to the responses of those who are more than merely suitable and we use a notion of maximal suitability against which to measure their superior suitability. So although the ideal respondent may never be an actual respondent, our conception thereof functions as a standard according to which criteria of suitability can be set.

§2.3.9 Is the Separation of Suitability of Respondents from Suitability of Conditions Really Necessary?

For the purposes of these analyses we have considered respondents and conditions separately, looking at which criteria determine who counts as a suitable respondent and which determine what count as suitable conditions of response. The analyses demonstrate, however, that such separation is not necessary and a clearer and cleaner picture of the constraints that limit the circumstances of responses relevant to the determination of response-dependent concepts can be achieved if just conditions of response are qualified by means of the ‘suitable’ placeholder. In the case of actor concepts, relevant responses are the result of interactions between manifestations of actors’ dispositions to act and manifestations of respondents’ dispositions to respond. In the case of patient concepts, the patient’s response, which is the relevant response
in such cases, is the result of interaction between manifestations of its disposition to respond to manifestations of actors’ dispositions to act. These interactions are only guaranteed to occur under certain conditions. Which conditions these are is determined by criteria of suitability and include conditions on respondents and on the environment of response. In some instances, it is indeterminate whether a particular condition is a condition on respondents or a condition on the environment of the response. And in those cases where it is not indeterminate, nothing about the analysis of the concept seems to depend upon whether it is one or the other. When an actor is distant from a respondent, separation may seem more appropriate: The banana’s yellowness, for example, is experienced as external to the respondent; the disgustingness of the congealed remnants of yesterday’s supper are experienced as external to the respondent. But when physical separation of actor and respondent is absent, when the poisonous substance is responded to within the respondent’s body; when the response to the sweetness or the smoothness of the chocolate mousse takes place in the respondent’s mouth, it is clear that constraints on respondents just are constraints on the environment of response and vice versa. Any separation of these constraints is artificial and does little important work within the basic equations for a concept. I propose, then, to abandon the separation, using the placeholder ‘suitable’ to qualify the placeholder for conditions (C) where that is understood to include condition(s) on the respondent and conditions of the environment of response. A schema for the basic equation, then, would be:
For any object X: X is F iff X is such as to elicit R in Ss under suitable C

§3 The A Prioricity of the Basic Equation

The basic equation for a concept is intended as a theorists’ tool that demonstrates the essential role that responses and conditions of response play in determining the extensions of certain of our concepts. It makes an a priori claim of dependence between a concept’s extension and the response that things that fall under that extension tend to elicit in respondents under suitable conditions. The basic equation for ATTRACTIVE, for instance, says a priori that if and only if respondents find something attractive under suitable conditions is that thing part of the extension of ATTRACTIVE. It is a representation of the practices that constitute the use of ATTRACTIVE. It is not a representation of beliefs that ordinary users of the concept might actually form about the concept, nor is it a representation of a rule that guides users in its correct application. Rather, it should be thought of as a mapping that specifies the connection between responses, conditions and a concept’s extension without alluding to mental mechanisms that mediate that connection. As such, the basic equation for a concept forms part of the theory of the practice in which that concept is involved. If an agent is within that practice and understands when to and when not to use the concept, then, although they don’t ordinarily do so, they would be able to derive the basic equation a priori, from their armchair, so to speak.
That said, however, theorists are required to engage in a certain amount of a posteriori theorising if basic equations are to have substantial, non-trivial content. As we have seen, the bulk of this theorising involves cashing out the ‘appropriate’ placeholder to generate the criteria that, if the theory is going to be correct, should be used to rule conditions of response in and out. In the cases included in our taxonomy, these criteria are usually represented as criteria of normality, which further analysis has shown, should be understood as suitability.

The a prioricity of the basic equation is a special relative kind of a prioricity as it relies upon certain background assumptions being in play. It is possible in principle to know that the basic equation is true using just what is needed to understand it. However, some empirical knowledge is required to understand a basic equation and thus we cannot know that a basic equation is true in the absence of some background a posteriori knowledge. This will include (i) the knowledge that certain conditions are considered unsuitable for enabling the extension-determining response and therefore conditions of response (including conditions on respondents) are constrained to those that meet criteria of suitability. And (ii) knowledge that those conditions might vary slightly among sub-groups of a target population for a concept that is non-indexical, such as RED; that they might vary more radically among target populations to which an indexical concept is indexed, such as ATTRACTIVE; and yet more radically between the individual respondents to whom deeply agent-relative concepts such as ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X are indexed.
§4 The Basic Equation: Rigid or Non-Rigid?

In the literature it has become usual to argue that we should rigidify on certain of the terms in the basic equation. When authors refer to a ‘rigid reading’ (Pettit 1991, p. 612) or ‘rigidification’ (Wright 1992, p. 113) of the basic equation, then, they mean an equation certain of the terms of which are rigidified upon. When posing the rigidification question, we are asking whether responses under conditions deemed suitable in the actual world determine a concept's extension across all possible worlds. The effect, then, of rigidifying the basic equation to the actual world and to conditions that to date have counted as suitable for that world is to reflect the way in which only the responses of actual world respondents under those conditions determine the extension of the relevant concept. So the class of responses that potentially count as tokens of the relevant response is narrowed to include only those of actual respondents under conditions that are actually suitable. If rigidified, the basic equation is amended thus:

\[
\text{BE } F
\]

For any object X: X is F iff X is such as to elicit R in Ss under actually suitable C.\(^{38}\)

In the secondary qualities case rigidification seems appropriate because it enables basic equations to handle hypothetical cases, and to deal with variations in what count as suitable conditions between different (sub)populations, for instance, cases in which we imagine our qualia to be radically different so that we respond to red things as if

\(^{38}\) Of course the phrase ‘is such as to’ adds a further layer of modality to the biconditional. As the metaphysics of dispositions is controversial and it would not be possible to do justice to it here, I will not venture further into the issue of how modal niceties ought to be handled in a fully rigidified system.
they were green, which would mean that suitable subjects in particular would have these aberrant counterfactual qualia. In addition, rigidifying the basic equation to the actual world enables the preservation of traditional and (arguably) non-negotiable naturalistic assumptions about secondary qualities\(^39\) – that they supervene upon objects’ physical features such that any real change in secondary qualities would have to be accompanied by a change at the level supervened upon. Suppose, for instance, worldwide environmental pollution causes changes to the atmosphere so that light is refracted differently and objects’ apparent colours are different: ripe bananas appear to be red, ripe strawberries yellow, ripe blueberries green, gooseberries blue. Our response to such cases is that we are not inclined to say that objects’ colours are different in the absence of any difference in their underlying features. Rigidifying on terms in the basic equation is an attempt to respect this element of our practice when constructing a representation of the practices of use for the concept in question. The responses actual respondents would have made under actually suitable conditions had those conditions prevailed, would not be different, and hence, objects’ colours would not be different.\(^40\)

However, while this approach preserves naturalistically motivated objectivist intuitions about secondary qualities, it may turn out to be inappropriate for some of the types of response-dependent concepts identified earlier. Some of those concepts

\(^39\) David Lewis, for example, argues that they are non-negotiable (1999 p. 332).
\(^40\) If the change were irreversible so that over time what were considered to be suitable conditions for colour experience altered to meet what became the new actuality, colour concepts may well evolve in order better to track this new reality. If what had previously been green and brown were now impossible to distinguish, then the community might well come to categorise objects accordingly - using the same concept for all such instances where they had previously differentiated between things that looked green under suitable conditions and things that looked brown under suitable conditions. But this does not mean that objects’ colours are different, only that practices of classifying them are, but the practice has evolved to track differences in the environment that affect respondents’ colour perception, so the difference in practice still tracks a difference in the relevant domain of reality.
might be more accurately represented by a non-rigid basic equation. For, as we have seen, some response-dependent concepts are significantly relative in ways that are not captured by a rigidified basic equation. In the following subsections, by considering their resilience to counterfactual cases, I will examine the case for rigidifying the basic equation for exemplars of each of the six types of response-dependent concepts we have identified.

§4.1 SWEET

Let us suppose that the world were different from how it actually is such that respondents whose responses usually determine the extension of SWEET and those of other concepts of the tastes of things were neurophysiologically different such that they had a different capacity for taste sensitivity. What tastes sweet to actual respondents under actually suitable conditions tastes bitter to them, what would taste bitter to actual respondents under actually suitable conditions tastes sweet to them. So ripe bananas taste bitter to them while unripe ones taste sweet. How do our intuitions lie in this case? Are ripe bananas still sweet in this counterfactual world? Are unripe ones still bitter? Our inclination is still to say that they are really sweet and really bitter because that is how they would taste if respondents and suitable conditions were as they actually are. Ripe bananas aren’t really bitter, they just taste different to these weird (unsuitable in our terms) respondents. Parallel to the case of response-dependent colour concepts, intuitive analysis, then, supports the case for a rigidified basic equation as an accurate representation of conceptual practices involving SWEET,
BITTER and the remainder of the family of concepts of the tastes of things. Although objects may taste different to respondents when experienced under conditions that differ from those that are actually suitable, only responses made under actually suitable conditions are extension determining.41

§4.2 POISONOUS

Suppose that the world were different from the actual world such that conditions on respondents that count as suitable mean that those respondents whose responses are treated as extension-determining have digestive systems different from those of respondents under actually suitable conditions. Thanks to this difference, the counterfactually suitable respondents are immune to the effects of hemlock – they suffer no ill effects when ingesting it. Are we inclined to maintain that hemlock is poisonous? In the case of counterfactual respondents it is not obvious that we are. Hemlock does not cause the reaction(s) associated with poisonous substances, it seems counterintuitive to maintain that it is poisonous for these respondents and, hence, as they count as suitable in this counterfactual world, that it is poisonous in that world. In this case, then, rigidification is less appropriate than in the secondary quality case. It would be a misrepresentation of our practices if the basic equation for POISONOUS tied its extension rigidly to actual responses made under conditions deemed suitable in the actual world. In the counterfactual case(s) the responses of different sets of relevant (suitable for that population) respondents are extension-determining. This arises because of the indexicality of concepts such as POISONOUS.

41 If one adopts a certain type of dispositional account of the secondary quality features themselves, one might not want to say that the basic equations for our concepts thereof should be rigidified. For one might think that if we changed our dispositions to respond under suitable conditions, the tastes, colours, smells, sounds and textures that things have or make really would change.
We have already noted that POISONOUS is indexed to species or aggregations thereof and defaults to humans when the group to which it is indexed is unspecified. The concept POISONOUS-FOR-HUMANS is really the concept POISONOUS-FOR-ACTUAL-HUMANS, then. For the counterfactual humans discussed above, hemlock is not POISONOUS-FOR-THEM, but oranges, let’s say, are POISONOUS-FOR-THEM even though they are not POISONOUS-FOR-(ACTUAL)US.

§4.3 ATTRACTIVE

We have seen that concepts of the type exemplified by ATTRACTIVE are relative to a target population that tends to be a sub-group of the total population. These target populations are socially or culturally determined. Thus there are already other possible extensions of ATTRACTIVE because there actually exist target populations that are different from our own. It is unnecessary to imagine counterfactual populations because the actual world provides us with myriad cases of populations the respondents for which are disposed to be attracted to things different from those that attract respondents under conditions that count as suitable in our own (actual) case.

Consider, for instance, a population in which respondents are attracted under suitable conditions to women whose feet have remained childlike as the result of binding. Reflecting the high degree of relativity of concepts such as ATTRACTIVE, we have no problem acknowledging that women with bound feet are ATTRACTIVE-TO-THEM, but it seems counterintuitive to claim that they are or would be attractive for us, because
respondents under conditions that qualify as suitable in respect of our target population do not find women with bound feet attractive. If we were to rigidify the basic equation for ATTRACTIVE, so that extension-determining responses were limited to those made by actual respondents from our population under actually suitable conditions, then women with bound feet would not be included in the extension of ATTRACTIVE. This would not fully represent practices in which the concept is involved, for women with bound feet are as a matter of fact included within the somewhat fluid boundaries of the extension of ATTRACTIVE. The device of rigidification is inappropriate in this case, because it obscures the relativity inherent in concepts such as ATTRACTIVE.

§4.4 ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T]

In the case of deeply agent-relative concepts such as ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T], to be accurate, the basic equation needs to reflect not interpersonal differences between sub-populations or species, as in the case of POISONOUS and ATTRACTIVE, but intrapersonal differences. That is, it needs to allow for x’s changing fancies, that x may be disposed at t to find y attractive, but not at t₀. As in the cases previously considered, examination of our intuitions towards a counterfactual case will help to make the case for or against rigidification of the basic equation for ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T]. The upshot of rigidification in this case is the limitation of the extension of ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T] to all and only those things that x finds attractive under actually suitable conditions.
Suppose that in the actual world under suitable conditions x finds tall, dark, handsome men attractive. Now suppose that the world were different from the actual world such that x finds tall, dark, handsome men unattractive (he is not attracted to them under conditions that would count as suitable in the actual world), rather he has developed a penchant for short, balding, oddly featured ones. In this world, then, tall, dark, handsome men are not attractive-for-x. If the basic equation for ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X were rigidified to x’s responses under actual suitable conditions, then tall dark handsome men would count as attractive-for-x, even though it is plausible to suppose that his dispositions to be attracted to such men could change on a whim. Similarly, short, balding, oddly featured men would not count as attractive-for-x, even though it is plausible to suppose that x could, on a whim, develop a disposition to be attracted to such men. The inability of the rigidified basic equation to reflect the possibility of changing dispositions to be attracted means that, if they are accurately to reflect practices using the concept in question, basic equations for deeply agent-relative concepts such as ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X should not be rigidified to the actual world.

Where the concept is of the most deeply relative type, where it is indexed to the response of a particular respondent at a particular time, there are no conditions on respondents or environment of response that restrict the extension-determining response. Thus, to rigidify or not to rigidify is not an issue with respect to those concepts.
§4.5 GOOD (used in its moral sense)

As we saw in Chapter I, response-dependent accounts of moral concepts may be informed by two meta-ethical debates – cognitivism versus non-cognitivism and absolutism versus relativism – the upshot being that (at least) four differing response-dependent accounts can be given of concepts such as GOOD. When we approach the question of whether or not to rigidify the relevant basic equations, the nature of the relevant response does not have a bearing, we seek only to work out whether extension-determining responses, whatever they turn out to be, should be restricted to actual world responses, so the rigidification question is underlaid only by the absolutism/relativism question.

§4.5.1 GOOD as an Absolutist Concept

According to this anti-relativist position, the target population for GOOD is all moral agents, regardless of cultural or social differences. So an action, agent or thing counts as good just in case it/they are judged or felt to be so by respondents under suitable conditions. If the basic equation is rigidified, the extension of GOOD will be limited to all and only those actions and agents that invoke the relevant response in actual respondents under actually suitable conditions. Is such an account accurate or does intuitive analysis of counterfactual cases suggest that we are prepared to allow that things that are actually good might not have been and vice versa?

We’ll take justice as an example of something that counts as good in the actual world
and torture as an example of an action that fails to count as good, rather it counts as (morally) bad. Now suppose the world had been different such that respondents tend to consider justice to be bad, and torture to be good, one effect of which being that the former is disapproved of and discouraged while the latter is approved of and promoted. Is our inclination to accept the responses of the counterfactual respondents to be extension-determining, thereby including torture in the extension of GOOD and justice in the extension of BAD? That this seems counterintuitive stems in part from the difficulty presented by attempting to imagine torture as good and justice as bad. Such ascriptions appear to undermine our very grasp of the concepts involved. More significantly, though, such ascriptions would ignore the fact that in the counterfactual scenario the underlying features of the actions and their effects that constitute torture and the actions and discourses that constitute justice are not different. What are different are the tendencies of respondents under suitable conditions to respond to apparent instances of torture and justice. As we have seen in other cases, if we want the basic equation to reflect differences in a concept’s extension relative to differences in the dispositions to respond of different groups of suitable respondents, then the basic equation should not be rigidified to the actual world. But if we take the position that GOOD is an absolute concept, the extension of which is (with minor exceptions) the same regardless of cultural or social context, we undermine the absolutist claim by allowing the basic equation to allow different extensions. According to the absolutist conception, torture is bad whatever the context and justice good. To reflect this, the basic equation should be rigidified to the responses of actual respondents under
actually suitable conditions.

However, although a counterfactual moral practice according to which torture is good and justice is bad seems counterintuitive, and although particular moral theories might rule out such cases by placing constraints upon which judgements count as rational, such a practice remains a possibility that leaves the question of rigidification indeterminate and trans-world moral relativism (at least) possible.

§4.5.2 GOOD as a Relativist Concept

If we’re considering a relativist conception of GOOD, based on our initial intuitive analysis, it might seem that the most accurate response-dependent representation of GOOD will be achieved by not rigidifying the basic equation, thereby reflecting the possibility of shifts in its extension relative to shifts in its target population. However, that might depend upon what moral concepts turn out to be relative to. If they are relative to cultures, we can still envisage counterfactual versions of those cultures in which practices are such that respondents converge on judgements different from those converged on by respondents who are deemed actually suitable by the culture. 42

Take for instance, Culture C, for whom cruelty to animals is wrong because respondents under conditions deemed suitable in respect of Culture C converge on the judgement that such cruelty is wrong. Now imagine that same Culture C under counterfactual conditions, for whom cruelty to animals is right because respondents under conditions deemed suitable in respect of Counterfactual Culture C converge on

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42 That is not to say that the extension of all moral concepts will, as a matter of fact, shift according to target population. Rather that the basic equation should allow for the possibility of such shifts.
the judgement that such cruelty is right. Given the possibility of counterfactual cases arising for the groups to which moral concepts might be relativised, relativised moral concepts might require rigidified basic equations in order to capture the practice whereby moral concepts’ extensions are determined only by the responses of respondents under conditions that are suitable for the relevant culture. On this picture, while moral concepts might be relative to cultures, they are not subject to trans-world relativism.

Theoretically, a less extreme relativist position is available according to which some moral concepts are global and are relative to a target population comprising all moral agents, while others are relative to local culturally-determined target populations. For example, concepts in the thinner region of the moral spectrum, such as WRONG, might be likely candidates for a global target population such that everybody agrees on what is wrong. It is wrong to do what is unjust, say. Meanwhile concepts in the thicker regions of the spectrum, JUSTICE, say, might be likely candidates for relativisation to a more local population. Thus there is global agreement that it is wrong to do what is unjust, but culturally-determined variation with respect to what actions and situations are unjust. This version of relativism would provide a case for considering rigidification on a case-by-case basis.
§4.6 Flexible

Analyses of concepts of features that lend themselves to traditional dispositional analyses, such as FLEXIBLE, need to preserve the same naturalistic assumption as that about secondary quality concepts, that is that the features in question supervene upon objects’ physical features such that any real difference in features at the upper level, such as the feature of flexibility, would have to be accompanied by a difference at the level supervened upon. By analogy with secondary quality concepts, then, we might expect that the best response-dependence analyses of these concepts will require that basic equations be rigidified to limit relevant responses to those of patients (the objects of which the property is being ascribed) under actually suitable conditions.

Something that is flexible just is something that is suited to flexing under suitable conditions. If we were to rigidify the basic equation, we would be representing FLEXIBLE as the concept of the feature of certain objects flexing under actual suitable conditions. Things that flex under those conditions, but not under others, will not count as FLEXIBLE. Conversely, things that do not flex under actual suitable conditions, but do flex under conditions that do not meet the actual criteria of suitability will not count as FLEXIBLE. Intuitive analysis of a counterfactual scenario will, once again, help to confirm the case for or against rigidification: Suppose the world had been different such that the conditions under which objects that are patients interact with actors were different from those in the actual world. For instance, gases normally present in the environment of that world cause objects’ molecular structures
to behave in ways different from those in which they would in the actual world. One upshot of these different environmental conditions is that objects that would count as flexible in the actual world – they flex under actually suitable conditions – respond like those that would be deemed BRITTLE – they crack and break under certain forces. On the other hand, objects that would count as BRITTLE in the actual world respond in this world in the way that flexible ones do in the actual world, that is, they bend when subjected to certain forces. Consideration of such cases tends to incline us to say that in the absence of any difference in their underlying features, objects that would flex under conditions deemed suitable in the actual world continue to count as FLEXIBLE even though they don’t manifest the relevant response in the counterfactual scenario. We simply accept that things behave strangely in that context. Similarly, the things that do manifest the relevant response within the counterfactual scenario, despite the absence of any difference in their underlying features, are still not intuitively counted as FLEXIBLE on the grounds that in the actual world, under suitable conditions, they would not manifest that response. Intuitive analysis like the above, then, suggests that in the case of patient concepts of the type exemplified by FLEXIBLE, an accurate representation of those concepts as response-dependent is provided by a basic equation within which ‘suitable’ is rigidified upon by the use of the qualifier ‘actually’.

A cautionary note must be sounded here, however. Folk usage of concepts of this kind is complex and there are considerations which might lead us to the opposite
conclusion. My purpose here is simply to illustrate the kinds of considerations that would lead us to decide one way or the other about the rigidification issue, not to give a definitive position on particular examples.

§4.7 Summary

Intuitive analyses of counterfactual scenarios involving each of our types of response-dependent concepts have shown that for most of the types of concept considered there is no determinate answer to the rigidification question. Practices involving secondary quality concepts and concepts of features best suited to dispositional analysis, such as FLEXIBLE, are, on analysis, best represented by a basic equation in which we rigidify upon the term 'suitable'. Both of these practices are subject to the naturalistic assumption that the concepts they involve are concepts of features that supervene upon objects’ underlying physical features. This assumption may well underlie the intuitive reaction to counterfactual narratives and the apparent case for rigidification in these cases.

In the cases of types of concepts that are indexed to species (or aggregations thereof), such as POISONOUS, or to culturally determined groups, such as ATTRACTIVE, or to individuals, such as ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T], our analyses suggested that they are best represented by basic equations in which we do not rigidify upon ‘suitable’. We might, however, take the view that a practice is best represented by providing a basic equation for each of a concept’s indexed permutations – POISONOUS-FOR-US,
POISONOUS-FOR-THEM and so on, and those basic equations could then be rigidified to limit extension-determining responses to those delivered by respondents who are actually suitable.

In the case of moral concepts, the results of our intuitive analyses depend to some extent upon the prior theoretical view one takes of moral practices. On an absolutist view, intuitive analysis suggests that moral concepts are best represented by rigidified basic equations. Despite these intuitions, however, the possibility of trans-world relativism remains live and could be considered a barrier to rigidification. When moral concepts are conceived relativistically the results of intuitive analysis are similar to those for the indexical and relativised actor concepts already considered; that is, while the strongest intuitive reaction to counterfactual cases is against rigidification, there may be a case for rigidifying on ‘suitable’ if one were to go down the route of providing basic equations for each culturally specific permutation of a moral concept such as GOOD.

In this chapter we have considered issues pertaining to the form and content of basic equations for each of the types of response-dependent concepts identified in Chapter I. We have seen that in the biconditionals for all of the types of concept, the ‘appropriate’ placeholder is best filled by ‘suitable’, where that may overlap with ‘usual’, but can be over and above the usual. We have also seen that it is sometimes indeterminate whether suitable conditions are restraints on respondents or on the
environment of response and have thus opted to take suitable conditions to include conditions on both respondents and environment of response. All the biconditionals make an a priori claim, but it is a claim that requires a certain amount of a posteriori background knowledge if it is properly to be understood. Finally, using intuitive analyses of counterfactual narratives, we have considered the to rigidify or not to rigidify issue with respect to each of our categories of response-dependent concepts and found that differences in the features of those concepts make for differing conclusions with respect to rigidification.

In the following four chapters we consider the response-dependence accounts of three major contributors to the literature on response-dependence and, in the context of their work, we will return to the issues considered here.
Chapter III – Johnston’s Response-Dispositionalism

§1 Introduction: Varieties of Response-Dependence Accounts

Early in the development of his response-dependence account, Mark Johnston characterizes response-dependent concepts as those which exhibit a conceptual dependence on or interdependence with concepts of our responses. 1989a, p. 145

Phillip Pettit, meanwhile, starts from the general idea that response-dependent concepts implicate subjects in the manner traditionally associated with secondary quality concepts. 1991, p. 597

Crispin Wright, in a project that aims to deliver a more-than-minimal account of truth, develops an extension determining/extension reflecting distinction between our responses making it true that so-and-so is the case and their merely reflecting that truth. 1988b, p. 45

And this distinction is sufficiently similar to a response-dependent/response-independent distinction to be of interest here.

On the face of it then, the three accounts are similar. But as Johnston himself observes, any appearance of similarity is merely superficial (1998, p. 39). The accounts develop their common starting point in divergent ways, reflecting differences in meta-philosophical commitments, evolution, purpose and scope. The account developed in Chapters I and II focuses on the role of responses in determining concepts’ extensions. In order to set that against the backdrop of key contributions to the development of the concepts and tools of the response-dependence approach, in the next four chapters I offer critical exegeses of these three varieties of response-dependence account. I trace their evolution and development in the context of each of the authors’ broader philosophical commitments, and lay out the central elements of each. I devote two chapters to Johnston’s work. In this one I trace the development of his account, his central theoretical notion – response
dispositionalism – and the way in which he constructs basic equations for response-dispositional concepts and properties. In the next, I trace the development of his growing dissatisfaction with his own approach.

§2 The Development of Johnston’s Account
Johnston’s version of response-dependence and the metaphysical and meta-philosophical frameworks that have shaped it have evolved in a series of papers on values, colour, perception and personal identity that have appeared during the past fifteen or so years.\(^4^3\) The response-dependence idea is first mooted in relation to moral concepts and secondary quality concepts in his 1989 paper ‘Dispositional Theories of Value’. Early in the development of his account, Johnston is optimistic that response-dependence can provide the basis of a ‘qualified realism’ about practices involving secondary quality concepts and moral concepts (among others) (1989a, pp 144-45). His 1991 paper ‘Explanation, Response-Dependence and Judgement-Dependence’ explains in detail the elements of Johnston’s response-dependence account of certain concepts and develops an important argument, the Missing Explanation Argument, while also providing a response to Wright’s response-dependence thesis. ‘How to Speak of the Colors’ (1992a) lays out Johnston’s response-dependence account of colour – his revisionary account of colour concepts and his views on the features that may be the colours. Here he introduces his sceptical Argument from the Problem of Acquaintance (my label), which he later uses to undermine a response-dependence account of secondary quality features. Johnston’s revisionary agenda with respect to our ordinary concepts of secondary qualities and moral values is clearly laid out in his 1993 paper ‘Objectivity Refigured: Pragmatism without Verificationism’ in which he sets out a Revisionary Protagorean manifesto. His Argument from the Problem of

\(^{43}\) Those papers directly concerned with response-dependence accounts of secondary qualities and moral values are:

Acquaintance is developed further in a pair of papers on perception that appeared in 1996, in which its conclusion with respect to secondary qualities becomes a full-blown denial of the possibility of perceptual acquaintance with secondary qualities. Most recently, he has explicitly taken response dependence to be a theory about things’ features, rather than concepts of those features, a theory that advances property identity claims rather than elucidations of concepts’ extension determination. Indeed, as he himself puts it, his surrogate concepts extend beyond his original revisionary aims and now amount to replacements for those concepts; he is, as he says, ‘changing the subject’ (1998, p. 43, n. 27). But as I show later, he has changed the subject in a more radical way, for what began as a thesis about response-dependent concepts has morphed into a thesis about response-dependent features. Having changed the subject in this way, he reworks the Missing Explanation Argument showing that earlier hopes, hopes that he himself once entertained, for a successful account of secondary qualities as response-dependent features remain unfulfilled. With respect to our epistemological acquaintance with the natures of objects’ features, things are, he concludes, ‘as bad as they would be if we were brains in vats’ (1996a, p. 188). To trace the development of Johnston’s account, then, is to trace the path of a slide into sceptical despair. In tracing that path, we will examine the elements of his version of response-dependence and the various doctrines that motivate and direct it.

§2.1 Our Projectivist Error

Adopting a tradition that finds its beginnings in Hume’s account of vice and virtue and of secondary qualities, Johnston alleges our ordinary understanding of many of the features of objects, actions and situations to be the product of systematic projectivist error. According to the traditional projectivist account, we systematically project features of our responses to objects onto them and then take those projected features to be response-independent features of the objects themselves rather than
features of our responses. So, for instance, in the case of the features related to most of the types of concepts that figure in our taxonomy, such as SWEET, ATTRACTIVE, NAUSEATING, POISONOUS and GOOD, features of our perceptions, emotions, desires, physical responses and judgements are taken to be features of the objects to which the concepts are attributed. What are in fact features of actors’ appearances and effects on respondents are taken to be features that occur independently of our experiences. We are, as the Humean idiom has it, ‘spreading’ ourselves upon the world by mistaking its response-dependent features for response-independent ones. In this respect, Johnston follows John Mackie, who, in both his work on Hume’s ethical theory and his own ethical theory, uses the claim of projectivist error as the basis of an Error Theory of our ordinary secondary quality and moral practices. Mackie argues, by means of his argument from the (ontic) queerness of moral values and his argument from the relativity of moral values, that the objectivist account of moral values generated by projectivist error cannot be sustained.

Johnston believes that the error of projection is more widespread than this tradition has thus far supposed. He identifies a general tendency to take experience, emotions and thoughts as ‘more revelatory of the nature of their objects than they could ever in fact be.’ (1991, p. 152). Most evident, he argues, in the colour case, the projective error results in a conception of colours that is not matched in reality by any actual features of objects:

The appearance of red is more similar to the appearance of yellow than either is to the appearance of green. But we also tend to believe just on the strength of the appearances that red is more similar to yellow than it is to green and indeed that the nature of red is just as it seems to be, as if the appearance of red wholly revealed the nature of red. On any

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45 Mackie 1977, Ch. 1. Mackie also suggests that Hume was committed to an error theory of virtue and vice. See his 1980, pp 51-2; pp 71-75.
view that takes external things to be red, this last step is an error. For no property anything like redness-as-it-seems-to-us-to-be is to be found on the surface of external things. Red is not just as it appears to be; we have wrongly taken the appearance to transparently and completely reveal the nature of red, as if the features of the appearance of red were not in any part due to the operation of our own sensibility. 1992b, pp 592-3

For Johnston, a concept/reality match is a relation within which the relata share properties or features, so the claim that colour concepts are not matched by any actual properties of objects is the claim that no colour properties have the same features that our colour concepts represent them as having.46

According to Johnston this erroneous projection of responses back onto the actors that elicit them should be understood as a symptom of an even more widespread epistemological malaise – that of being in thrall to a fallacy of revelation. That is, the error of believing that cognitive contact with objects completely and transparently reveals both their features and the nature of those features.47 In cases of response-dependent features mistakenly understood as response-independent features, then, we are misled by the phenomenology of our responses into thinking that a relational feature (Rab) is non-relational (Fa) and that our experience reveals it as non-relational. We commit the projective error by taking our perceptual experience of the banana’s colour, say, to be an experience of a feature that is ontologically independent of that experience and then, under the influence of the revelation fallacy, take that experience as acquainting us with the nature of the property of yellowness;

46 Johnston’s matching, then, is similar to Locke’s notion of resemblance according to which an idea of a property resembles its cause in an external object if it represents it as the correct type of property. So on Locke’s terms, primary quality ideas resemble their causes because they (correctly) represent primary qualities as non-relational properties of objects, while ideas of secondary qualities do not resemble their causes because they do not represent them as powers to produce effects in respondents. See Locke 1975, pp 132-43.

47 Johnston 1992a. Johnston is not alone in leveling this criticism at our assumptions about perception. The fallacy of revelation is similar to what Hilbert calls the ‘fallacy of total information’, ‘the assumption that if an object’s color is perceived at all, then every aspect of its color must be perceived in complete detail.’ (1987, p. 37). Hilbert, however, takes a different, anthropocentric realist, position on the nature of the colours.
that is, we take yellow to be a response-independent feature of the banana, though one
whose nature is revealed to us in perception.

Having diagnosed the sickness at the heart of folk practices regarding (in particular)
secondary qualities, Johnston does not seek remedy by a retreat into the projectivism
found in Galileo and Descartes’ accounts of secondary qualities whereby secondary
qualities are no longer considered part of the manifest world, but merely as part of the
manifest image of a world in which they play no causal role, nor by recourse to an
Error Theory like Mackie’s. Rather, response-dependence may offer a means of
reconciling a Galilean world-view with apparent knowledge gained via perception by
saving the secondary qualities in the face of the threat of elimination or relegation to
the manifest image. At least, that is what Johnston starts off by thinking. The
extreme complexity and evolving nature of Johnston’s ideas mean that we need to
take care in attributing a set of commitments to him. However, it is fair to say that
his commitments to minimalism and to revisionism constitute a two-pronged rescue
strategy for the secondary qualities.

§2.2 Revisionary Protagoreanism

Johnston labels the project of reconstructing our ordinary concepts of features such as
colour, taste and value better to represent the ontological reality of those features
‘Revisionary Protagoreanism’. Descriptive Protagoreanism is the thesis that ‘all
topic-specific concepts are [already] response-dependent’ (1993, p.106) and is
identified by Johnston as instantiated by Putnamian Internal Realism (Ibid, p. 129 n.
34). By contrast with this descriptive project, Revisionary Protagoreanism
involves the revision of certain of our mistakenly response-independent concepts by

49 All that is left in the merely manifest world would be (Aristotelian) form, finality (teleology) and value.
50 For instance it is a considerable undertaking to reconcile Johnston’s views on personal identity as they appear in
‘Human Beings’ (1987a) and ‘Relativism and the Self’ (1989c). The key to reconciliation can be found in certain
brief passages such as in 1989c, pp 468-9.
51 While Pettit’s response-dependence thesis, which is the subject of Chapter V, applies to all of our basic concepts
rather than our topic-specific ones, it fits the Descriptive Protagorean label in that it takes our basic concepts to be
already response-dependent.
52 Topic-specific concepts are just those which are neither formal nor topic-neutral concepts of logic or semantics.
response-dependent surrogates. Clearly such a project is revisionary in the sense that its aim is the revision and improvement of folk concepts. It is Protagorean in so far as it involves acceptance that responses are internally related to the determination of the extension of some of our concepts, thereby respecting in some part Protagoras’ alleged claim that Man is the measure of things.53 While providing response-dependent surrogates for folk concepts, Revisionary Protagoreanism remains faithful to an important aspect of the folk understanding of features such as tastes, colours and values; that is, while the surrogates respect the dependence of certain concepts on respondents’ dispositions to respond to certain of objects’ features, they do not altogether relinquish the claim, implicit in commonsense intuitions about the tastes, colours and values of things, that they are thus and so in some sense independently of respondents. Thus, if it can be pulled off, Revisionary Protagoreanism promises to offer revised concepts such that the practices to which they are central can be plausibly construed as realist (depending, of course, upon which commitments we take that doctrine to encompass; on which, more in Chapters VII and VIII).

The moves we’ve outlined in tracing the development of the Johnstonian version of response-dependence come together to form what we might term a ‘manifesto’ for Revisionary Protagoreanism in which the characteristics displayed by cases that offer good prospects for the revisionary project are laid out as follows:

(A) When it comes to conceiving of what grounds and justifies our responses we are susceptible to a certain kind of error. We have a response-independent conception of the objects of those responses which includes a rich characterisation of the objects to which we really have no right and which may in fact be satisfied by nothing.

(B) Such an error is often ‘projective’ in origin, that is, we arrive at the rich characterisation as a result of taking our experience transparently to reveal the nature of what it presents.

53 The claim remains ‘alleged’ because, as Johnston points out, we only have Plato’s word on Protagoras. See Johnston 1993, pp 105-7.
(C) Such rich and projectively generated response-independent conceptions are shown to be erroneous when we ask for a detailed account of how we could be responding to things satisfying the conception.

(D) The question of realism versus irrealism [about the relevant cases] turns on the extent to which adequate response-dependent surrogates can be found. Good surrogates are those that can serve a central core of the practical and theoretical ends to which the original concepts were put. When there are no such surrogates we may speak of a discourse that is vitiated by its metaphysical commitments. Johnston *Ibid*, p. 108.

More recently, Johnston has developed two arguments to the effect that Revisionary Protagoreanism cannot be pulled off successfully. In what I’ll call *the Argument from the Problem of Acquaintance*, he concludes that even reconceived as response-dependent properties, features of objects such as the way they taste and smell and the colours they appear to have would remain epistemologically unavailable to us. In his *Missing Explanation Argument* (which appears as early as his 1989 paper ‘Dispositional Theories of Value’), Johnston concludes that (re)conceived as response-dependent, properties such as the taste, colour, and value of things fail to meet a fundamental condition on explanations of our experiences thereof. In short, thus conceived, they cannot pull any weight in causal explanations of our experiences of them. The *Argument from the Problem of Acquaintance* and the *Missing Explanation Argument* are analysed in detail in Chapter IV.

§2.3 Minimalism

The motivation for the Revisionary Protagorean project derives from Johnston’s general scepticism regarding an overly robust approach to metaphysics and his desire to save ordinary practices and the concepts they involve by rescuing them from elimination by metaphysics.\(^{54}\) His commitment to the meta-philosophical doctrine of

\(^{54}\) The kind of overly robust approach Johnston has in mind would involve a position that involves a commitment to the truth and relevance of the ontological commitments underlying ordinary language and concepts. According
minimalism with regard to metaphysical accounts of certain of our practices is, with revisionism, part of a two-pronged rescue strategy. Minimalism aims to debunk metaphysical pretensions. It is the view that metaphysical pictures of the justificatory undergirdings of our practices do not represent the crucial conditions of justification of those practices. The minimalist has it that although ordinary practitioners may naturally be led to adopt metaphysical pictures as a result of their practices, and perhaps a little philosophical prompting, the practices are not typically dependent on the truth of the pictures. 1992b, p. 590

Instead, its justification should be understood in somewhat more pragmatic terms: ‘practices that endure and spread’, writes Johnston, ‘are typically justifiable in nonmetaphysical terms’ (Ibid). To this the minimalist adds the claim that,

[W]e can do better in holding out against various sorts of scepticism and unwarranted revision when we correctly represent ordinary practice as having given no crucial hostages to metaphysical fortune. Ibid

Practices that can be understood as minimalist, then, are ones whose metaphysical commitments play no real role. So minimalism with respect to a practice is the first step in saving it. Revision only becomes necessary when the practice in question cannot qualify as minimalist. Johnston’s position is that many of what might appear to be good candidates for Revisionary Protagoreanism don’t require revision because they can be rescued minimalistically.

To illustrate minimalism, consider Johnston’s minimalistic approach to our practices involving talk and thought about personal identity: According to Johnston, the folk talk and act as though some kind of dualism is true - as though we have souls. But
when we think about the role that the concept PERSON plays in our lives, it is clear, he argues, that we don’t ever need to invoke this dualism to explain or justify anything. It is an epiphenomenal wheel that fails to turn any cogs.\footnote{See Johnston 1987.}

\section*{§3 Johnston on Concepts, Dispositions, Responses and Properties}

In this section, we’ll begin unpacking Johnston’s version of response-dependence by considering in turn the accounts of concepts, dispositions, responses and properties on which it relies. In so doing, we’ll use the taxonomy established earlier to plot the scope and boundaries of Johnston’s version against the distinctions identified there. We should keep in mind throughout that unlike the account of response-dependent concepts given in previous chapters, and unlike the versions of response-dependence accounts we’ll consider later, Johnston’s accounts of concepts are intended as prescriptive revisions of folk concepts, not theoretical abstractions from actual folk practices.

\subsection*{§3.1 Concepts}

For Johnston, Talking about a concept F is just a way of talking about the core of a conception or cluster of beliefs de dicto about Fs. 1993, p. 103.

The core beliefs extracted from the cluster or network are ‘relatively non-negotiable’: if they turned out to be false, talk of ‘Fs’ would be meaningless \textit{(Ibid)}. (Notice, then, that this way of accounting for concept talk assumes some version of an analytic/synthetic distinction.) They identify via description a set of objects, features or relations that are the concept’s extension, and a concept’s application conditions are those which these beliefs represent Fs as satisfying.\footnote{This account of concepts is very similar to the \textit{platitudes} approach favoured by (among others) Michael Smith. For Smith’s \textit{platitudes} account of colour concepts see his 1994.} In the simple case of the concept BACHELOR, then, the beliefs will include the beliefs that bachelors are men and that they are unmarried. In the case of TRIANGLE, that triangles are 3-sided closed
planar figures, the sum of the angles of which is 180. According to this Johnstonian account, concepts are individuated by their conditions of application. This is demonstrated when he considers concept identity:

The concept F is the concept G just when F and G have the same a priori conditions of application in the sense defined [above]. So we can make good enough sense of talk of the concept F expressed by the predicate, “is F”. It is what is determined by the non-negotiable core of those beliefs which can be properly reported by using the predicate “is F” in an oblique context. Ibid.

When we report that ‘Jones believes that x is F’, ‘is F’ stands in for the conjunction of all the propositions that are the contents of the core beliefs from which the concept F is an abstraction. Identical concepts, say LORRY and TRUCK, abstract from identical clusters of core beliefs about their referents. If Jones believes that x is a lorry, he believes (among other things) that x is a heavy goods vehicle. If Smith believes that y is a truck, she believes (among other things) that y is a heavy goods vehicle. These and any other beliefs in the core will determine identical extensions for the concepts LORRY and TRUCK. Talk of application conditions, then, is the theorist’s way of talking about the propositional contents of the beliefs that regulate practitioners’ use of a concept. It is derived from reflection upon the propositions about Fs to which practitioners would assent if pressed. To be disposed to believe those propositions and properly to employ the inferences represented by those beliefs – for instance to believe of a thing that one knows is a (properly functioning) truck that it has wheels – is to be disposed to apply the concept correctly - for at least some of one’s uses thereof to fulfil its application conditions.

§3.2 Dispositional Concepts

As it evolves, Johnston’s version of response-dependence makes a crucial move from the shallow anthropocentricity of response-dependence to the deeper
anthropocentricity of response-dispositionality. Johnston doesn’t merely claim that certain of our concepts either (already) are or ought to be revised to be response-dependent, he thinks they are, or should be, *response-dispositional*. In order better to analyse this move, we need a brief account of what he takes dispositional concepts to be. He defines them thus:

> The concept F is a dispositional concept just in case there is an identity of the form: The concept F = the concept of the disposition to produce R in S under C, where R is the manifestation of the disposition, S is the locus of the manifestation and C is the condition of manifestation.


Allowing for slight differences in locution, many of the types of concept identified in our taxonomy will satisfy this definition. Patient concepts of features suited to traditional dispositional analyses are the most obvious candidates. The concept FLEXIBLE is open to analysis as the concept of the disposition of a patient to bend under the influence of forces within a certain range of magnitudes, the locus of manifestation is the patient itself and the conditions are those which count as suitable (in the manner discussed earlier). Actor concepts also fit the definition. For example, the concept ATTRACTIVE is the concept of the disposition of an actor to elicit feelings of attraction in respondents; the locus of manifestation is the respondent thus attracted. The concept GOOD (in a moral sense) is the concept of the disposition of an actor (which could be an agent, an act or a situation) to elicit the judgement that it is morally valuable/approvable on the part of respondents, who are thus the loci of manifestation. And, most pertinently for a theorist such as Johnston, whose primary focus is secondary quality concepts, the concept SWEET is the concept of the disposition of actors to elicit a sweet taste sensation on the part of respondents – the loci of manifestation.

In the account of response-dependence developed in Chapters I and II, the claim that a
concept of a feature is response-dependent, is the claim that responses under suitable conditions are implicated in the determination of its extension. That response-dependence claim does not characterise the feature itself as a disposition. To say that a concept is a dispositional concept, however, is to make a further claim – that the property determined by the concept is a dispositional property. The core beliefs from which talk of such a concept is an abstraction will include beliefs to the effect that if x is F, x is disposed either to respond in a particular way itself – in the case of patient concepts such as FLEXIBLE – or to elicit a certain response in respondents under suitable conditions – in the case of actor concepts such as ATTRACTIVE. In short, the theorist’s claim that ATTRACTIVE, say, is a dispositional concept is the claim that we understand and think of attractiveness as a disposition to affect respondents in a particular way.

§3.3 Response-Dispositional Concepts

Johnston cashes response-dependence out response-dispositionally because he believes that the concepts in question are either already concepts of certain types of dispositions, for instance ATTRACTIVE; or are not but ought to be replaced by response-dispositional concepts, for instance SWEET. Given the Johnstonian account of concepts, this amounts to saying that we should correct our thinking about the properties they attribute by coming to think of those properties as dispositional. Johnston’s notion of response-dispositionality is more limited than that of traditional dispositionality (above), so the class of response-dispositional concepts is not co-extensive with the class of dispositional concepts (as defined above). Further, as we see shortly, some of the types of concepts identified in our taxonomy do not count as response-dispositional and hence are not, by Johnston’s lights, response-dependent.

It is helpful to understand Johnston’s version of response-dependence as providing a three-stage account of a concept:
i. An account of the conditions that must be met by things that have the property
determined by the concept.

ii. An account of how we conceive of the property determined by the concept.

iii. An account, via description, of the property itself.

In making the move from response-dependence to response-dispositionality, he
combines the extension-determination claim of response-dependence with a claim
about how we conceive, or ought to conceive, of the things that comprise the
extension of the concept. Concepts that are response-dependent in the Johnstonian
sense must a) display a certain type of dependence on responses. This is not just the
dependence that ensues from the concept’s extension being determined via responses;
the relevant response is not only relevant on those grounds, it is relevant because it is
the response that the property in question is conceived of as a disposition to elicit.
And they must b) be dispositional, that is, they must be concepts of dispositions.
Which of the types of response-dependent concepts identified earlier qualify?

Dispositional concepts the loci of whose manifestation is the object to which the
property in question is attributed, that is, patient concepts of properties traditionally
construed as dispositional such as FLEXIBLE and FRAGILE, do not count as response-
dispositional in Johnston’s terms. This is because the relevant responses – the object’s
bending or breaking under a force within a certain range – are responses of the objects
themselves rather than responses of human respondents upon which an object acts.
Johnston develops response-dependence to serve as a tool that captures a sense in
which certain features of things are dependent on human sensibilities (a dependence
which he eventually argues undermines the possibility of our properly perceiving
those features). 57 For Johnston’s purposes, then, response dispositionality and hence,
response-dependence, is restricted to concepts of dispositions to elicit responses in
human respondents. On these grounds those concepts that we noted in Chapter I as

57 See for example 1996b, pp224-5. These arguments are dealt with in detail in Chapter 4.
able to be indexed to non-human species, such as POISONOUS-TO-DOGS, would also be ruled out of contention as response-dependent. Likewise moral concepts if we allow that moral concepts are at least in principle available to non-human agents, thereby potentially undermining Johnston’s claim that moral concepts look like good candidates for the Revisionary Protagorean treatment.  

The fact that a concept’s relevant response is a human one is not sufficient to qualify it as response-dependent in the Johnstonian sense. The nature of that human response is also significant:

Let us say that the concept F is a response-dispositional concept when something of the form [of the identity statement above] is true and [i] the manifestation R is some response of subjects which essentially and intrinsically involves some mental process (responses like sweating and digesting are therefore excluded).… 1991, p. 144 [my emphasis].

Johnston appears to want to limit response-dependent concepts to those whose relevant responses are mental by an epistemological Cartesian criterion: they must be objects of introspective awareness. Thus concepts such as DIGESTIBLE and EDIBLE are ruled out of contention, although if indexed to non-human species, they would be ruled out anyway on the grounds that the relevant response is not a human one.

Hence, a concept’s relevant response must meet two criteria if the concept is to count as response-dispositional and hence response-dependent on Johnston’s terms: i) the relevant response must be a human one; ii) the response must involve ‘some mental process’. A majority of the types of response-dependent concept identified in Chapter I fulfill these criteria. Secondary quality concepts such as SWEET involve human responses. Those responses are perceptual and hence involve a mental process. Concepts of the type exemplified by ATTRACTIVE (SIMPLICITER) qualify: the response is a combination of human desires and emotions (sometimes with physical

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58 Of course, Johnston could take the perfectly plausible line that we are only interested in our own moral concepts.
elements), as do their deeply agent-relative counterparts exemplified by ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T]. Moral concepts will qualify (and are clearly taken to do so by Johnston) whether they are understood as cognitivist or non-cognitivist, absolute or relative, so long as the community of moral practitioners is limited to that of human agents.

Johnston’s revisionist stance makes for a further distinction within the class of response-dispositional concepts. There are those concepts such as IRRITATING and NAUSEATING (his examples) that ‘wear their response-dependent nature on their face’ (1989a, p. 146), as do concepts such as ATTRACTIVE, DISGUSTING, EXCITING and their deeply agent-relative counterparts such as ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T]. So too do those, like secondary quality concepts and moral concepts, that are not response-dispositional as they stand, but should, according to Johnston, be revised in favour of response-dispositional ‘surrogates’. This distinction correlates with a further distinction, not made by Johnston, but included in our taxonomy. Those concepts for which Johnston’s response-dispositional tag is descriptive – IRRITATING, NAUSEATING, ATTRACTIVE, DISGUSTING, ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T] – all have relevant responses that are inwardly directed, whereas, the relevant responses for those concepts Johnston believes to be in need of replacement by response-dependent concepts are all outwardly directed towards the object that elicits that response. The phenomenology of secondary quality and moral experiences, then, emerges as a likely cause of the alleged projective error identified by Johnston as the root of our misconception of secondary quality and moral features as response-independent.

§3.4 Broadening the Definition of Johnstonian Response-Dependence

Not all of the concepts that qualify as response-dependent on the Johnstonian account meet the criteria set out above. This is either because they are compound concepts or because they are concepts of dispositions to respond. Thus Johnston broadens his
definition of response-dependence to allow these two types of cases to qualify:

[A] concept is response-dependent just in case it is either the concept of a response or a response-dispositional concept or a truth-functional or quantificational combination of concepts with at least one non-redundant element being a concept of a response or a response-dispositional concept. 1991, p. 145.

As an example of a concept that is response-dependent by dint of being a truth-functional compound of response-dispositional concepts, Johnston offers that of a U.S. state law being constitutional:

[The concept] is not the concept of the Supreme Court being disposed to ultimately regard it [the law] as constitutional, but rather the concept of the Supreme Court not being disposed to ultimately regard it as unconstitutional. Ibid

Here the response-dispositional concept UNCONSTITUTIONAL makes the concept CONSTITUTIONAL response-dependent. As we saw in Chapter I, according to Johnston, a law is UNCONSTITUTIONAL just in case it elicits from Supreme Court judges the judgment that it is unconstitutional. In terms of Johnston’s richer understanding of response-dependence as response-dispositionality, this is to say that a law’s being UNCONSTITUTIONAL consists in its being disposed to elicit the judgement of unconstitutionality in Supreme Court judges.

Johnston believes that concepts of respondents’ dispositions to issue relevant responses should also be understood as response-dispositional.39 This involves understanding relevant responses as manifestations of suitable respondents’ dispositions to thus respond. Understood this way, the relevant response is a manifestation of both the actor’s disposition to elicit that (extension-determining) response and the respondent’s disposition to thus respond. For example, when a respondent under suitable conditions finds someone attractive, her finding them

attractive is a manifestation of i) the actor’s disposition to elicit the relevant response in respondents under those conditions and ii) her (the respondent’s) disposition to respond in the relevant manner when confronting attractive things or persons under suitable conditions. So the concept of respondents’ dispositions to find something attractive when encountering it under suitable conditions exemplifies response-dispositionality just as the concept of the thing’s disposition to be found attractive does. But the former is a patient concept, the latter an actor concept. The biconditional for the concept of the disposition to issue the response relevant to ATTRACTIVE, call it the concept FINDING ATTRACTIVE reflects this distinction:

For any respondent S and any object x: S is disposed to find x attractive/be attracted to x iff when confronted with x under C, S finds x attractive.

§3.5 Summary

We have seen that Johnston demarcates response-dependence by means of the following criteria: To count as response-dependent, a concept must be either response dispositional or a concept of a disposition to issue a relevant response or a compound concept, at least one element of which is a response-dispositional concept. A concept is response-dispositional when its relevant response is human and is a manifestation of a disposition to issue a response that is an object of introspective awareness. The types of concepts identified in our taxonomy, then, meet or fail to meet Johnston’s criteria for response-dependence as follows:

1. SWEET, as it stands, is not response dependent according to Johnston. Thanks to an alleged systematic projective error, it is not even a dispositional concept. He would argue, however, that it (and mutatis mutandis the other secondary quality concepts) is a good candidate for revision in favour of response-dependence. Its post-revision surrogate is response-dispositional; that is, it is the concept of a disposition to elicit in human respondents a response of which they are introspectively aware.
2. POISONOUS is ruled out on the grounds that its relevant response is not an object of introspective awareness.\footnote{Although being poisoned may in some instances manifest in responses of which we can be introspectively aware, such as pain or nausea, these responses are contingent and not constitutive of what it is to be poisoned. Such responses cannot count as the response relevant to POISONOUS.} If the species-relativity of concepts of the type exemplified by poisonous were recognised, the iterations of those concepts relative to non-human species would be ruled out on the grounds of the type of respondent (in addition to being ruled out by the type of response).

3. ATTRACTIVE qualifies as response-dependent: It is response-dispositional – the concept of the disposition to elicit in human respondents a response of which they are introspectively aware. According to Johnston, such concepts are response-dependent as they stand. Hence, response dependent analyses thereof are descriptive, not revisionist.

4. ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T] qualifies as response-dependent as it stands: It is response-dispositional – the concept of the disposition to elicit in a particular human respondent a response of which he or she is introspectively aware.

5. GOOD (in its moral application) is not, as it stands, a response-dependent concept according to Johnston. Thanks to an alleged systematic projectivist error, moral concepts fail to acknowledge the dependence of moral features on human responses. Like secondary quality concepts, moral concepts are good candidates for Johnstonian revision in favour of response-dispositional surrogates for which the relevant response is both human and an object of introspective awareness.

6. FLEXIBLE does not qualify as response-dependent by Johnston’s lights because it is generally a patient concept of the disposition of objects to issue a certain response and is thus disqualified on the grounds that its relevant response is not a human response.\footnote{Where the patient that manifests the relevant response is human, a respondent whose joints are flexible for instance, the type of response disqualifies the concept from response-dependence as Johnston defines it.}
The claim that concepts of responses are themselves response-dispositional is central to Johnston’s re-casting of response-dependence as response-interdependence.⁶² The relation between concepts and responses becomes one of interdependence because the response – finding someone attractive, say – involves attractiveness by dint of its being a manifestation of a disposition to respond to apparent instances of attractiveness. In his Argument from the Problem of Acquaintance Johnston has argued that this interdependence undermines the hope that acquaintance with the colours (and mutatis mutandis the other secondary qualities) can be achieved if they are indeed dispositions to produce visual experiences.⁶³

In Section 3 we have developed a characterisation of a theoretical notion introduced by Johnston. This notion of response-(inter)dependence is the central tool in his attempt to save concepts of the features that are the secondary qualities (and, later, the features themselves) from relegation from the manifest world to its mere image. By (re)conceiving those features as response-dependent, he hopes to have developed an understanding of them according to which certain responses are implicated in the concepts that determine them, but their status as genuine features rather than mere appearances thereof is not undermined by that interdependence. As far as Johnston’s project goes, his rescue strategy for secondary quality features can only be successfully executed if the response-(inter)dependent account can be sustained in the face of the problems articulated by the Missing Explanation Argument and the Argument from the Problem of Acquaintance.

§4 The Basic Equation

In Chapter I we saw how biconditional basic equations for response-dependent concepts might be qualified to limit conditions of response and also addressed the

⁶² The move is made explicitly in Johnston 1993, p. 105, but is presaged in Johnston 1989a, p. 145-6 where he gives a disjunctive account of response dependence as applying to concepts where there is interdependence with or dependence on a concept of respondents’ responses under specified conditions.

⁶³ See Johnston 1996a, p. 197. This argument and its implications for response-dependence accounts are considered later in the chapter.
question of whether we should rigidify on the terms expressing those qualifications thereby tying extension determinations to responses made by actual respondents under conditions that actually count as suitable. In these next sections, we will consider Johnston’s views on issues pertaining to the form and content of the basic equation.

Thus far we have treated the basic equation for a concept as a theorist’s device for demonstrating an a priori dependence between the determination of a concept’s extension and responses under suitable conditions to things that are apparently included therein. Once Johnston has made the move from dependence to interdependence, we should understand the basic equations of his version of response dependence as

[T]he assertion of an interdependence between the philosophically interesting concept [secondary qualities, values, and so on] and the relevant concept of our disposition to respond. 1993, p. 105

The interdependence asserted here is between the concept that is the object of the response dependence claim – the concept that appears on the left hand side of the biconditional – and the concept of respondents’ disposition to respond to manifestations of objects’ dispositions to cause manifestations of that particular disposition of respondents. So in the case of DISGUSTING, the interdependence is between the concept itself and the concept of respondents’ dispositions to find certain things disgusting under suitable conditions. Things found disgusting by respondents under suitable conditions so disposed will (all other things being equal) be those things that are indeed disgusting.

The move to re-cast the relationship between a concept and the concept of the relevant response as one of interdependence remains consistent with the approach to dispositional properties whereby dispositional talk is construed counterfactually:
Where F is some dispositional property, if x were F, then under certain conditions, x would elicit a characteristic response in certain respondents. Thus, if x were disgusting, under conditions C, x would elicit disgust in respondents. Counterfactual analyses of dispositional properties determined by the concepts that Johnston holds to be response-interdependent fix the reference of concepts such as DISGUSTING on a pair of coordinated properties: one an actor property – the property of being disgusting and the other a patient property – the property of being disgusted. Thus the pair of properties is related such that one is the property of the actor’s disposition to cause a particular response and the other is the property of the patients’ disposition to issue that response. A counterfactual rendering of dispositional talk, then, shows us how the extensions of concepts of dispositional properties are fixed – they are fixed by how objects are disposed to behave in relation to certain respondents under certain conditions – but the counterfactual rendering is not meaning giving.

Johnston, however, prefers to stick with the dispositional idiom, rather than render the object/respondent relation counterfactually. Suitably adjusted to encompass the intrinsic features of objects that constitute the bases of their dispositions to behave thus and so, a dispositional account is better able than a counterfactual account to handle discrepant cases where the behaviour paradigmatic of objects with a particular feature does not eventuate even though conditions on environment and respondents meet the criteria of suitability. Such cases fall into three categories labeled by Johnston as follows: i) Mimicking – where something that would behave thus and so under certain circumstances still doesn’t count as having the disposition to behave thus and so because it lacks the constituting basis for that disposition. So, for example, a cup of coffee without the addition of sugar or some other sweetener does not taste sweet, but the sweet-toothed angel has the power to make it taste sweet when no sweetening substance is at hand. Although the coffee would taste sweet if tasted by respondents under suitable conditions, something extrinsic to the coffee – the angel’s

64 See, for example, 1992a, pp 231-34
powers to change the way it tastes – is the cause of its tasting sweet, rather than any
intrinsic features of the coffee itself. ii) Altering – where something that would
behave thus and so fails to exhibit the relevant paradigmatic behaviour under suitable
conditions because it has been altered in some way, but still counts as having the
disposition to behave thus and so. For instance, a cup of sugared coffee would not
taste sweet to respondents under suitable conditions if the sour-faced angel has
affected it so that it tastes salty (and that is the only effect of her adulteration) to those
respondents under those conditions. However, its salty taste is a result of the angel’s
alterations to intrinsic features of the coffee itself but, were it not for those alterations,
if the angel were removed, say, the coffee would (still) taste sweet and the
dispositional claim holds true. (iii) Masking – where an object would behave thus and
so under certain conditions, but something acts as a barrier to the occurrence of the
paradigmatic behaviour. So, for instance a cup of well-made, unsweetened espresso
coffee would taste bitter to respondents under suitable conditions, but the café owner,
who earns a big commission for selling tea, has discovered that by using a certain
type of cup, she can make the espresso taste sour. The espresso would taste bitter were
it not for the extrinsic feature of being served in certain cups. Thus, its intrinsic
features are unchanged: it is (still) disposed to taste bitter to respondents under
suitable conditions.

A reason for making interdependence explicit may be to side-step qualms about the
apparent circularity of the biconditionals. The response (inter)dependence claim that

An object x is DISGUSTING iff respondents are disposed to find x disgusting
under C

may appear circular or trivial because the word ‘disgusting’ is used on the right hand
side for the concept receiving the response-dependence analysis and on the left hand
side to denote the relevant response. The appearance of circularity arises because
differences in concepts – in this case the concept under analysis and the concept of
respondents’ dispositions to respond – outrun the vocabulary available to talk about them; we expect an accurate account of a relational concept to make reference to both terms of the relation. However, this impoverished vocabulary is to be expected, if as Johnston holds, we commonly mistake relational properties for non-relational ones. Johnston himself, in his Revisionary Protagorean phase at least, argues that this circularity is unproblematic:

Circularity would be a vice if the Protagorean’s aim were reductive definition. However the aim is instead to exhibit the kind of conceptual connection which shows how the facts about some matter, perhaps not overtly having to do with human response, do turn out none the less to implicate our responses in a certain way. *Ibid.* p. 105-6

The way in which we used basic equations in our taxonomy is consistent with their contributing to what is the first stage of Johnston’s tripartite account of a concept: they give an account of the conditions that must be met by things that have the property determined by the concept. For Johnston, though, the basic equation is derived from an identity claim (1993, pp 104-6). So, for example, the identity claim

The concept **DISGUSTING** = the concept of the disposition to produce a feeling of disgust in respondents under C

yields the basic equation

an object x is **DISGUSTING**  iff respondents are disposed to find x disgusting under C

Understood in the manner developed in Chapters I and II, this is simply a claim about extension determination: it says that **DISGUSTING** applies to all and only those things that elicit a certain response under certain conditions. It doesn’t identify the concept as a dispositional concept and so doesn’t claim that we conceive of being disgusting as a disposition. However, as we saw in consideration of Johnston’s general account of concepts as abstractions from non-negotiable core beliefs about the property a concept determines, on that account, concept identity consists in concepts being abstractions
from the same set of non-negotiable core beliefs. So the claim of identity between DISGUSTING and THE DISPOSITION TO PRODUCE FEELINGS OF DISGUST IN RESPONDENTS UNDER C amounts to the claim that they are abstractions from the same set of beliefs about the feature of being disgusting and that this set includes the belief that certain (human) responses are implicated in the question of something’s being disgusting (or not). Understood as derived from an identity claim, as opposed to being an (armchair) derivation from practices involving the concept in question, the basic equation makes an indirect claim about how we conceive of the property determined by the concept in question, thereby constituting the second stage of Johnston’s tripartite response-dependence account.

If Johnston has a view of properties such that any concept reliably determines a unique property, then his general account of concepts as abstractions from non-negotiable beliefs about the properties they determine (or their referents) enables him to segue easily and not illegitimately into talking about response-dependent properties instead of concepts. For the beliefs, and hence the basic equations that draw upon them, provide an account of the property via description. This is perhaps why Johnston (without comment) makes the move from talking about response-dependent concepts to talking about response-dependent properties. Despite the considerable care and attention Johnston gives to setting out and explaining his account, it is left to the reader to attempt to reconstruct the account of properties that is likely to underlie his theory of response-(inter)dependent concepts. If he is not committed to a view of properties such as that adumbrated, then the move from concepts to properties requires more explicit legitimisation. The move from concepts to properties also represents a move back towards the traditional Cartesian and Lockean position on manifest qualities according to which properties such as tastes, sounds, smells and colours are identified with powers to produce certain sensory experiences under certain conditions. The move to property talk also enables Johnston to use the

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65 An underlying theory of properties as sets of possibilia would not be consistent with the shift of focus from concepts to properties.
response-dependence apparatus to investigate accounts of manifest qualities in an attempt better to do justice to them. In Johnston’s most recent work on response-dependence, then, the basic equation is derived from property identities rather than concept identities.

Given the revisionist intent of Johnston’s original project, when the claim of response-dependence is a claim about concepts, the basic equation is either derived from actual non-negotiable beliefs involving things under the concept’s extension – in the case of concepts such as NAUSEATING, which are response-dependent as they stand – or from what would be the non-negotiable core beliefs if the actual (erroneously response-independent) concept were revised to take account of the dispositional nature of the property it determines. Once we shift our focus to properties, though, it seems otiose to talk of revision, as properties themselves, as opposed to thought (or talk) about them are non-revisable. Applied to properties, then, the response dependence claim, and the associated basic equation, can only be descriptive of the actual property even though our ordinary concept of that property might need revising to match its response-interdependent nature. Here, as we see in Chapter IV, Johnston’s sceptical moves involve denying (i) the coherence of the notion of response-dependent properties on the grounds that we cannot causally account for how we manage to perceive them and (ii) the possibility of acquaintance with those properties via perceptual experience.

§4.1 Appropriateness

In the previous chapter we saw how placeholders for respondents and conditions in the basic equation are limited by the qualification ‘appropriate’. I subsequently argued that the separation of appropriate respondents and appropriate conditions was unnecessary and opted instead to treat appropriate conditions as including conditions on respondents, thereby placing limitations on who counts as an appropriate
respondent. However, as Johnston and others maintain the traditional separation of respondents and conditions, I maintain that separation for the purpose of accurate exegesis. We considered in detail how ‘appropriate’ might be cashed out in the case of each of the types of concept identified in our taxonomy and concluded that in the majority of cases, ‘suitable’ best captured what was significant about the respondents and conditions that survived the ruling out process. We also claimed that ‘ideal’ as a qualification for respondents and conditions is best understood as ‘maximally suitable’. In what follows we’ll consider Johnston’s approach to signaling within the basic equation whose responses under what conditions are relevant to various response-dependent concepts.

Until recently, Johnston’s work has included little detailed discussion of the interpretation and filling out of the ‘appropriate’ placeholder. In his ‘Are Manifest Qualities Response-Dependent?’ (1998), however, the meaning of the qualification becomes pivotal in the version of the Missing Explanation Argument Johnston formulates to show that, if we are to be epistemically receptive to them, manifest properties cannot be response-dependent properties.

In the early paper, ‘Dispositional Theories of Value’ (1989a), appropriate perceivers and conditions of response under which the relevant response (for RED) can occur are ‘standard perceivers’ and ‘standard conditions’. These terms are rigidified on by limiting standard perceivers to those who count as standard in the actual world and by limiting standard conditions to those conditions that count as standard in the actual world. This locution is repeated in ‘Explanation, Response-Dependence and Judgement-Dependence’ (1991) when Johnston is discussing colour concepts. In his discussion of the nauseating he fills out the placeholder with ‘suitable’, but nothing appears to turn on this terminological difference. In his ‘Objectivity Refigured: Pragmatism without Verificationism’ (1993), the favoured locution (when discussing
the concept RED) remains ‘standard’. Here, Johnston also notes the possibilities of rigidifying the reference of ‘standard’ to the actual world and of indexing the subject and conditions placeholders to varying groups of subjects and sets of conditions. Consistent with the move taken in Chapter II to recognise their interdependence, conditions of response are not given any attention independently of considerations of appropriate subjects. In the more recent versions of his sceptical Missing Explanation Argument, the focus of which is on response-dependent properties, the semantics of ‘standard subjects’ receives considerably more attention.

In Chapter IV I look in detail at this argument along with his second, sceptical, argument – the Argument from the Problem of Acquaintance. Taken together they make a case against the possibility of there being response-dependent features (i) that could be explanatory of our perceptions thereof and (ii) that we could know.
§1 The Missing Explanation Argument

Johnston’s Missing Explanation Argument is first adumbrated in his ‘Dispositional Theories of Value’ (1989) and then more fully developed in his ‘Explanation, Response-Dependence and Judgement-Dependence’ (1991). More recently, in his 1998 paper ‘Are Manifest Qualities Response-Dependent?’ he has re-visited the argument as a central element of his case against a response-dependent account of the manifest properties. In this chapter, I focus on the more recent version of the argument. Johnston argues that the semantics of ‘standard subjects’, as he sets things up, undermine the possibility of properly empirical explanations of appearances of manifest properties. According to Johnston, the term ‘standard subjects’ refers to those subjects who as a matter of fact have the ability to sense or perceive the relevant qualities had by the relevant objects. The function of the description those subjects who have a disposition which in standard conditions issues in the appearing of one of the objects having some of the qualities (or in the immediate perceptual belief that one of the objects has one of the qualities) (i) just when the object in fact has the qualities and (ii) partly because the object has the qualities, then, is that of reference-fixing rather than of meaning giving. The term ‘standard subjects’, Johnston asserts, is used rigidly to denote the actual respondents who in fact have the disposition in question.

In common with earlier versions, the most recent incarnation of Johnston’s Missing Explanation Argument has its roots in the idea that to be successful, our epistemic

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66 The most apparently significant difference between this and the earlier versions is that a substitution principle is no longer among its premises. However, in response to counterexamples to the substitution principle that figures in those earlier versions (Cf. Note 17 where Johnston reports a counterexample Stalnaker raised during a discussion), Johnston says that it was merely ‘stage-setting’ which can be ‘discharged’, p. 26.
relationship with the world must encompass receptivity. Distinguishing between sensing and perceiving as forms of epistemic receptivity, Johnston asserts that the very idea of sensing/perceiving as forms of receptivity cannot be made sense of without their being reliable. Reliability in this context consists in the relevant responses being reliably dependent on the way things are with respect to the objects sensed or perceived and this in turn places necessary conditions on sensing and perceiving: To count as (properly) sensing a family of qualities had by a range of objects, then, a respondent must

[have] a disposition which in standard conditions issues in the appearing of an object having some of the qualities (i) just when the object in fact has these qualities and (ii) partly because the object has these qualities. Johnston 1998, p. 15

To count as perceiving a family of qualities, she must:

[have] a disposition which in standard conditions issues in the immediate perceptual belief that an object has some of the qualities (i) just when the object in fact has these qualities and (ii) partly because the object has these qualities. Ibid

Reliability of sense and perception, and thus receptivity, requires respondents to have a patient disposition to respond that is manifested under standard conditions just in case the object sensed or perceived has the quality it appears to have or that the respondent believes it to have. Where that quality is response-dispositional, the patient disposition will be triggered under standard conditions by manifestations of the actor’s disposition to prompt such responses. This interdependence between actor and patient dispositions is

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67 The basis of Johnston’s preferred distinction is a difference between phenomenal experience and epistemic experience. ‘Sensing’, he writes, ‘is an achievement, a matter of getting into the right relation to things and their qualities. Here there is room for success or failure…but not yet for correctness or incorrectness, truth or falsity.’ By contrast, Perception involves a cognitive relationship to propositions about the things sensed and thus a ‘correct or incorrect take on how one’s environment is’. Either sensings or perceptions (construed non-extensionally as they are in Johnston’s account) are suitable candidates for the responses cited in response-dependence accounts. When we are talking about visual experiences, though, ‘sensing or perceiving’ are captured by talking about ‘seeing’, aural experiences captured by ‘hearing’; olfactory experiences by ‘smelling’; gustatory experiences by ‘tasting’ and tactile ones by ‘feeling’.
the key to the failure of the idea of response-dependent properties, a failure that the Missing Explanation Argument is intended to demonstrate.

The requirement that the relevant response be identified as a disposition to respond is the crucial difference between Johnston’s requirement of epistemic receptivity and a weaker requirement, labelled epistemic servility by Pettit, which, I argue later, is required by realism when it takes an epistemic stance. If the response itself were not couched as a disposition but rather manifestations of a disposition, the explanation for which we are searching would have those manifestations as its explanandum, and the disposition to respond would be cited in the explanans. It might not be a spectacularly informative explanation, but it would contain empirical information setting the explanandum in a ‘pattern of events and states governed by empirical regularities’ – the desiderata of empirical explanation according to Johnston (Ibid p. 31 and see below). Johnston motivates his stronger requirement by appeal to what he terms ‘baldly’ Aristotelian intuitions that sensing and perceiving are capacities or dispositions (1998, p. 28). If they don’t involve general capacities or dispositions, he argues, we can’t rule out the possibility that when things are as they appear to us, it is just the result of our being lucky with respect to the range of actual cases.

Where satisfied, the conditions placed on sensing and perceiving deliver reliability because the required disposition only manifests when the acting object is of the appropriate type. Imaginary cases of the quality in question are thus ruled out as instances of sensing/perceiving because they do not constitute manifestations of patients’ dispositions to respond to manifestations of the relevant actor disposition. Thus the explanatory requirement rules out accidental and hallucinatory appearances/perceptions, but the conditions do not mean that reliability requires infallibility, respondents’ dispositions are not required to be surefire and sometimes the disposition will fail to be manifested. Such failures will occur in the types of finkish cases, such as altering,
masking and mimicking, discussed earlier.\textsuperscript{68} Most significantly for the Missing Explanation Argument, receptivity entails the availability of an empirical explanation of an object’s triggering standard subjects’ dispositions to respond. The requirements placed by the reliability condition on respondents’ dispositions to respond involve an empirical generalisation connecting those dispositions with a class of facts about the objects that trigger it. This means that an empirical constraint is placed on standard subjects’ ability to sense/perceive. The reference fixing description for ‘standard subjects’ (above) licences the following contingent generalisations linking the disposition to the fact that an object has some of the relevant properties:

A. Standard subjects (with respect to a family of qualities had by a range of objects) have a disposition which in standard conditions issues in the appearing of an object having some of the qualities just when the object has these qualities.

B. Standard subjects (with respect to a family of qualities had by a range of objects) have a disposition which in standard conditions issues in the immediate perceptual belief that an object has some of the qualities just when the object has these qualities. 1998, p. 17

As we see in Johnston’s case of the stone in the cave, these generalisations are applied to particular cases to yield empirical explanations of instances of receptivity; that is, explanations of manifestations of standard subjects’ dispositions to have objects appear thus and so to them under standard conditions or to form immediate perceptual beliefs that an object is thus and so. Johnston asks us to imagine a precious stone lodged in the wall of an underwater cave.\textsuperscript{69} If a standard subject swims down and illuminates the cave so as to produce standard viewing conditions, they see the stone as deep red. It becomes,

\textsuperscript{68} It is not clear that the requirement rules out cases of mimicking. If the disposition to have objects appear to one as red were manifested by something that wasn’t red, but was disposed to mimic the behaviour of red things under standard conditions, ie appear red to standard perceivers, the manifestation of the respondent’s disposition to respond would fulfil the conditions on reliability .

\textsuperscript{69} The cave case is used to ensure that what has to be explained is how suitable subjects would see the stone under suitable conditions, rather than how they do see it, thereby also capturing the fact that unseen things are still coloured. So the effect of this is to create a context in which the dispositional idiom is not pleonastic.
writes Johnston ‘a reasonable bet’ that standard subjects under standard conditions are disposed to sense/perceive the stone as deep red. And, ‘If this is a fact then it is an empirical fact which admits of a variety of empirical explanations.’ (Ibid)

One of which takes this form:

1. The stone is deep red.
2. [As a consequence of A and B above] When an object has some color then standard subjects under standard conditions are disposed to see it as having that color; ie., they are disposed to have its color appear to them or are disposed to form the immediate perceptual belief that it has the color.

That is why

3. Standard subjects under standard conditions are disposed to see the stone as deep red; ie., they are disposed to have its deep redness appear to them or are disposed to form the immediate perceptual belief that it is deep red. 1998, pp 17 – 18

So 3 is explained by a combination of a specific fact (1) and a contingent generalisation linking objects being coloured to standard subjects being receptive to their colours. The availability of this explanation, Johnston says, is a consequence of sense and perception being forms of receptivity and hence of the subjects’ 'sensing or perceiving the family of qualities that is the colors.' (1998, p. 18) For receptivity, with its requirement of reliability, establishes a connection between an empirical fact about an object – in the case in question, a fact about its colour – and a contingent generalisation about standard subjects’ dispositions to sense/perceive the colours of things under standard conditions for seeing colours. The stone in the cave case is set up to launch the defence of Johnston’s central claim, an echo of conclusions drawn in his earlier work on the problematic of response-dependence accounts of secondary quality and moral concepts.
If the qualities in play are response-dependent then no such explanation will be available. **Hence response-dependent features cannot be sensed or perceived.** [And we are not epistemically receptive to them] *Ibid*

A revisited Missing Explanation Argument, directed at response-dependence accounts of properties forms Johnston’s defence of this claim. The ‘real principle’ behind the Missing Explanation Argument, Johnston explains,

concerns the status of the relation between the explanans and the explanandum in an empirical explanation….as I have presented it here, the argument turns on the claim that in an empirical explanation a proper subpart of the explanans cannot itself strictly imply the explanandum. *Ibid*, p. 26

This principle derives from Johnston’s views about empirical explanation, which he lays out in response to Alexander Miller’s objection that we have no good reason to believe an empirical explanation goes missing when the biconditional is intended only as an a priori truth (as Johnston accepts) and not (as in the Euthyphro case) as a definition or conceptual reduction (Miller 1995). Explanation, Johnston claims, requires that the explanandum be ‘empirically framed’. The explanans cites antecedent particular matters of fact together with contingent generalisations about the way the world goes which together entail the explanandum. The explanans provides an ‘empirical frame’ for the explanandum by placing it in ‘a pattern of events and states governed by certain empirical regularities.’ (1998, p. 31) Once explanation is understood thus, there is no hope of preserving empirical explanatoriness in an explanation in which the explanans and explanandum are necessarily a priori equivalent because that would leave no space for an empirical explanation:

*IIndependently of how the world stands in matters of particular fact and lawlike regularity the explanans will always and only occur with the explanandum.* The distinctive way the actual world is plays no role in accounting for the explanandum. You don’t have to know anything about the
distinctive features of the actual world to account for the explanandum. *Ibid*, p. 31

The Missing Explanation argument, then, demonstrates an incompatibility between empirical explanations and the necessary a priori inderdependence of objects’ dispositions to elicit certain responses in suitable subjects and suitable subjects’ (patient) dispositions to respond under suitable conditions to manifestations of objects’ (actor) dispositions.

A response-dependence account of a property, deep red, say, represents the property as the disposition of an object – the actor – to appear thus and so to appropriate subjects under appropriate conditions. So whereas the previous considerations concerned the *patient’s* disposition to respond (by sense or perception) to instances of a property, we are now focusing on the *actor’s* disposition to bring about manifestations of that patient disposition.

While the appropriate respondents in the case of the disposition to sense or to perceive instances of properties such as deep red are ‘standard subjects’, the appropriate respondents in the case of the disposition to appear deep red are all actual and possible appropriate subjects.

\[
x \text{ is deep red iff } x \text{ is disposed to appear deep red to all actual and possible 'appropriate subjects' under standard conditions. *Ibid*, p. 18}
\]

The relationship between ‘standard subjects’ and ‘actual and possible appropriate subjects’ has implications for the modal and epistemic status of the biconditional and forms the crux of the re-visited Missing Explanation Argument.

Johnston notes that any characterization of 'actual and possible appropriate subjects' that makes the biconditional for the property of deep red a priori and necessary will entail that they just are, as an a priori and necessary matter, the standard subjects; that is, all and
only those actually such that they are under standard conditions disposed to see x as deep red iff x is deep red. Given the interdependent nature of the actor’s disposition to appear deep red to certain respondents and the patient’s (i.e. those same respondents’) disposition to have deep red objects appear thus and so to them/to form the immediate perceptual belief that those objects are deep red, we should not be deeply surprised that once characterized, they emerge as the same set of respondents. The necessity of the equivalence, argues Johnston, is simply a consequence of the semantics of ‘standard subject’ (as he has set things up). If there is an actually existing appropriate subject who lacks the patient disposition to respond thus and so, then the biconditional for the property in question is false. If such an actual appropriate subject were possible, then the biconditional is no longer necessary. Approaching the issue from the other direction: given the semantics of ‘standard subject’, a standard subject who is not an actual appropriate subject is impossible.

The a prioricity of the equivalence also comes down to the semantics of the term ‘standard subjects’, which permit neither the epistemic possibility of an actual appropriate subject who is not a standard subject nor that of a standard subject who is not an actual appropriate subject. If the biconditional is to be a priori, Johnston argues, then the equivalence of the class of actual appropriate subjects to the class of actual subjects who are under standard conditions disposed to see an object as deep red iff it is deep red is an a priori matter.

The a priori and necessary equivalence of actual appropriate subjects and standard subjects (expressed in (4)) entails

(5) It is a priori and necessary that (if x is disposed to appear deep red to all actual and possible appropriate subjects under standard conditions then x is disposed to appear deep red to standard subjects under standard conditions.)

If we have a response-dependence account of deep red in place, it follows that
(6) It is a priori and necessary that (if \( x \) is deep red then \( x \) is disposed to appear deep red to standard subjects under standard conditions.) 1998, p. 20

The upshot, then, is that if an object is deep red and deep red is understood as a response-dependent property, then that amounts to saying that the object is disposed to appear deep red to standard subjects. So once deep red is understood as a response-dependent property, the explanation (above)

(3) Standard subjects under standard conditions are disposed to see the stone as deep red; i.e., they are disposed to have its deep redness appear to them or are disposed to form the immediate perceptual belief that it is deep red.

is yielded directly by (1), the statement that the stone is deep red. For ‘deep red’ (we learn) should be understood as ‘disposed to appear deep red to standard subjects under standard conditions’. The empirical generalization (2), which derives from the requirements of receptivity, is redundant and so, says Johnston, is the prospect of an empirical explanation of the stone’s appearing deep red, an explanation whose possibility is a consequence of the idea that sensing and perceiving are forms of receptivity.

So long as (a) our epistemic relationship with manifest qualities is taken to be one of receptivity and (b) receptivity is taken to consist in perceptions and sensations that are dispositions on the part of respondents so that (c) the explanation that ‘goes missing’ is an explanation of the relevant disposition itself rather than of a manifestation thereof, then the Missing Explanation Argument does seem to deal a fatal blow to the prospect of an account of the manifest qualities as response-dependent features of objects. Is there any way to resuscitate the response-dependence account?

§1.1 Limiting the Argument’s Scope

Although the Missing Explanation Argument casts doubt (at best) on the possibility of our being epistemically receptive to certain manifest qualities response-dependently conceived, the scope of its sceptical force is limited to those response-dependent
properties for which the relevant response consists in sensing or perceiving an apparent feature of an object. Some of the properties determined by concepts that we earlier identified as response-dependent, then, do not fall within the scope of the Missing Explanation Argument. In the case of properties where the relevant response is inwardly directed, we can appeal to associated response-independent features of objects that are contingently related to that response to explain suitable subjects’ dispositions to respond in the manner typically associated with manifestations of objects’ dispositions to elicit that response. Where a relevant response is inwardly directed, we have a strong indication that it will be explained by associated features rather than by a disposition of the object to elicit that response in suitable subjects. The properties determined by three of the six categories of response-dependent concepts identified earlier are, by these lights, immune from the force of the Missing Explanation Argument. Properties determined (i) by actor concepts for which the relevant response is physical, public and inwardly directed such as POISONOUS, NAUSEATING, EDIBLE and DIGESTIBLE; (ii) by actor concepts for which the relevant response is a combination of emotions and desires and, sometimes, physical responses, which typically has both private and public aspects and is inwardly directed, such as ATTRACTIVE, DISGUSTING, EXCITING and DISAPPOINTING and (iii) by their deeply agent-relative counterpart concepts such as ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T], DISGUSTING-FOR-X[-AT-T], EXCITING-FOR-X[-AT-T] and DISAPPOINTING-FOR-X[-AT-T] the relevant responses for which are similar to those for concepts of type (ii).

Johnston’s own example comes from the first category (above): The biconditional for the property of being nauseating (understood as response-dependent) is both a priori and necessary:

An object x is nauseating iff suitable subjects are disposed to feel nauseous when exposed to x

According to the Missing Explanation Argument, an attempt to explain the disposition of respondents to so respond such as that offered by:
Suitable subjects are disposed to feel nauseous when exposed to rotten meat because rotten meat is nauseating. Fails to provide an empirical explanation. But this is not fatal for the response-dependence conception of the nauseating, Johnston argues, because the phenomenology of feeling nauseated is not that of an outwardly directed sense or perception of the nauseatingness of the rotten meat. Rather we experience an inwardly-directed sensation (feeling nauseated) that is a manifestation of our (patient) disposition to feel nauseated when confronting the nauseating. While this response serves as the extension-determining response for the concept of the property, the features of the meat that we perceive are associated features to which other of our responses are (outwardly) directed – its smell, its visual appearance, maggots, if there are any, its taste (if we’re unfortunate enough to ingest it). 70 ‘Nothing’, argues Johnston, in the ordinary phenomenology of nausea encourages the idea that if we lost our capacity to feel nausea we would lose our access to a way the rotten meat is even when it is not producing nausea in us. 1998, p. 23 And as we don’t experience the nauseating as a feature of the meat, we don’t, he argues, feel the need to explain our disposition to respond in terms of the meat’s disposition to elicit nausea. In a case such as this, subjects’ epistemic receptivity to perceptible features – smell, look, taste, etc. – needs to be established. So we are satisfied with an explanation that cites associated features as causally responsible for our response, an explanation such as:

Suitable subjects are disposed to feel nausea when exposed to rotten meat because rotten meat has perceptible qualities (such as a purplish blush, evident maggot-riddenness, a noisome smell, etc.) which cause the feeling of nausea in the subjects in question. Ibid, p. 24

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70 The Missing Explanation Argument will of course apply to explanations of subjects’ dispositions to respond to the meat’s smell, taste and other manifest qualities in so far as they are conceived as response dependent. So too will Johnston’s further arguments against the perceptibility of manifest qualities so conceived.
which does convey an empirical explanation and establishes how suitable subjects are epistemically receptive to qualities in the meat that trigger their disposition to feel nausea.

Are the other properties determined by the types of concept identified (above) similar to the nauseating in respect of the inward directedness of their relevant response also able to side-step the Missing Explanation Argument by appeal to associated features? Let’s take the property of attractiveness as an exemplar of category (ii): The phenomenology of finding something or someone attractive is that of an inwardly-directed combination of emotions and desires sometimes accompanied by physical elements (most likely in the case of attraction to a person). This phenomenology is captured by talk analogous to nausea talk and disanalogous to secondary quality talk – we feel attracted just as we feel nauseated, but we don’t feel that we taste something sweet nor feel that we smell something acrid. Like the nausea case, the a priori and necessary biconditional for the property of attractiveness (understood as response-dependent):

\[
\text{An object/person } x \text{ is attractive iff suitable subjects are disposed to find that thing attractive under suitable conditions}
\]

suggests an explanation for suitable subjects’ dispositions to find George Clooney attractive as follows:

Suitable subjects are disposed to find George Clooney attractive under suitable conditions because George Clooney is attractive.

And thus, as the Missing Explanation Argument shows, an empirical explanation disappears. However, following the line that Johnston takes with the nauseating, if the phenomenology of attraction is such that it is not presented as a perceptual experience of the attractiveness of George Clooney, but only as an inwardly-directed experience, then, by analogy with the case of the nauseating, we should be able to appeal to associated features in order to secure an empirical explanation of subjects’ dispositions to respond.
Thus an explanation such as the following might satisfy as an explanation of suitable subjects’ dispositions to find Clooney attractive:

Suitable subjects are disposed to find George Clooney attractive when encountering him because GC has perceptible qualities such as blue, come-to-bed eyes, full lips and a chiselled jaw, which cause suitable subjects to find him attractive.

Such an explanation has the desired empirical content and accounts for suitable subjects being epistemically receptive to Clooney’s attractiveness.

We can adopt the same strategy to account for an individual subject’s disposition to issue the response relevant to the feature of things/people determined by concepts such as ATTRACTION-FOR-X[-AT-T]. Again, the relevant response is an inwardly directed combination of emotions, desires and (possibly) physical sensations, a response in other words that is captured in ordinary talk by ‘feeling’. The phenomenology of feeling attracted (in the manner associated with the deeply agent-relative concept) is of an experience in the field of the self (so to speak) rather than of an experience of perceiving the attractiveness-to-oneself of the object/person in question. From the biconditional for Attractive-for-x

An object/person Y is attractive-to-x iff x is disposed to find Y attractive under suitable conditions

we can derive the following attempt at explanation of x’s disposition to feel attracted to Helen Clark:

x is disposed to find Helen Clark attractive under suitable conditions because Helen Clark is attractive-to-x.

which is clearly devoid of empirical content. By appeal to associated perceptible features, however, we can come up with an explanation that does enjoy empirical content:

x is disposed to find Helen Clark attractive under suitable conditions because Helen Clark has certain perceptible features, such as a commanding voice, a sharp
intellect, a good sense of humour and crooked teeth, which cause x to find her attractive.

Where the phenomenology of experiences of a response–dependent feature shows suitable subjects’ dispositions to respond to be manifested by inwardly directed experiences, then, we can save an empirical explanation by appeal to the associated perceptible features that are, in fact, the cause of the response. In saving the possibility of empirical explanation, we save the plausibility of a response-dependence account of features such as being nauseating, edible, digestible, and being attractive, disgusting, exciting, disappointing together with the deeply agent-relative features of being attractive-for-x[at-t], exciting-for-x[at-t] and so on. However, given that according to the phenomenological account upon which Johnston relies, our relationship to these features is not such that we are disposed to perceive or sense them under standard conditions, we cannot be said to be epistemically receptive to them, and where we are not epistemically receptive to a response-dependent feature, the Missing Explanation Argument does not get a foothold, because there is no response in the form of a sense experience or perception that requires explanation in terms of an object’s having the relevant response-dependent feature. By the same token, while the response-dependence account of such features survives the Missing Explanation Argument, a certain kind of realist construal of those (response dependent) features is ruled out once we accept that we are not epistemically receptive to them. Yet as we see in Chapters 7 and 8, a response-dependence account of the associated concepts need not vitiate a realist construal of the practices in which they are involved.

§1.2 Can We Save a Response-Dependence Account of the Secondary Qualities?

Johnston argues that in the final analysis a response-dependence account of the manifest

…is confused. The notion of a secondary quality was a bad idea to

generalise. 1998, p. 40
The Missing Explanation Argument shows the difficulty of maintaining the necessity and a prioricity of the biconditionals implied by the relevant property identities while also holding on to the idea that suitable subjects are epistemically receptive to manifest properties thus construed. Moreover, Johnston shows that despite the necessary a priori equivalence of ‘standard subjects’ and ‘actual appropriate subjects’, by introducing the term ‘standard subjects’ to rigidly denote the actual subjects who as a matter of fact are disposed in standard conditions to have relevant objects appear to them to have certain qualities (or cause them to form the belief that the objects have those qualities) when they in fact do, and partly because they do, the biconditional for the property in question turns out to be contingent. For it is contingent that standard subjects – the actual subjects who as a matter of contingent fact have the disposition – have the disposition. ‘[W]e’ and ‘Locke before us’ mistook the contingent for the necessary, writes Johnston, because we were tempted to think that we had managed to fill out the biconditional to give substantial characterisations of subjects, responses and conditions, and thus a non-trivial biconditional, when we in fact had not managed to do so (Ibid, p. 36).

Recall that Johnston’s response (inter)dependent account of manifest properties makes claims about property identities between manifest properties and dispositions of objects to elicit manifestations of standard subjects’ (patient) dispositions to respond under certain conditions. These property identities imply the necessary truth of the biconditionals used to represent the properties as response-dependent. Defining response-dependence in his 1998 paper, Johnston inserts an intermediate step between extension determination and property identity such that a property is response dependent if the extension of the predicate that ‘expresses’ that property is determined in such a way that it can be captured in an a priori necessary biconditional. Thus for any object x and any predicate ‘is f’, which ‘expresses’ a property being f:

\[ \text{[An object] } x \text{ is } f \iff x \text{ is disposed to produce } x\text{-directed response } R \text{ in all actual and possible subjects } S \text{ under conditions } C. \text{ Ibid, p. 9} \]
is a priori and is necessarily true if the placeholders ‘R’, ‘S’ and ‘C’ can be filled out substantially and the necessity is not superficial. The aim of this substantiality requirement is to rule out *whatever it takes* specifications of responses, subjects and conditions that would merely trivialise the biconditional; for instance, filling ‘S’ with ‘The subjects, whoever they might be, disposed to issue R in C just when x is f’.

Examples of substantial characterisations favoured by Johnston are similar to those considered in our earlier examination of these issues: ‘normal lighting conditions’, ‘those who fail no discrimination test passed by other human subjects’ and ‘believing or seeing that x is f’.

As for necessity, the necessity that can be secured by rigidifying on a relation that is itself contingent is insufficient for Johnston. This consideration proscribes securing necessity by rigidifying on standard subjects and standard conditions in the actual world to generate a biconditional thus:

\[
x \text{ is f iff } x \text{ is under actual standard conditions disposed to produce } x\text{-directed response } R \text{ in actual standard subjects}
\]

This type of necessity tells us that certain properties and relations – the property of being a person who hasn’t failed discrimination tests passed by other human subjects and the property of being disposed to R under normal lighting conditions, say – can coincide in the actual world (we can go there to see how things are), but it doesn’t constrain the distribution of those properties in other possible worlds. So the biconditional doesn’t tell us that distinct properties go together in all possible worlds and doesn’t force an identity between the property of being f and the property of being disposed to produce x-directed responses in standard subjects under standard conditions.

When we attempt to generate substantial biconditionals by inserting substantial characterizations of ‘R’ ‘S’ and ‘C’, we can’t attain real necessity, argues Johnston. In the case of the property red, we might cash out the place holders thus:
x is red iff x is disposed under conditions of full illumination to produce the experience of a red thing in subjects who score best on colour discrimination tests. *Ibid*, p. 36

But, argues, Johnston, such a biconditional is only necessarily true and substantial if in every possible world the extension of ‘subjects who score best on colour discrimination tests’ is in every possible world the subjects who are also disposed under conditions of full illumination to experience an object as red just in case it is red. And that, says Johnston,

is a very strong constraint on the extension of ‘subjects who score best on color discrimination tests’. *Ibid*

Confidence that the constraint is met, he argues, depends upon falling back into the trivial *whatever it takes* understanding of the class of standard subjects. Ultimately,

Real necessity is very hard to come by, and it becomes harder and harder when we have a number of substantial properties and relations which are required to go together in every possible world. *Ibid*

As they indeed are if the response-dependence claim is intended as a claim about property identities.71

### §1.3 A Return to Extension-Determination?

Johnston considers relinquishing necessity and instead understanding the biconditionals as specifications of the extension determination of the relevant concepts. He gives three reasons, independent of the Missing Explanation Argument and of considerations about real versus superficial necessity, why he considers it ‘unattractive’ to 'alter the requirement on response-dependent features so that a feature counted as response-dependent if the canonical biconditional was contingent but a priori.' (*Ibid* p. 37)

However, that does not properly articulate the suggestion that he claims to be

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71 And if contingent identity claims are ruled out.
considering, the source of which is Alexander Miller. 72 The suggestion is that we understand them, as in the account developed in Chapters I and II, as doing nothing more than showing how the extensions of the relevant concepts are determined, not that we take them as making a claim about the features of objects that may be included in those extensions. To compound the difficulty of interpreting Johnston’s dialectic here only two of the three reasons he gives address the unattractiveness of the extension-determination possibility, while the third addresses the possibility of a contingent biconditional:

Firstly, asks Johnston,

Shouldn’t we maintain some semblance of historical realism in our claim to the effect that the meanings of certain expressions fix the reference of others? Ibid Kripke’s example of ‘Neptune’ as a case where the name of the planet was determined by description rather than by ostension does not offend against this principle, Johnston argues. 73 Kripke notes that if Leverrier really did name the planet before it was seen (for he was unable to see it through a telescope) then he named it on the basis of the hypothesis that it was ‘the planet that causes discrepancies in the orbits of such and such other planets’, that is, by description. The material equivalence between ‘Neptune exists’ and ‘some one planet perturbing the orbit of such and such other planets exists in such and such a position’ is a priori, but not necessary because ‘Neptune’ was introduced as a rigid designator. It isn’t difficult, Johnston argues, to imagine in or around 1846 Leverrier or one of his colleagues thinking the thought ‘La planète qui provoque des perturbations dans l’orbite d’Uranus – appelons-la “Neptune.”’

Nor does Johnston’s own reference fixing for ‘standard subjects’, which is merely the introduction of a purely technical term that doesn’t ordinarily have a place in our

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72 See Miller 1995, p. 866, n. 20
73 Kripke 1980, p. 79, n. 33
language, offend against this principle. The response-dependence reference-fixing claim for ‘being red’ - ‘the property things have when they appear thus and so to certain subjects under such and such conditions’, however, lacks historical credibility according to Johnston and ‘being red’ cannot simply be passed off as a technical term the reference of which can be legitimately fixed by theoretical fiat.

Perhaps, though, the reference fixing claim is an ‘as if’ claim – the term functions semantically as if its reference were fixed in the way suggested. Johnston also rejects this possibility: the as if claim requires empirical evidence that speakers (who also understand the terms ‘a priori’ and ‘contingent’) recognise the reference fixing claims as a priori and contingently true, but there is no such evidence in the case of ‘being red’. Only in those cases such as ‘Neptune’ where the reference was as a matter of (historical) fact fixed by description is there the possibility of such recognition as to make an as if story plausible.

Johnston’s second reason for rejecting the possibility of re-casting the biconditionals as reference fixing the names of the secondary qualities is that it is otiose to fix the reference of names for features to which we have independent access via description. By comparison, it is appropriate to rely on reference fixing descriptions where we have no ‘better access to the referent than via some little theory or set of beliefs’ (Ibid, p. 38). Take the case, presented by Johnston, of ‘Greek fire’ (Ibid): A narrative about the ancient Greeks has them discovering a substance that explodes on contact with water and using it to great effect against enemy vessels. We can fix the reference of the term ‘Greek fire’ by this narrative (or theory). In so doing we implicitly allow that we have no independent access to what Greek fire is. Greek fire is simply whatever satisfies the story. In the case of manifest qualities of which we are visually aware (and/or,

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74 Johnston's argument misses Miller's point somewhat because the reference fixing claim is for the name of the property, not for the name of the concept, which is clearly what Miller is talking about.
presumably, aurally, orally, tactually and olfactorily aware), says Johnston we have independent access and don’t need access via a description.

Thirdly, settling for contingency would, Johnston argues, break the link with 'Locke’s idea that some manifest qualities are 'nothing but powers’ to produce responses in us.'\(Ibid\) p. 39) Response-dependence accounts of (the references of names for) the manifest qualities would no longer share with Locke’s account the objective of identifying objects’ manifest qualities with actors’ dispositions to appear thus and so to subjects disposed under standard conditions to have them appear thus and so to them. In short, once we opt for contingency, we change the subject away from what Johnston takes to be Locke’s original subject – identifying the nature of the properties that are termed ‘the secondary qualities’ – thereby reversing Johnston’s own moves (in his later papers) back in that direction. Once necessity is relinquished, we give up the possibility of property identities between manifest qualities and response dependent properties, that is, actors’ dispositions to elicit manifestations of standard subjects’ dispositions under standard conditions to respond in particular ways. Arguably, however, Locke’s own account of the secondary qualities sustains a reference-fixing (and therefore a priori contingent) reading of the relevant biconditionals.

When Locke writes that the secondary qualities are

\[\text{[N]othing in the Objects themselves but Powers to produce various sensations in us by their Primary Qualities.}\] 1975, p. 135 (italics in original)

he is reasonably read as taking the line that they are nothing in objects except powers to produce sensations in us, as opposed to taking the line that they are nothing in objects at all, but rather they are powers to produce sensations in us. Qua secondary qualities, then, their names are fixed via responses, as, arguably, the relevant biconditionals reflect. Moreover, Locke also gives an account of how objects come to cause those sensations,
how, if you like, their powers to produce particular sensations come to be manifested. The secondary qualities are causally responsible for the sensations associated with them only in so far as objects’ tastes, smells, colours, textures and sounds are ‘modes’ or arrangements of their primary qualities. In so far as secondary qualities are real properties, then, they are real by dint of being ways of having primary qualities, which are the causal bases of their powers to produce certain sensations in us. Arguably, for Locke, unlike for Johnston, then, there is no necessary relation between the sensation (or ‘response’ in our terms) and the property, for the properties that are the secondary qualities can be identified as modes of objects’ primary qualities and these are existentially and epistemically independent of any responses they may cause. There is, moreover, an a priori contingent connection between the reference of the names for the secondary qualities and the relevant responses that derives from the way in which their reference is fixed in practice. Such connections (between the extension of concepts and responses at least), rather than property identities, were after all what the tools of response-dependence were originally intended to elucidate.

§2 Johnston’s Argument from the Problem of Acquaintance

In his two 1996 papers on perception, Johnston reworks a further sceptical argument against a response-dependence account of the secondary qualities, which first appears in his 1992 paper 'How to Speak of the Colors'. This argument, though independent of the Missing Explanation Argument, shares with it a reliance on similar preoccupations and themes, including those that motivate Johnston’s revisionary project. It presents a version of familiar epistemic anxieties concerning the ability of perception to bridge an appearance/reality gap. Here they crystallise into an essentialist worry. In short: Johnston argues that perception gives us the false impression that it acquaints us with or reveals to us the natures of the properties of external objects. We implicitly place cognitive value on acquaintance as an outcome of perceptual experience, according to Johnston, because it

provides ‘cognitive contact’ not only with what properties things have, but also with the natures of those properties (1996a, p. 189). Where properties such as colours, tastes, textures, smells and sounds are identified with dispositions to elicit certain responses in standard subjects under standard conditions, that is, where they are taken to be secondary qualities, and, in Johnston’s terms, response-dispositional, perceptual experience tells how things look, taste, feel, smell and sound – how they appear, but not how they are. Perception’s promise of acquaintance, at least in respect of these families of properties, then, is ‘utterly fraudulent’ (1996a, p. 185).

As Johnston acknowledges, his argument might simply be driven by the impossibly high epistemic standard set by what he takes to be a Russelian understanding of acquaintance. Russell’s naïve conception of acquaintance was derived, says Johnston, by taking perception at face value and sets the standard of acquaintance as complete knowledge of a property as it is in itself (by contrast with how it appears in perceptual experience.)

Elsewhere, Johnston notes that the notion of acquaintance with a property taken as knowledge of its nature is ‘somewhat obscure’ (1992a, p. 254). Nevertheless he continues to test out his argument using a revised but ‘nonetheless significant standard’ derived from an operational characterisation of acquaintance applied to knowledge of the natures of properties.

‘Crucial’ to this characterization of acquaintance is that acquaintance with properties provides knowledge of similarity and difference relations within families of properties via the faculty of perception. To take Johnston’s example of the ordinary Euclidean shape properties – pyramids, cubes, spheres, cones, etc., I am acquainted with them if (i) I can recognise instances of them having seen exemplars and (ii) I know a family of similarities and differences, for instance, cubes are more similar to pyramids than they are to spheres.

76 It is not irresistible to interpret Russell as construing acquaintance with the colours of objects as acquaintance with the natures of the colours as properties. Indeed, it is not at all evident (in The Problems of Philosophy at least) that acquaintance with the natures of properties is something about which Russell cares. See his 1912, pp 22-28.
by dint of having straight sides. How does this account deliver the crucial desideratum of perceptual acquaintance, namely that if we are perceptually acquainted with a property (or a family thereof), our perceptual experiences *reveal* its nature? Johnston argues that the similarities that we know by acquaintance are intrinsic and essential similarities; that is, they,

i) Follow from the natures of the properties in the family
and therefore

ii) hold among the properties in any possible situation, i.e., no matter how the contingent relations among properties are varied and no how the facts about which things have [which] properties are varied. 1996a, p.192

On this account, acquaintance with a family of properties turns out to be a matter of degree determined by the extent of the knowledge of similarities it provides. The operational account, then, saves the possibility of acquaintance with the family of Euclidean shape properties, and it would work in the same way with respect to shapes of two-dimensional figures by delivering acquaintance via perceptually sourced knowledge of the essential similarity relations between members of a family of such properties.77 The operational account of acquaintance, however, cannot, according to Johnston, perform the same rescue manoeuvre with respect to the families of properties that are the manifest properties.

The general nature of the problematic of perceptual experience, as Johnston sees it, is illustrated by familiar sceptical thought experiments such as the Brain in the Vat. Traditionally, the Brain in the Vat case problematises the justifiability of our beliefs about the external world. But it also presents what Johnston terms ‘the other problem of the external world’ –the problem of acquaintance:

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77 The success of the revised (operational) account seems to rest on the examples chosen and there is no particular reason to think that the point about shapes generalises to other cases. It is, however, difficult to know how to generate counterexamples given that the secondary quality properties themselves might be said to provide such a counterexample.
The problem of how, given the nature of information transmission, we could be acquainted with the nature of any of the properties of external things represented by our experience. 1996a, p. 187

The nature of information transmission undermines the possibility of acquaintance, Johnston argues, because the nature of any message received is partly a product of the cause or sender of the message and partly a product of the recipient. In the case of perceptual experience, we can’t separate out the contributions of our own sensibility from the contribution of the objects apparently experienced – the medium corrupts the purity of the message.

Brain in a Vat experiments demonstrate that our experiences don’t discriminate between different types of causes of those experiences so long as their effects on us are structurally identical. Thus, infers Johnston, perceptual experience cannot be revelatory of the natures of the properties of external objects because

[N]o perceptual experience could at the same time reveal two things so intrinsically unalike as life in Boise and the inner workings of the vat computer [in the Brain in a Vat case]. Ibid, p. 187-88

And if it is not revelatory of the natures of properties, that means it fails to acquaint us with the natures of the features of objects that are the causes of our experiences of them as being thus and so. We can know the features by description – as the features that are standardly causally responsible for such and such an experience, whatever they may turn out to be (in themselves) – and hence as objects of language and of thought. But Johnston claims that despite this level of epistemic contact, relative to the problem of acquaintance, things remain ‘as bad as they would be if we were brains in vats.’ (Ibid, p. 188).

The impossibility of separating out the contributions to our perceptual experiences of the object perceived (and assumed to be the cause of the experience) and of our perceptual
experience gives rise to a causal worry: What Johnston terms a ‘causal condition on seeing’ is not met. That causal condition on seeing an object's properties places on visual perception (and analogously on other modes of perception) a demand that is shared with epistemic receptivity, that is, an object’s having a property F must be part of any causal explanation of seeing that the thing is F (Ibid, p. 190). If the visual experience of seeing that the object is F is to be revelatory of the nature of the property of being F, that is, if it is properly to acquaint us with Fness, it must veridically represent the nature of Fness. But the rub is that the way visual experience represents Fness as being is determined by the internal states that a perceiver is in when having the experience. If the causal condition is satisfied, those states must be causally explained by the object’s being F. However, short of a ‘pre-established harmony’, Johnston argues, no causal process will deliver a nature-revealing match between how Fness is and the way perceivers are caused to represent Fness as being, that is, causal processes such as those required by the causal condition on seeing and by epistemic receptivity generally do not deliver acquaintance with the natures of the properties that cause our experiences of them.

Applied to the case of the manifest properties response-interdependently conceived, then, the crux of the failure of perceptual experience to acquaint us with their natures is the impossibility of distinguishing the contribution to the experience of the respondent’s own sensibilities from the contribution of the actor that is both cause and object of that experience. As we saw earlier, where the manifest properties are response-interdependently conceived of as dispositions, experiences of them are understood as the manifestation of each of the sides of a coordinated pair of dispositions – the actor disposition of an object to elicit a particular response under suitable conditions in suitable respondents and the patient disposition of standard respondents to respond thus and so when confronted with certain objects under standard conditions. It is the difficulty of separating out the effects of the actor and the effects of the patient that is the source of so much essentialist and causal anxiety.
Momentarily, one might think, as Johnston himself does in his 1992 paper on colours, that according to the operationalist revision of acquaintance, perception does manage to reveal the nature of the manifest properties if they are conceived of as response-dispositions. Johnston allows that it is plausible to hold that if a colour, say, is taken to be a disposition to produce a given experience and a respondent has such an experience (and takes the experience to be a manifestation of the disposition in question) that respondent knows the nature of the disposition thanks to her perceptual experience. So if I conceive of the sweetness of the chocolate to be a response-disposition to produce a particular response in standard respondents under standard conditions (and I take myself and the prevailing conditions to qualify as suitable) and I find myself to be responding in the manner characteristic of manifestations of the disposition to taste sweet under those conditions to those respondents, I can, says Johnston, be in possession of ‘all there is to know about the essential nature’ of the response-dispositional property that is sweetness. So on the basis of perceptual experience, I can satisfy the (revised) condition of acquaintance for the family of taste properties. For on the basis of perceptual experience, I can know that sweetness is dissimilar from bitterness and sourness, which are more similar to each other than they are to saltiness and hence I know at least some of their essential similarities and am at least partially acquainted with the family of taste properties.

But the hope of acquaintance is, as I warned, merely fleeting, and separation anxiety re-emerges. The nature of the response-dispositions that are the secondary qualities, that is, actor/patient pairs of dispositions, means that any perceptual experience that is taken to be a response characteristic of experiencing sweetness, say, is both a manifestation of the disposition of the actor to elicit that response in standard respondents under standard conditions to those respondents under standard conditions. However, this does not mean that the respondent is acquainted with the physical properties that realise the disposition. This is not to say that she is acquainted with the physical properties that, as a contingent matter of fact, realise (underlie) the disposition.

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78 This is not to say that she is acquainted with the physical properties that, as a contingent matter of fact, realise (underlie) the disposition.
conditions and of the disposition of the patient to respond thus and so when confronted with sweet objects under standard conditions. And the experience is as much a revelation of the patient’s disposition as it is that of the actor. All well and good, we might say, secondary qualities are ‘scattered capacities partly in the object of perception and partly in the perceiving subject’ and perceptual experience reveals that to us (Ibid p. 197). But, counters Johnston, perception only acquaints us with these capacities if we conceive of our experiences qua manifestations of such capacities and that in turn requires that we take our perceptual experiences as revealing features which are as much features of ourselves as they are features of external objects. Ibid, p. 197

And this is no easy feat given the phenomenology of perception, which represents perception as an outwardly directed cognitive enterprise. By contrast, as we saw earlier, with other forms of experiences of objects’ dispositions to elicit in us inwardly directed responses, such as bodily sensations.

Thus Johnston concludes that even with revised standards of acquaintance, it is not clear how acquaintance with the properties that are the secondary qualities is possible and this threatens perceptual knowledge generally. For

Without being founded in acquaintance with properties, our knowledge of the external world….is …bloodless and schematic, devoid of the very substance which seemed to make it intrinsically appealing – acquaintance with properties. Ibid, p. 198

But one might still remain unconvinced of the pressing need for the type of ‘cognitive contact’ Johnston sees as being delivered by acquaintance.79 Johnston’s motivation is moral as well as metaphysical, he believes there is a ‘human cost’ of striking ‘what we might call the pornographic attitude’ rather than what Husserl calls the ‘natural attitude’

79 As do Allan Gibbard and Enrique Villanueva in their responses (Gibbard 1996, Villanueva 1996) to Johnston, as he notes (1996b, p. 223).
We take pleasure in the ‘revealed sensible natures of things’ via emotions such as the aesthetic, the sensual and the erotic – our sensual pleasure in the rich, tongue-enveloping sweetness of the chocolate, for instance – which presuppose that their objects are as they are represented in perceptual experience. Once we realise that they are not, because perceptual experience fails to reveal the natures of the properties to which we are responding, we need to revise our understanding of those pleasures as pleasures in (mere) appearances. The ‘human cost’ to which Johnston alerts us is the relinquishment of the possibility of access to the natures of things, a loss the upshot of which is that we are ‘already inhabitants of a virtual reality’ (Ibid, p. 229). But if acquaintance via perceptual experience is only ever a false hope for human perceivers, it is hard to see what is lost apart from an unrealistic epistemic ideal.

§3 What Went Wrong?
From the outset, Johnston’s notion of cognitive contact via acquaintance with the *natures* of objects’ properties, a notion which he acknowledges as ‘obscure’, shapes his project of rescuing the secondary qualities via response-dependence. The impulse to revise ordinary secondary quality and moral concepts arises from the allegation of widespread projective error concerning the nature of those properties. We take experience to be revelatory of their natures and hence we take them as we find them – as non-relational response-independent features – when they are actually the converse – relational and response-dependent, specifically, according to Johnston, response-dispositions. If we are to avoid an Error Theory of the features posited by practices involving our concepts of these properties, our concepts should be revised or replaced by surrogates that take account of the properties’ relational natures. Consistent with Johnston’s commitment to minimalism, his revisionary stance amounts to an attempt to prevent moral properties and secondary qualities from disappearing from the manifest world into the mere manifest image of the world and, indeed, he sees Locke’s project as a predecessor to his. The revisionary project ultimately fails, however, because under the revised conception, that is, as
response-dispositional and interdependent, the properties in question cannot meet the
explanatory and essentialist demands that arise from the excessive requirements placed
by the epistemic goal of cognitive contact, which is construed as acquaintance with the
natures of properties.

We have traced how the subject of Johnston’s project changes as it evolves from a
revisionary account of *concepts* into a descriptive response-dispositional account of
*properties* (that thereby requires the revision of our concepts). This change of subject is
itself generated by the goal of cognitive contact via acquaintance with the natures of
properties. However, once the a priori biconditionals that make up the response-
dependence account are understood as property identity claims rather than as
representations of the ways in which concepts’ extensions are determined, they must not
only be a priori, they must also be necessary. Once necessity is in place, we are faced
with the problem, articulated in Johnston’s Missing Explanation Argument, that two
relata related in an a priori and necessary manner, as a response-dependence account
usually demands, cannot also be successfully related as explanans and explanandum –
any attempt at explanation using the two relata will be empty of empirical content.
Unless, that is, we can fall back on an explanation via ‘associated features’, but properties
for which this is an option are not ones with which our epistemic relation is one of
receptivity and thus they are not instances where the Missing Explanation Argument
gains traction. The upshot, then, is that once we understand the secondary qualities as
response-dependent properties, they cannot function in explanations of standard subjects’
dispositions to respond to them as response-dependent features, that is, they fail to pull
any weight in explanations of our experiences of them. Once their causal credentials are
cast into doubt, their status as real properties (on Johnston’s terms) is once again
questionable and the attempt to save them for the manifest world, as opposed to the mere
manifest image, is doomed.
So, what went wrong? Is there still any cause for optimism with respect to response-dependence accounts? In short, because of the considerations advanced via the Missing Explanation Argument, the response-dependence account doesn’t sustain the change of subject from concepts to properties, but we can remain optimistic about the prospects of response-dependence as an apparatus for understanding the role of responses in the determination of concepts’ extensions, if we are prepared to return to that original, more modest, aim. Furthermore, the understanding of the reality of properties as consisting in their causal efficacy requires further examination. As we see in Chapters VI, VII and VIII, they can earn their ontic status via the satisfaction of somewhat more liberal demands on explanatory efficacy.

Johnston adopts the revisionary stance on the grounds that our concepts of secondary quality properties and of moral properties are based on the mistaken assumption that perceptual experience transparently reveals the natures of the properties we experience, that is, we are subject to the fallacy of revelation. We don’t experience those properties as response-dependent so, believing their natures to be revealed, we take them to be response-independent. However, Johnston’s grounds for revision are not entirely irresistible.

Reflection upon ordinary cases of perceptual experience suggests that it is a mistake to convict ordinary secondary quality practice of so systematic an error. It is certainly the case that not all of our perceptual experiences reveal the relational nature of secondary qualities, but they do so more frequently than Johnston allows. These cases suffice as a basis for the correction of any response-independent conceptions of those properties that we may be tempted to form. Part of the problem is that Johnston’s case relies on reflection on visually perceived properties. The relational nature of secondary quality and other properties comes into sharper relief through our reflection on other types of perceptual experience. Take for example experiences of taste properties such as
sweetness and bitterness. Some aspects of the relational nature of these properties are readily available to us on the basis of perceptual experience. Experience shows us that things may taste different in juxtaposition to other substances, so that most wines taste sour if one has been eating chocolate, for instance; that things may taste different if one has been smoking, or drinking coffee, or has a heavy cold. Moreover, as small children learning about the sense of taste and about taste qualities, and being initiated into the relevant conceptual practices, we experience, and are invited to reflect upon, the way in which different parts of our tongues are sensitive to different tastes even in the same object. Additionally, we may experience the way in which an object tastes different at different temperatures. Similarly, but less primitively, sound engineers learn to pay attention to the context in which sounds occur, particularly to the sounds that occur immediately before and after that upon which they are focussed. Cases such as these demonstrate for us at least some ways in which taste and sound properties are related to both our taste sensations and the conditions in which those sensations are experienced, and reflection thereupon suggests that contrary to Johnston’s account, we form our concepts accordingly. That is, either we (already) form relational concepts or we begin with inaccurate non-relational concepts and gradually refine them into relational concepts as our understanding of our experiences and their relations to ourselves and conditions of experience develops. Indeed, during the stages of conceptual development when our concepts are inaccurately non-relational, it is less than plausible to think that we would have developed a folk-metaphysical understanding sufficiently sophisticated to generate thoughts and concerns about the intrinsic natures of the properties things have.

Colour experience itself is not as wholly incapable of revealing aspects of the unsteady and relational nature of colours as Johnston would have it, particularly with respect to relativity to conditions of perception, especially to light conditions. We tacitly acknowledge this relativity every time we take an object into the daylight in order to view its colour more accurately. The allegation of systematic error is further vitiated by
reflection upon the way in which we tend to correct for odd or poor lighting conditions such as neon, sodium or candle light, and by the way in which painters are trained to pay attention to the way in which the context in which colours are viewed affects perception thereof. One aspect of the relativity of colours to observers’ perceptions is revealed by consideration of differences in colour perception between normal respondents and the colour-blind. Cases of these types suggest that the charge of systematic error in our practice is misplaced. We have many opportunities to correct any response-independent conceptions of these properties we may be inclined to form. I suggest that our ordinary unrevised practices reflect this. They also demonstrate that we have an intuitive understanding of what the theorist terms suitability constraints upon conditions of experience (response) and hence an intuitive understanding that the nature of the experience is related to the conditions in which it occurs and to the condition of the respondent.80

Even if Johnston were to concede that folk understanding of secondary qualities is less erroneous than he has alleged, our knowledge of their relationality will not satisfy the demands of cognitive contact as he construes them. For, as we have detailed, acquaintance with the natures of properties (albeit according to an operationalist notion of acquaintance) must be achieved if we are to have full and frank epistemic contact with secondary quality properties via perception. The Argument from the Problem of Acquaintance shows that the nature of perception makes this impossible, while the Missing Explanation Argument shows that even if it weren’t, we wouldn’t be able to explain those perceptual experiences in terms of the properties they purport to be of.

If a response-dependence project is to proceed successfully then, it must proceed free of certain of Johnston’s overly strong epistemic demands. Acquaintance with a property

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80 These bits of tacit knowledge of relativity of colour experience to respondent and conditions are elements of what David Lewis has termed ‘common knowledge’, which is central to the folk’s psychophysical understanding of colour. See Lewis 1999, pp 333-36.
understood as the ‘obscure’ notion of acquaintance with its nature is difficult to motivate as an epistemic goal in those who find themselves relatively untroubled by the pornographic problem of appearances that so disturbs Johnston. Contrary to his view, acquaintance with the nature of a property is an epistemic relation that concerns the metaphysician, but not an outcome that the folk expect or seek through perceptual experience, even implicitly. Although some general sceptical worries may remain, the Argument from the Problem of Acquaintance is not an especially pressing formulation thereof. Once acquaintance, in the strong sense pursued by Johnston, is relinquished as the goal of perceptual cognitive engagement, the Argument from the Problem of Acquaintance leaves response-dependence accounts of secondary quality properties immune from what is essentially the familiar sceptical worry that a veil of perception blurs the reality of properties thus construed.

Even if the account of response-dependent properties can sidestep the Argument from the Problem of Acquaintance, it must still face the Missing Explanation Argument, which remains a barrier to a successful account. Johnston has acknowledged that reining in his commitment to epistemic receptivity – whereby sensing and perceiving are taken to be dispositions that are triggered by objects when they have a property and because they have that property – and limiting it to epistemic servility, as favoured by other theorists, such as Phillip Pettit and Alexander Miller, removes the force of the Missing Explanation Argument. If the perceptual response is no longer understood as a disposition but rather as the manifestation of a disposition, the explanation that goes missing under the requirements of receptivity would have that manifestation as its explanandum, and the disposition to respond would be cited in the (albeit incomplete) explanans. Although, the dispositional idiom is, as Johnston claims, legitimate here, it is not exclusively so.
A preoccupation with acquaintance with the natures of properties as a cognitive goal and value (perhaps) motivates Johnston to re-focus his revisionary response-dependence project away from concepts and towards a description of properties. A response-dependence account of properties consists of basic equations derived from property identity claims that determine that those equations be both a priori and necessary. It is the tension between those conditions on basic equations and certain causal conditions that the Missing Explanation Argument demonstrates. A response-dependence account of the concepts that determine those properties, however, is not undermined by the argument, as Johnston concedes (1998, p. 37). If we focus not on properties, but rather on a project the aim of which is to elucidate the role of responses in determining certain concepts’ extensions, elucidations that are in fact consistent with a variety of theories of the properties determined by those concepts, and that allow for different accounts of properties determined by different types of response-dependent concepts, then neither the Missing Explanation Argument nor the Argument from the Problem of Acquaintance are a barrier to our progress.\(^8\) In Chapters 5 and 6 we consider two further approaches to response-dependence that follow variations of the extension-determination route.

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\(^8\) Johnston’s objections to the extension-determination reading of the response-dependence claim were laid out in §1.3.
Chapter V – Pettit’s Descriptive Project

§1 Introduction

In a theory developed by Phillip Pettit the term ‘response-dependent’ has been used to express a claim about the role of responses in concept possession and the mastery of terms. Although the theory, like Johnston’s (at least at the outset of Johnston’s theorising), aims to give an account of respondent-involvement that remains consistent with a realist account of the practices that involve those concepts, it is otherwise, as the main protagonists note, divergent in most of its important elements. Most immediately, it gives a descriptive rather than a revisionary account of ordinary practices involving the concepts and terms in question. Its basic equations, then, are derived from reflection on the processes and practices by which possession and mastery of concepts and linguistic terms deemed to be basic (in a sense that will be explained below) to a speaker or a community are developed and established. So in their most recently published work (2002), Pettit and (collaborator) Frank Jackson claim that it is this competence that is response-dependent and thus it is in this sense that a concept (or term) is response-dependent, its response-dependence will be demonstrated via an ethocentric account of how it is learned. By these lights, the response-dependence claim is not, as Johnston’s is, supposed to be a claim that makes any commitments about the nature of the property determined by the concept in question or connoted by the term in question.

The theory’s application to basic concepts means that its scope is a good deal wider than either the account proposed in Chapters I and II or Johnston’s account. Indeed, in his earlier papers, Pettit described his theory as global response dependence (where the

‘globe’ was the world of basic concepts). It also means that, despite the choice of examples (RED appears frequently), the focus has shifted from secondary quality concepts. Of course, many of the concepts that are response-dependent by the lights of the accounts considered thus far will also fall within the ambit of response-dependence as it is understood by Pettit, but on significantly different grounds.

This account has developed in a more linear fashion than Johnston’s, its evolutionary changes amounting to adjustments of emphases, strivings for greater clarity and responses to objections. It is thus possible to consider it as a stable set of theses in the context of the arguments given in their support and the assumptions that background them.

§2 Concepts: Basic and Otherwise

According to this account, response-dependence is a characteristic of both concepts and terms. Throughout Pettit’s relevant work ‘concept’ and ‘term’ tend to be used interchangeably such that what is claimed for terms is intended to apply to concepts and vice versa. Although this conflation is not uncontroversial, interrogating it at this stage would be an unnecessary distraction from our current aim of clear exegesis. For the time being, I will simply point out justifications for the conflation move given elsewhere in either Pettit’s or Jackson’s work.

In particular, Frank Jackson’s comments on the project of conceptual analysis, of which his contributions (with Pettit) to the development of this strain of response-dependence accounts are a part, shed some light on the underlying view of concepts/language that is in play here. For Jackson and Pettit, talk of concepts abstracts only very slightly from talk of language and of words’ meaning, and, as we shall see, they believe that basic

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terms and concepts are learnt via the same (ostension involving) processes. Elsewhere, Jackson has explained that the broad aim of conceptual analysis is to elucidate what governs our classificatory practices (1998, pp. 29-37). Although the project is labeled conceptual analysis, what it actually does, he claims, is show what possible situations are covered by the words we use. He has chosen to use the 'conceptual analysis' label (i) in deference to the nomenclature of the tradition in which his work is located (Chisholm, Ayer) and (ii) because concept talk remains neutral with respect to differences between particular languages, so that the focus of analysis remains on ‘getting clear about the cases covered rather than on what does the covering, the word per se.’ (1998, p. 33)

As the authors under consideration clearly believe that nothing turns on whether their claims are made with respect to terms or to concepts, consistent with our treatment thus far, I will continue to write of response-dependent concepts, resorting to talk of terms only where context or direct citation requires it.

Before giving an account of the notion of basic concepts employed by Pettit, it will be helpful to have an overview of the general understanding of concepts in play in that account. Taking an approach to concepts that is similar to that developed by Peacocke, according to which concepts are individuated via their possession conditions, Pettit’s focus when developing his view of concepts is on what it takes for someone to count as being able properly to use a concept – to grasp or possess it. A concept, he writes,

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84 In a move that parallels Michael Dummett’s argument that a theory of meaning should be a theory of understanding, Peacocke has argued that a theory of concepts should be given by a theory of concept possession. A possession conditions account of a concept will state (i) what individuates a concept and (ii) what it is to possess that concept. Concepts are thus defined:

\[
\text{Concept } F \text{ is that unique concept } C \text{ to possess which a thinker must meet condition } A(C).
\]

Peacocke 1992, p. 6

Condition \( A(C) \), then, is the possession condition. The possession conditions approach to theorising concepts contrasts with an application conditions approach, which gives accounts of concepts in terms of the beliefs competent users typically hold about items that fall under their extension. The ability to hold such beliefs will require that thinkers already enjoy a degree of competence with a concept; that is, that they already fulfill its possession conditions. So an applications conditions account is derived from reflection on the beliefs entailed once a thinker has acquired and is using a concept, rather than what she must be able to do in order to grasp it in the first place. As we have seen, the account of concepts favoured by Johnston, according to which concepts are individuated in terms of clusters of de dicto
Is an intentional and accessible entity and to possess a concept of something is to be able to think about what beliefs to form in regard to propositions involving that item. 1991, p. 596

This capacity account is more demanding than some in that it requires an agent who possesses a concept to be able to do more than simply form beliefs about items to which the concept might apply. Rather,

The person must be able to fix on the object or property or operation in question with a view to forming rational and true beliefs about propositions that involve it; she must be able to try and respect the requirements of that entity for the truth of those propositions. She will need to have the capacity to track the object through time, as she tries to determine if it is still thus and so. She will need to have the capacity to identify the property across different bearers, as she tries to decide whether something hitherto unencountered possesses it. 1993, p. 195.

On this account, then, grasp of a concept F consists in the ability to apply that concept appropriately to an object a, thereby making the judgement ‘Fa’, at time₁ and, where relevant, subsequently at timeₙ (provided that a remains unchanged), and the ability to apply F appropriately to objects b, c, d, e… on the basis of their relevant similarity to a paradigm such as a. As we will see, it is the practice of recognising salient similarities between paradigms and subsequent cases, together with extrapolation from that similarity that this response-dependence account takes as the relevant response. Indeed, it is the central role played in their competence with a concept by thinkers’ beliefs about and responses to the objects of its application that is the ground for the claim that the concept in question is response-dependent. 85

85 Later versions of the Pettitian account emphasise the belief-dependence of the acquisition of basic concepts. I deal with this point in §2.2.
2.2 Basic Concepts

As indicated in the introduction, a significant element of the Pettitian response-dependence approach is that the scope of its response-dependence claim is limited to what its proponents term basic concepts. The theory that certain concepts are basic in the manner claimed will be interrogated in due course, for now it will be sufficient to see what it is for a concept to count as basic in these terms. Throughout the development of this account as it appears in the work of Pettit et al, the global scope of the response-dependence claim has been limited to the domain of basic concepts.\(^{86}\)

A concept’s status as basic, like its status as response-dependent, derives from the manner in which it is acquired – the way in which agents become competent with it – and, crucially, the role of ostension in its initial introduction to an agent:

Among those terms or concepts that a person uses to characterise the world, we can distinguish between those that are introduced to the subject wholly by definitions that employ words already understood, and those that are not introduced in that way. Those that are not introduced in that way may presuppose a network of other terms, and they may be partly defined by their place in that network. But their introduction – whether this be one by one, or in packages – must directly link the subject with items in the perceived world. Ultimately the mastery of these terms involves ostension: it is accomplished by directing the learner’s attention to the things that are experientially available. We shall describe these terms as semantically basic. Jackson and Pettit 2002, p. 97

Pettit is careful to add caveats to ensure that the notion of basic concepts is neither understood nor inflated to involve ontic or epistemic commitments. Basic concepts are

\(^{86}\) The idea that some concepts provide a base from which others can be grasped is not novel. Peacocke gives a similar account of observational concepts, see his 1983, Ch. 4, as Does Wright (1986, p. 276ff).
not intended to be concepts that determine properties that are in some way ontically basic, nor are they supposed to be epistemically basic in the sense that they provide an essential foundation for the acquisition of further concepts. They will, though, include the concepts we are likely to form as a result of primitive experience of the world – concepts of properties such as colour, taste, smell, size and shape, and of objects such as trees, men, women, houses and cats. The basic/non-basic distinction is not intended to commit its proponents to a foundationalist account of concept acquisition; it does not entail that there is some set of basic concepts with which one must be competent in order to be able to grasp any other (non-basic) concepts. While Pettit and Jackson insist that for any given culture at any given time there will be some concepts that are basic (in their sense) to overall conceptual competence and others the mastery of which is derivative thereof, the set of basic concepts is not static, but fluid and changing relative to individuals and cultures and to historical location (2002, p. 98). Thus there may be variation between communities and between members of a community with respect to which concepts are basic to them at a given time. Jackson and Pettit assume ‘a good deal of convergence’ on which concepts are basic for ordinary users. But, as they remark, it is an assumption of convenience upon which nothing hangs (Ibid). For instance, most ordinary concepts of the tastes of things (sweet, sour, salty, bitter) will be basic for the majority who are physically equipped to perceive them, but some may well be acquired via definition and thus non-basic for those who are taste-blind. In addition to its lack of foundationalist ambitions, the account also lacks atomistic intent. Acquisition of a basic concept can still be dependent upon, or achieved in association with, that of other basic concepts, the underlying picture being that of a conceptual network, the complete topology of which is learnt by first becoming familiar with local holisms.

Due in part to his early objective of finding a non-sceptical solution to rule-following problems, Pettit’s earlier formulations of this theory of response-dependent basic concepts has made much of his use of an ethocentric methodology to track concept...
acquisition. At the heart of the *genealogy* of the possession of basic concepts is the disposition to extrapolate from the exemplars of a concept’s extension that are provided via the ostension process, a disposition that manifests itself in ‘primitive similarity responses’ (1991, p. 599). Pettit has written elsewhere that the disposition to extrapolate is

almost certainly underwritten by biologically programmed sensitivities – these patterns are salient, those are not – but it may also be subject, of course, to culturally induced shaping and prompting. 1999, p.29

‘Whatever their source’, he continues, it is plausible to claim that we are equipped with such dispositions. It is not completely clear, however, the extent to which the dispositional notion invoked here is theoretically loaded. Elsewhere in that paper, Pettit talks about ‘a disposition or habit’ (*Ibid*, pp 28-9). This suggests that he might mean ‘disposition’ in a less theoretically loaded ordinary sense such that it is synonymous with ‘habit’, which would be consistent with his ethocentric approach, and wouldn’t entail a categorical (in this case biological) base for the disposition to extrapolate. Concepts’ genealogies are traced by reflection upon the habits and practices in which their use and acquisition consist and it is its appeal to these resources (connoted by the term ‘ethos’) that is the ground for Pettit’s ‘ethocentric’ label. The ethocentric project’s own ethos is best grasped in juxtaposition with a logocentric approach that attempts to formulate the algorithms on the basis of which thinkers apply concepts in new cases.

Pettit constructs an ethocentric narrative about concept acquisition according to which thinkers come to grasp basic concepts on the basis of noticing *salient similarities* between newly encountered cases and familiar paradigms of those concepts’ instantiation to which we are introduced via ostention. He believes that human thinkers have a natural inclination to group objects together on the basis of apparent similarities and this inclination underlies concept acquisition. The capacity in which competence with a concept consists just is the capacity to move from exemplars to new cases, recognising
them as being of the same kind, together with the capacity to rule out non-cases. We acquire a concept then,

on the basis, first, of being presented with certain exemplars under certain conditions and on the basis, second, of finding it salient to extrapolate from those exemplars in a certain direction. Pettit 1991, p. 598.

The type of process Pettit has in mind is captured by the following narrative involving the concept BOX-SHAPED: A thinker’s primitive experience of the world involves encounters with a few paradigmatic boxes to which she has been ostensively introduced – the cardboard container that houses her morning cereal, the wooden object that houses her toys, the coloured object out of which pops a small brightly coloured figure called ‘Jack’. Like almost all other humans, she enjoys an unreflective inclination to group together objects thus encountered on the basis of their similarities. Suppose she groups these particular exemplars together on the basis of their similarity in respect of shape. She need not have grasped the less primitive concept of geometric shape to be able to do this, she could do it on the basis of an awareness that they seem to fill space in the same way or that they present the same visual appearance. On the basis of these exemplars, she finds it primitively salient to extrapolate in the direction of an indefinite range of novel objects that seem to have the same similarity relation to the paradigms as they have to each other. Thus she forms the habit of going on in the same way, associating boxes of different sizes, shapes and colours with the paradigms, while not, for instance, associating flat objects with them (unless they are all the same colour, for instance, and the salient similarity to which she is in fact attuned is one of colour appearance). If she were to extrapolate from the paradigmatic boxes to, say, a flat, star-shaped object on the basis of an apparent (to her) similarity in respect of shape, then theorists and other thinkers would have good reason to think that she had not in fact grasped the concept BOX-SHAPED.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{87} Theorists or fellow thinkers who are trying to ascertain whether the novice has succeeded in grasping the concept in question would have to test out some hypotheses in order to check that she does (minimally) understand herself as applying \textit{that} concept and not some other that is also exemplified by the same set of objects.
Members of the community, who share these primitive grouping and extrapolative inclinations, and who already possess the concept – who are already immersed in the practice that employs it – guide the novice’s attempts at use, policing and assisting their concept acquisition.

Clearly given the emphasis this account places on ostension and on the experiential availability of paradigms, secondary quality concepts qualify as basic and hence response-dependent, as demonstrated by Pettit’s ethocentric narrative for the concept RED:

People have red sensations – things look red to them – as a matter of primitive experience of the world. Those sensations may not be the objects of introspective awareness but they will have an impact on what people find similar. They will make English postboxes, ripe tomatoes and heated metals similar in a salient respect. This enables people to use such examples then to indicate a certain property, viz the common colour. What colour? All they can say is that colour, pointing at relevant examples. The examples make the property in which they are interested salient and the concept is ostensively defined by reference to the examples. Pettit 1991, p. 600.

However, as we shall see in due course, secondary quality concepts should not necessarily be considered paradigmatic of response-dependence thus construed.

In their recent (2002) paper ‘Response-Dependence Without Tears’, Jackson and Pettit have refined this account, affording more prominence to the role played in concept acquisition by certain beliefs and the dispositions to form them. It is in virtue of the belief-dependence of a concept’s possession, they argue, that it is response-dependent in their terms. Given the terms of their definition of basic concepts (above), one might expect that epistemic commitment in the sense of having certain beliefs about the items in a concept’s extension and about their relations to those that fall under definitionally
related concepts would play a crucial role in competence with non-basic concepts. Jackson and Pettit, however, maintain that the entertainment of certain beliefs is involved even in competence with basic concepts. ‘When we are introduced to the term “red”’ they argue, we learn that if an object *seems* red, then in the absence of various obstacles and limitations that typically distort our responses, its appearance can be taken as a reliable indication that the object *is* red. Thus, the appearance elicits a belief that the thing in question is red and the formation of the belief constitutes a manifestation of a disposition to form such beliefs on the basis of appearances under certain conditions.

With this latest refinement in place, response dependence is defined thus:

> Take any basic term or concept, ‘T’, that is used in common amongst a community of speakers to refer to something, T…. ‘T’ will be response-dependent just in case an ordinary speaker’s competence in the use of the term goes hand in hand with their believing of anything they encounter that it is T if it seems T and there is no evidence of unfavourable influences; and with their believing that it is not T if it seems non-T and there is no evidence of unfavourable influences. Jackson and Pettit, 2002, p. 99

Elsewhere, Pettit has argued for a requirement of *non-conceptualisation* which, when met, would ensure that relevant responses are ‘relatively primitive’. They must be capable of doing the job required of them without being conceptualised; they can occur and they can mediate the agent’s use of terms, without themselves being articulated in language by the agent in question. Pettit 1998, p. 120

The account requires non-conceptualisation of responses if the notion of basic concepts is to remain intact. The theory has it that responses are essential to learning the use of concepts and terms that are basic. But if learners require a concept or term for the response itself, then we require an account of how that concept was acquired and the status of the concept supposedly learnt response-dependently as basic comes into
question. Pettit maintains that the requirement is not difficult to meet as it seems that respondents can be unconscious of their response to something (and lack a word for that response) and yet still be led on the basis of it to group it with sufficiently similar things and name, or otherwise treat it – make judgements about it, say – accordingly and appropriately.

Jackson and Pettit argue that in addition to this case-by-case belief-dependence – the disposition to form the appropriate belief about encountered object a, another about encountered object b, and so on – this account entails a more general belief-dependence. For competence with ‘T’ entails the general belief ‘that among the things encountered by speakers those and only those that seem T under favourable conditions, C, are T and deserve to be called ‘T’.’ (2002, p. 99). But this does not mean that ordinary thinkers competent with ‘T’ are epistemically committed to this general proposition. Rather, the authors maintain, they need only be committed to the proposition in ‘a distinctively tacit or practical manner’ in the sense that they need not entertain an explicit belief that it is true, but, analogously with the way in which non-logicians treat modus ponens, they need only ‘treat it as true on a case-by-case basis, not under the aspect of a general truth.’ (Ibid, p. 100)

Elsewhere, Pettit has expressed this distinction in terms of the difference between believing a proposition in sensu diviso and believing it in sensu composito. He uses the distinction to cash out the general idea, which, though not explicitly discussed, is at work in his response-dependence thesis, of a practical mode of belief that requires of a thinker

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88 1998c, p. 22. In this paper Pettit attempts to show how practical modes of belief, as opposed to the familiar, behavioural modes of belief, whereby to believe that p is to be disposed to behave as if p; and judgemental modes of belief, whereby to believe that p is both to be disposed to behave as if p and also to be sincerely and comprehendingly disposed to judge that p, can avoid the paradox of analysis. While more general in its approach, the paper touches on several issues pertinent to Pettit’s response-dependence thesis.
who (practically) believes that \( p \) only that they are able to reason on a ‘\( p \)-pattern’, that is that they are able to

recognise and practise instances of reasoning that are unified and legitimated by the fact, if it is a fact, that \( p \): to treat as reasons for forming certain judgemental beliefs considerations whose status as reasons for forming those beliefs is explained and justified by the fact, if it is a fact, that \( p \). Pettit 1998c, p. 22

Beliefs formed in the process of acquiring response-dependent concepts need only be practical beliefs. Those principles of reasoning specific to the acquisition of a particular response-dependent concept or family of concepts are captured in the biconditional for that concept. Thus biconditionals for taste concepts capture the principle that something is sweet, say, if and only if it tastes sweet under appropriate conditions.

A familiar problem for ostensive practices such as that claimed here to be crucial to the acquisition of basic concepts, a problem which echoes the question of indeterminacy at the heart of rule-following problems, is that it will be indeterminate which properties are exemplified to a thinker by an apparent set of paradigms that may co-instantiate various properties. The set of exemplars that a teacher uses ostensively to introduce the concept BOX-SHAPED, for example, may also instantiate the property of being something found pleasurable by the concept learner to whom they are introduced. Apparent paradigms of water will also co-instantiate (among other things) wetness and transparency. So how does the teacher ensure that the learner associates the intended property with the ostensibly introduced paradigms?

Alert to this difficulty, Jackson and Pettit argue,

What has to happen is that that property [the intended one] comes to be privileged among the coinstantiated set by the fact that it is, as we say, salient or striking. It is the property such that the instances present
themselves as instances of that property – or at least of a relatively narrow set to which it belongs – and not to any other. 2002, p. 103

These instances, they continue, will have a ‘distinctive effect’ on the learner such that they will elicit in them the belief that those instances have the property the teacher intended ostensively to pick out. Their holding of that belief will then be manifested through their dispositions to classify and discriminate between objects. They will use the term ‘T’ in their expression of that belief; and they will extrapolate appropriately from the paradigms in order to form the correct beliefs about other things that are also T (so long as limits or obstacles that might distort their response are absent.)

Jackson and Pettit consider such dispositions to extrapolate appropriately to be necessary to competence with a basic concept and to consider it so, they claim, just is to ‘embrace a response-dependent account’ of competence. That account postulates precisely the sort of extrapolative disposition required. It maintains that under the impact of the ostensive exemplars the learner will learn what it is for something to seem T and will become disposed to infer being T from seeming T, and seeming T from being T, at least under what are taken to be favourable specifications. Ibid, p. 104

The upshot, then, is that in order for someone to use a basic concept to determine a particular property, their competence must be response-dependent. Only if it is response-dependent, can we explain what makes it the case that it determines that property and not some other that is co-instantiated in the paradigms by which the concept in question is ostensively introduced. In the next sections then, we consider in detail the phenomenon of response-dependence as it is identified here – as a feature of competence with a basic concept.

§3 Response-Dependence
Given what we have seen of the Pettitian account thus far, one might question the usefulness of talking in terms of response-dependence. According to this response-dependence story, all and only the concepts that are *basic* for an individual or community are response-dependent. What distinguishes basic concepts from non-basic, theoretically-introduced ones is the process by which they are acquired, a process dependent on responses. Why bother with the ‘response-dependence’ label at all? one might ask, why not just talk about basic concepts? However, the label remains useful (i) for pinpointing just what is distinctive about allegedly basic concepts and (ii) for drawing out similarities and differences between this and other ways of using the label. To this end, then, this section goes on to explain what 'response-dependence' and related terms mean in the context of the Pettitian theory.

We should recognise that according to this theory, the response-dependence of a concept is relative to the individual or group under consideration. For, as we have seen, the notion of a basic concept is relative: a concept that is basic for one group, or even for one individual, may not be basic for others, for its being basic is by dint of how it is learnt by that group or individual. So while the literature tends to treat RED as paradigmatically response-dependent, it is in fact response-dependent-for-most-human-thinkers. We can easily imagine a group (or groups) of thinkers for whom the colours of things are not readily apparent and who, while perfectly able to learn RED and other colour concepts via definition, do not come to possess them via the ostension route associated with basic concepts. Similarly, for a minority of human thinkers who cannot learn them via ostension, colour concepts will not be basic and so not response-dependent.
In its earlier incarnations, this theory talked about *response-privileging* (1991) and *response-authorizing* (1993) concepts. These are the same thing, but amounted to alternatives Pettit used to emphasise particular aspects of the role of responses in the acquisition of basic concepts. That is, the a priori link between responses made under certain conditions by certain respondents and the correct judgement that the actor that elicits that response falls under the concept a priori associated with that type of response. A basic concept is response-authorising in the sense that its referent is picked out in such a fashion that the relevant response – the inclination to extrapolate – cannot lead us astray under favourable conditions. Under favourable conditions, under conditions that survive negotiation across times and persons, the response represents an authorised mode of access to the referent in question. It cannot fail to hit the target-referent; it is definitive of which entity is the referent of the concept.

At this point in the development of the theory, then, Pettit elected to explain response-dependence by focusing on the (albeit qualified) epistemic infallibility that attaches to uses of response-dependent concepts when the relevant response occurs under appropriate conditions, and on the implications of this infallibility for a realist construal of the relevant practices. This a priori guarantee that judgements that are an element of the relevant response will correctly identify items that fall under the extension of the appropriate concept is only available if conditions are appropriate. Moreover, as we saw in Chapter II, the notion of constraints on respondents and conditions (indicated by the ‘appropriate’ placeholder in the basic equation) is introduced by theorists to represent practices used to discount and accept respondents and/or conditions of response as appropriate (variously cashed-out, in the accounts we consider here, as ‘suitable’,

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89 Thus, explaining the former, Pettit writes that concepts that are response-privileging ‘are such that certain human responses, at least under suitable conditions, represent a privileged mode of access, a mode of access that rules out error and ignorance.’ 1991, p. 597
‘standard’, ‘favourable’ and ‘ideal’). Participants need not be aware that they engage in these practices as such. Thus, given that respondents can manifest the relevant response without knowing whether or not conditions are indeed appropriate (even those conditions pertaining to ourselves), our infallibility as to the extensions of response-dependent concepts is not something of which we can be certain in any particular situation, so the possibility of error always remains, even though in practice, if nothing seems awry, we will take those judgements as true without necessarily knowing that they are.

In more recent work (most recently with Jackson) Pettit emphasises that according to his response-dependence account, the a priori biconditional only commits us to the claim that something is denominably T if and only if it is such as to seem T under appropriate conditions. Pettit 1998b, p. 114

Something is denominably T if and only if it possesses a property, T, for which I and fellow speakers use the word or concept ‘T’. Pettit 1998b, p. 114

So we can understand the claim represented by the biconditional to be that it is a priori that something is denominably T if and only if it is such as to seem T under appropriate conditions. And this is not the same, argues Pettit, as the claim (attributed to Johnston’s account) that something is T if and only if it is such as to seem T under appropriate conditions. In claiming that there an a priori link between something’s being made accessible to us via the concept T and its seeming T under appropriate conditions, we draw attention to the essential role of responses in the mastery of T, but we don’t claim that the property determined by T is itself human-involving. In short, we do not claim that the property of being T is response-dispositional, only that the concept (term) T is response-dependent. An upshot of this difference is that in a world in which there are no conditions (on respondents or environment) that count as appropriate, nothing will count

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90 Pettit 1998b, pp 113-14; Jackson and Pettit 2002, pp 101-2. One reason given for emphasising this point is to stake out different territory from that covered by Johnston’s theory. I consider this contrast in § 6 of this chapter.
as denominably T, because for it to count as such, it must seem so under appropriate conditions. This does not rule out something’s being T in such a world, it’s just that its being so would go undetected, at least by those who under appropriate conditions would be expected (reliably) to detect its being such as to be included in the extension of T.

In their recent paper, Jackson and Pettit introduce the locutions ‘response relational’, ‘response-specific’ and ‘response-opaque’. These serve to demonstrate the extent and limits of their use of the response-dependence idea.

§3.1 Response-Relational Concepts

Response-relationality is a feature manifested by certain but not all response-dependent concepts, it is not a necessary feature of response-dependence and, indeed, some response-relational concepts may be ‘theoretical’ and hence, in Pettit’s and Jackson’s terms, not basic and not response-dependent at all. As far as they are concerned, a concept’s being response-dependently possessed is both distinct from and ‘more interesting’ than its being response-relational (2002, p. 109). The notion of response-relationality is intended to capture the way in which some concepts of properties represent those properties as ‘inherently’ related to human responses (Ibid, p. 107). To say that the concept NAUSEATING, say, is response-relational would be to say that the property determined by that concept is the disposition of certain actors to elicit certain responses in certain respondents under certain conditions. The target of these remarks is Johnston’s theory, which, Pettit and Jackson argue, conflates response-dependence (understood as response-dispositionality) with response-relationality. All of the concepts that are response-dispositional by Johnston’s lights are also response-relational, but, as Pettit and Jackson also remark, this is a corollary of the differing focus and intent of his theory. Concepts that are response-dispositional in Johnston’s terms, then, are response-relational, because, according to his story, they represent the properties they determine as dispositions to elicit manifestations of respondents’ dispositions to respond. Concepts
such as NAUSEATING, COMFORTABLE and AROMATIC are plausibly thought of as response-relational, because it is plausible, say Pettit and Jackson, to think that they determine anthropocentric dispositional properties ‘of a kind with fragility or solubility’ (Ibid., p. 106). I think we need to be careful here, though, about what is meant by ‘of a kind with’. For while it is plausible to think that concepts such as these determine properties that are dispositions on the part of actors, properties such as fragility and solubility are dispositions on the part of patients. Without bearing in mind this distinction, we end up saying that properties such as being nauseating, comfortable or aromatic are dispositions on the part of respondents to be nauseated, comforted or find something pleasant smelling, rather than dispositions on the part of actors (objects) to elicit those same responses in respondents.

Also, as we have seen in our earlier discussion, we should recognise a certain indexicality in some concepts of this type. My sofa, for example, might be COMFORTABLE-FOR-DOGS, but the box in which a dog travels to the vet’s surgery, might be UNCOMFORTABLE-FOR-DOGS. The responses relevant to possessing at least some of these concepts are not limited to human responses, though in so far as they are basic for a thinker, they will, by the lights of this theory, be response-dependent for that thinker and for those relevantly similar to her.

The claim that the properties determined by response-relational concepts are dispositions amounts to the claim that they are (higher level) role properties. Pettit and Jackson want to ensure the ecumenism and flexibility of their account by allowing for the properties determined by response-dependent concepts to be either role or (lower level) realiser properties. The restriction of response-dependence to the response-relational would undermine this objective. A concept may be response-relational, the authors note, without determining a role property as such. In these cases, the property determined is a realiser property, but the property is picked out under the aspect of its either playing an
anthropocentric role or grounding an anthropocentric disposition, thereby determining a non-role property but representing it under the aspect of its being found comfortable (by humans), say. Even though, on this account, the concept does not determine an anthropocentric disposition, it still determines the property of grounding such a disposition, and this is sufficient, say Pettit and Jackson, for it to be response-relational, and, indeed, response-dependent. But, as with the narrower account of response-relationality, which understands response-relational properties only as role properties, being response-relational even in this extended sense is not a necessary condition of a concept being response-dependent.

Allowing the notion of response-dependence to remain neutral as to the type of property determined by response-dependent concepts is consistent with what Pettit and Jackson allege to be the ordinary use and understanding of some response-dependent concepts:

[F]or ordinary people, to say that something is red is to ascribe a certain salient objective property without any intention, let alone any commonly recognised intention, to comment on the effects that it is liable to have on creatures like us human beings. *Ibid*, p. 108

According to this account, for the ordinary folk:

[R]edness just is that property, as they will think of it, the one that saliently binds those things in to a single kind.

And

[They] may not even reflect on the fact that red things tend to look red – they may not even have the concept of a sensation of redness – and may not associate redness with the disposition to look red; they will typically think of it as a categorical property. *Ibid* p. 106

Though not, presumably, in those (extra-ordinary) terms.

§3.2 Response-Specific Concepts
Response-specific concepts are those response-dependent concepts the extensions of which are determined by single modality sensations under certain conditions. Response specificity occurs when a concept, RED, say,

\[\text{[N]eed have no more effects, according to those who master and employ the term, than its effect in making things look red under favourable conditions.}\]

*Ibid*, p. 109

Its response-specificity is brought out, argue Pettit and Jackson, by considering the way in which we would introduce a congenitally blind person to the concept – it is presented to them as the property that makes things look red under appropriate conditions and we provide background explanation about the nature of colour sensations. The point here is that the specificity of the response – the red sensation – means that the ‘natural’ way to introduce the concept even to those for whom it is not basic and who don’t therefore grasp it response-dependently is by reference to how things look under certain conditions. As we saw earlier when considering the apparent circularity of the biconditional, this specificity makes for a dearth of vocabulary for talking about the relevant response, hence the sense of naturalness of this way of introducing such concepts. Although some response-dependent concepts, particularly secondary quality concepts (which, as we have seen, tend throughout the literature to be taken as exemplary of response-dependence) such as RED, are *response-specific*, not all of the concepts that are response-dependent on Pettit's account are response-specific. The recognition that not all response-dependent concepts are response-specific is (a) the recognition, already seen during the taxonomic exercise undertaken earlier, that a variety of types of response other than single-modality sensations can be a priori associated with a concept and (b) that possession of a response-dependent concept can be a priori associated with more than one type of response. So on this account the single sensation, response-specific model apparently offered by secondary quality concepts is not particularly useful.
Concepts that are not response-specific determine properties the effects of which go beyond simply eliciting responses in appropriate (human) respondents; that is, they will affect other objects as well as human (and other) respondents. And Pettit and Jackson believe that these effects are also associated with possession of the concepts of those properties. The concepts of something’s being straight, being flat, or being regular in shape, and of something’s being soft or hard (relative to conditions) provide examples of the phenomenon of response-dependence without response-specificity that they have in mind:

The shape properties in question have effects on how things line up against each other, not just on how they impact on us. And the property of softness or hardness has effects on how things affect other bodies, not just on how they affect ours. *Ibid.* p. 108

Clearly, the most likely relevant response when it comes to possession of the concepts that determine these shape properties would be sensations. In the usual case, that is, where conditions on environment and respondents are appropriate, we learn which things fall under the concepts’ extensions by attending to the way straight, flat and regularly-shaped things *look* under appropriate conditions or the way that things that are soft or hard (relative to conditions and impacts) *feel*. But if for some reason a respondent is not able to issue those responses, the concept can be introduced via responses involving an alternative sense modality. Instead of seeing that something is flat or straight or regularly shaped, a respondent might take the measure of its shape by running a hand over it; instead of feeling an object’s hardness or softness they might see it. Moreover, even in the absence of any of these single sensation responses, someone could be introduced to the concept via the effects that the feature posited by the practice in which it is involved

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91 Crispin Wright makes a similar point when he says that such properties have a wider *cosmological role* than those conceptualised in what Pettit and Jackson term a *response-specific* way. For a property to have a wide cosmological role is for its explanatory efficacy to extend beyond its being efficacious in explanations of its immediate effects on appropriate (human) respondents. This, and other distinctions introduced by Wright, will be considered in detail in the next chapter.
has on objects other than our selves by dint of their wider cosmological role, effects that we notice when we manipulate or observe the manipulation of objects in relation to each other as well as to ourselves. We might come to recognise as salient for instance the way in which a spherical (or more or less spherical) object will be able to roll easily along a surface that is smooth and flat, or that a fragile object dropped onto something that is soft is unlikely to break, whereas one dropped onto a thing that is hard is likely to. Pettit and Jackson note that as well as demonstrating the lack of response-specificity of some concepts that are response-dependent in their terms, the interrelationship of responses in cases such as these demonstrate that an element of holism is present here and in the usual case the concepts will be grasped holistically as part of a network. The effect that makes one property salient, such as the flatness of a surface, serves simultaneously to make another – the spherical shape of the orange I roll along it, say – salient.

As they also note, a similar, but more modest, holism is present among (response-specific) colour concepts, for something’s looking blue under appropriate conditions rules out its looking red under those conditions and, hence, it’s being red. This would also seem to be the case for some, but not all, other families of secondary quality concepts. Something’s sounding shrill under appropriate conditions rules out its sounding dull; but something’s tasting sweet need not rule out its tasting sour; something’s smelling acrid under appropriate conditions need not rule out its also smelling pleasant. This does not undermine the claims of a modest holism within each family of concepts, only the thought that the colour concepts are a model for all secondary quality concepts in this respect.

§3.3 Response-Opaque Concepts

A response-dependent concept is *response-opaque* when the property it determines via the relevant response, remains opaque to us via those responses. That is, on the basis of the response alone, it is indeterminate which property from a number of candidates is that
determined by the concept. Pettit and Jackson argue that response-opacity is avoidable and a feature of only some response-dependent concepts such as concepts of secondary qualities. The concern to avoid response-opacity arises from the charge that global response-dependence entails a brand of Kantian noumenal realism, whereby the true natures of the properties determined by response-dependent concepts remain inaccessible to us.92

Pettit and Jackson argue that it is ‘natural’ on their account of response-dependence to take the property determined by a concept to be a lower-level realiser property (2002, p. 111). The property, then, is that which would make things seem thus and so under idealised conditions. It is the instantiated realiser of that idealised role. Response-opacity occurs, then, when the property determined by a response-dependent concept depends on the world of evaluation. As we vary the world with respect to which we determine the extension of a concept, the property that realises the role determined by that concept may alter. This is the case, claim Pettit and Jackson, with response-dependent colour concepts. While in the actual world the property that realises the role of making things look red to respondents under appropriate conditions is a range of spectral reflectance triples, if a different world were actual, a world in which the spectrum were reversed say, then a different range of spectral reflectance triples might realise the role. In the colour case, opacity is avoided if the property determined is the dispositional role property. The disposition to look red under appropriate conditions will be unaffected by shifts from one instantiating world to another. But, as Pettit and Jackson point out, electing to identify the concept’s extension as the role state merely shifts the opacity, for the type of property realising the dispositional role property remains opaque to us (Ibid, p. 112). While opacity may not be completely avoidable in the case of colour concepts, Pettit and Jackson develop a strategy that enables even response-dependent concepts that

determine realiser properties to avoid opacity, thereby avoiding the related charge of succumbing to noumenalism and diminishing what might be seen as the epistemic cost of accepting that certain concepts are response-dependent by their lights.

The crucial move in this strategy is to disconnect concepts from instantiation and to construe the property determined as an *idealised* one. The result is that non-opaque response-dependent concepts determine the *idealised* realiser of an idealised role as opposed to the *instantiated* realiser of an idealised role (as we might initially think to be the case). A non-opaque response-dependent concept, then, determines the idealised property that plays the role in question and could itself be termed an ‘idealised concept’ (*Ibid* pp 112-13). An idealised concept has the following features: (i) Even if not instantiated in a world to which we attend (the actual world), the property determined is well defined. Because it determines an idealised realiser, the concept of the role determines a determinate property even if no realiser occurs in the world that is actual. (ii) It determines an abstract (realiser) property that is bound to be a disjunction of many different properties, and, consequently a property that abstracts from all such further variations; it is bound to contrast in this way with the concrete, instantiated sort of property – the property about which much more can in principle be learned empirically. *Ibid*, p. 113

This is in contrast to the concrete instantiated property determined by a non-idealised concept. Idealisation, then, enables response-dependence concepts to avoid opacity because idealisation, being independent of instantiation, ensures that the same property is determined regardless of which world is actual, for the property determined is the property that *would* realise the role under idealised conditions. In such cases, then, the a priori connection characteristic of response-dependence is between a concept’s extension and idealised responses; that is, the responses made under ideal conditions on respondents and on environment of response.
The effectiveness of this strategy is best seen through examples, such as those of concepts of certain shape properties employed by Pettit and Jackson. By showing that such concepts, though response-dependent, are not opaque, they hope to remove some of the epistemic anxiety that might be aroused by the claim that concepts of such apparently objective and cosmocentric (in the *carving nature at the joints* sense) properties are response-dependent. The concepts they have in mind are those that we have already considered as instances of concepts that are response-dependent but not response-specific, concepts such as STRAIGHT, PARALLEL, SMOOTH, FLAT and REGULAR. We already intuitively regard such concepts as ideal and abstract, they claim, in the sense that nothing in the actual world to which we are able to attend through observation instantiates the properties determined by them: as far as we are able to observe, no edges are (perfectly) straight, no surfaces (perfectly) smooth. Pettit and Jackson believe that we already find it intuitive to think that the properties determined by these concepts are not opaque to the relevant responses. While it is ‘sensible’ to allow that the property determined by RED may remain opaque, it would ‘border on nonsense to entertain a similar thought with the geometrical terms and properties.’ (*Ibid*, p. 114) Idealisation in these cases involves recognising that appropriate conditions do not simply rule out conditions that obstruct and limit the relevant response, but also rule in conditions that furnish maximal information on an issue, such as conditions that enable us better to determine whether an edge is straight – regarding it from a particular perspective, say. Such conditions may not be able to be met in the actual world, so the property determined by our concept of straightness cannot be instantiated in the actual world, even though our responses – having the edge look or feel straight to us under less-than-ideal conditions – direct us to approximations of the property. Moreover, the property that *would* realise the being straight-edged role under these unrealised yet ideal conditions would not be opaque to responses made under those conditions.
In the previous sections we have seen how it is possible for concepts to be response-dependent without being *response-relational*, *response-specific* or *response-opaque*. These considerations also show that when response-dependence is construed along Pettit’s and Jackson’s lines – as a feature of the possession of all basic concepts – the commonly employed model of secondary quality colour concepts (usually *RED*) does not serve usefully to illustrate response-dependence, because the aspects of response-dependence they manifest – relationality, specificity and opacity are not manifested by (what Pettit and Jackson take to be) response-dependent concepts generally. The arguments and considerations presented here employed the idea of appropriate and ideal conditions. In the next section we consider how the ‘appropriate’ placeholder is cashed out in the Pettitian account of response-dependence.

§4 Appropriateness: Conditions Favourable, Normal and Ideal

The account of appropriate conditions favoured by Pettit marries an ethocentric story about the practices ruling conditions of response in/out with a functionalist approach that characterises appropriate conditions as those fulfilling a certain role, specifically an inferential role. Like the analyses considered in previous chapters, this account emphasises that the notion of appropriate conditions is a theorists’ device for the identification and analysis of which responses will count as relevant to (in this case) possession of a concept. In order to give an account that does no more than attribute *practical* (as opposed to behavioural or judgemental) beliefs to practitioners, Pettit places on his account an epistemic requirement of *lack of articulation* on the part of practitioners of the appropriateness of the conditions that survive the process. The account should neither require nor imply that they have a word to describe the conditions that theorists would describe (in Pettit’s terms) as ‘favourable’.

Pettit uses ‘favourable’ to fill the place held in the biconditional for the qualifications on conditions on respondents and environment of response. ‘Favourable’ is intended to
include both normal and ideal conditions, where normal conditions are those under which there is an absence of factors that obstruct or distort responses, such as seeing objects through coloured glasses or the partiality that adversely affects evaluative judgement (1999, p. 32). While ideal conditions, which we have already discussed in connection with response opacity (§3.3), are conditions that would count as normal and are further enhanced by an absence of limiting factors, such as limits on the information available. Such conditions are favourable in the sense of being favourable-for-detection of instances of the property determined by the concept in question and ‘reflect conventions of social life’ (1999, p. 23). Responses made under such conditions are (with the caveats on fallibility discussed earlier) guaranteed a priori correctly to detect the relevant features of the actor that elicits the response. Under favourable conditions, if something is judged to be thus and so, it is thus and so. When normality or ideality reign, then, the is/seems gap can be considered closed, though will most likely not be considered by practitioners to be closed.

As we saw earlier (§2.2), according to the most recent Pettitian account of response-dependence as a feature of concept acquisition, a concept $T$ will be response-dependent just in case an ordinary speaker’s competence in the use of the term goes hand in hand with their believing of anything they encounter that it is $T$ if it seems $T$…Jackson and Pettit 2002, p. 99 (my emphasis)

Taken at its most literal, this suggests a variant on the notion that a user will count as normal so long as they are not such as to be impeded by factors that distort or obstruct their responses. On this account a speaker need only be ‘ordinary’ to count as a respondent for whom it is the case that if something seems $T$ under favourable conditions, it is $T$. But such a speaker will not necessarily be such as to issue relevant responses that are free of distortion or obstruction. Someone who lacks a sense of smell, but is otherwise perceptually and cognitively competent, counts as an ‘ordinary speaker’, but not as a favourable respondent in respect of their ability to track smells. Similarly, a
moral psychopath will plausibly be an ordinary speaker, but wholly incompetent when it comes to tracking right actions. I suspect, though, that this might be an occasion where charity of interpretation should prevail. The authors, it is plausible to surmise, intend ‘ordinary speaker’ to connote on the one hand the non-reflective, pre-theoretical user of a term/concept, and on the other, a user who is ‘normal’ in the ‘usual’ or ‘common-or-garden’ sense. But as these simple examples show, the ordinary and the normal can still come apart. If, in order to capture the pre-theoretical sense of competence in play here, we want the notion of an ‘ordinary speaker’ to play a part in the account of response-dependence without muddying the waters with respect to who counts as a favourable (or ideal) respondent, we should talk of ‘ordinary speakers who count as favourable’ or some such.

The ethocentric component of the account of favourability is part of a general ethocentric story about the acquisition of basic concepts that reflects on habits and practices that constitute concept acquisition and use. As we saw, on this story, in the first instance possession of a concept requires manifestations of thinkers’ dispositions to extrapolate from examples introduced by ostension to further instances of the concept exemplified. A second disposition places limitations on the first and ensures that an is/seems gap still occurs in the absence of favourable conditions by leading thinkers to disregard or suspend judgement upon those cases where they are disposed to extrapolate in ways that fail to preserve consistency with their earlier moves, or which diverge from the extrapolations of others who experience the same exemplars. Thinkers, then, have both the inclination to extrapolate and the inclination to maintain intra- and inter-personal consistency in those extrapolatory practices. The last element of the ethocentric story concerns the practice of identifying factors that explain these discrepancies, leading to their being able to be discounted as detections of the feature in question. To illustrate, Pettit draws upon observation of language learners:
We register that no, our skin does not change colour when we look at it under sodium light; that yes, there is as much water in the small, squat glass as in the tall, thin one; that no, the surface we touch after immersing our hand in hot water is not any colder than it was previously; that yes, the stick in the water is straight, despite appearances; that no, our favoured team was not any more law-abiding than the opposition; and so on. 1999, p. 31

Preferably we find explanatory factors upon which practitioners agree, thereby enabling all of us to discount a particular type of discrepant response and resolve any disagreement. Thus we are able to think of the concept in question as having (more or less) the same extension when used by different populations of practitioners. If we could not resolve differences in this way, argues Pettit, it would be more plausible to think that the concept varies between populations (Ibid, p. 31-3). As he notes, that is not to say that disagreements are resolved in all cases. If we don’t agree on the explanation of the discrepancy – one of us thinks that the coffee we’ve been drinking has affected the taste of the wine, the other thinks that the wine is just poor – we may just remain with our different judgements. Alternatively, we may agree on the source of the discrepancy – different background cultural/religious beliefs lead one to judge an act to be patriarchal, another to judge it as dutiful – but be unable, because of a reluctance to relinquish the background commitments, to resolve the impasse.

With this analysis in place, Pettit is in a position to draw some more general (functionalist) conclusions about the role that conditions must fulfill to count as favourable and the types of conditions that do, as a matter of fact, fulfill that role in the actual world. The practice of discounting conditions that distort responses – conditions that are treated as unfavourable – enables the identification of favourable conditions as those under which the unfavourable factors are absent. Factors are ruled in/out on the
basis of the extent to which doing so maximises convergence on the use of the concepts in question. We can, then, characterise unfavourable factors as

those whose identification as unfavourable would maximise expected, long-term agreement about the judgements at issue among relevant individuals. *Ibid*, p. 35

This means that they count as favourable in so far as they play an inferential role in practices: favourable conditions are such that they support practitioners’ inferences to the judgment that things *are* as they *seem*.

Pettit points out that this account is not conventionalist and manages to preserve a role for the world in the determination of which conditions are favourable. While practices are what make it right to treat certain factors as favourable/unfavourable, fallibility remains, and a thus a conventionalist reading is undermined in that practitioners could still turn out to be mistaken about which factors are as a matter of fact unfavourable-for-detection. Moreover, while practices determine the role played by conditions that come to be treated as favourable, the question of *which* conditions fulfill the role in any particular world is a question that remains to be settled empirically. 93

§5 Rigidity and Contingency

As we have seen, one option is to limit conditions that count as favourable-for-detection to those that are favourable in the actual world. If we take this option, we reflect the move in the biconditional by rigidifying on ‘favourable’ so that it is a priori that something is (denominably) T if and only if it is such as to seem T under actual favourable conditions. From the outset of his theory, Pettit has opted for the rigid reading of the biconditional arguing that it secures a stronger possibility of ignorance and error on

93 As we see in Chapters VII and VIII, what would be preserved in such a case is the epistemic independence of the judgements in question, which is a requirement of realism when it takes an epistemic stance. It is preserved when favourability is determined by practice-independent facts about the features or entities posited by those practices. However, as we see, the requirement is not met by all practices in which response-dependent concepts are involved.
the part of thinkers than the non-rigidly understood biconditional does and while the possibility of error and ignorance remain open, the possibility of (at least an epistemic) realist construal of the relevant practices also remains. However, as Pettit notes, and as some of the cases examined in the earlier taxonomy demonstrate, the rigid reading and the prospect of realist construal fail to converge in every case, thereby undermining any suggestion that the former will somehow deliver the latter.

On the rigid reading, something is T if and only if in the actual world it seems or would seem T under conditions that count as favourable there. This reading requires there to be conditions that count as favourable in the actual world if the concept is to have an extension there. Moreover, responses made in worlds other than the actual world, responses that are possible, but not actual, might fail correctly to detect instances of T because, in the absence of actually favourable conditions, they are not a priori guaranteed to be successful detections. Something might seem T in some other possible world, so the relevant response might occur, but in the absence of conditions that would count as favourable in the actual world, the thing’s seeming T does not entail the conclusion that it is T. It may turn out to be T, but human (or other) responses alone won’t be a reliable indicator of its T-ness. Outside of the actual world, then, responses and reliable detection can come apart. While the rigid reading of the biconditional requires that actual favourable conditions obtain if the concept in question is to have an extension in the actual world, the non-rigid reading requires only that there be some possible world in which favourable conditions obtain. On that reading, then, the possibility remains that something in another possible world is denominably T.

A corollary of the rigid reading of the biconditional as it figures in Pettit’s account – that is as a claim about the acquisition of concepts and not, as in Johnston’s account, as a

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94 The relationship between response-dependence and realism is considered in depth in Chapter VIII.
property identity claim – is that it should be understood as a contingent a priori truth. The a priori guarantee of successful detection under (what are taken to be) favourable conditions only holds in the actual world, it does not extend to all possible worlds.

As we have seen, in his recent work on response-dependence, Pettit has re-packaged the response-dependence claim to emphasise that it should be understood as a claim about something’s being *denominably* T rather than its being (in reality) T. Part of the denominability claim is that in possible worlds in which favourable conditions fail to obtain, nothing is denominably T; that is, a (response-dependent) concept T fails to have an extension. If all observers in the actual world are colour-blind, then, nothing is denominably red in the actual world. Something could still *be* red, we just wouldn’t have detected it through the usual means. In this respect, to (re)interpret the biconditional as a claim about what it takes for something to be denominably T, then, has the same effect as reading it rigidly. For both require favourable conditions to obtain in the actual world if a concept is to have an extension there.

Now that we have a full picture of Pettit’s response-dependence project and its commitments, we can turn our attention (1) to consideration of the ways in which it differs from both the Johnstonian project and from that proposed in Chapters I and II and (2) to flaws in and difficulties with Pettit’s project. The next sections undertake these tasks.

§6 Differences

The principal difference between these projects is thrown into relief if we consider the questions each is designed to answer. The account developed earlier via our taxonomic exercise focuses on the role played by responses in the determination of concepts’ extensions. Put most simply, then, the question there is ‘what determines the extension of a concept T?’ In its earlier forms, Pettit’s project was also explicitly engaged in
answering the same question, but, as we have seen, in its more recent incarnations, the response-dependence project is explicitly presented as a means of answering the question ‘How do we acquire a concept/learn how to use a term?’ Johnston, meanwhile, has turned his attention to the question ‘what is the nature of the property determined by the (response-dependent) concept T?’ to which he had hoped the answer was ‘it is a response-dispositional property’. As we have seen, his arguments lead him to a sceptical conclusion regarding the possibility of knowledge of those properties so conceived.

This variation in problems confronted reflects a broader variation in approach. While Pettit’s and my project have descriptive aims, Johnston’s initially aims to revise ordinary response-independent concepts, while its eventual aim is to describe the properties our concepts determine. The taxonomy developed earlier takes concepts the extensions of which are as they stand determined in such a way that response-dependence looks to offer some explanatory devices to clarify the role of responses in their determination and which make interesting and useful distinctions between different aspects and degrees of respondent-involvement. Pettit, meanwhile, argues for a global response-dependence account of the possession of all concepts that count as basic for an individual or for a community on the ground that those concepts are as a matter of fact so acquired. So while Johnston uses response-dependence to develop revised concepts of (inter alia) secondary quality properties and, eventually, accounts of the properties they determine, my project along with Pettit’s seeks only to give the best description of extension determination, or of concept possession. The difference in approach also entails a difference in scope. Johnston’s response-dispositional notion makes for a very limited set of concepts that, once revised, are response-(inter)dependent in his terms. Pettit’s application of a response-dependence account of concept acquisition to any concept that counts as basic for an individual or a community leads to the global scope of his claims, while the inclusion in our taxonomy of all those concepts (both actor and patient) in the determination of whose extension responses can plausibly be taken to play a role means
that its scope is somewhat wider than Johnston’s but lacks the global aspirations of Pettit’s.

Because it encompasses all basic concepts, the scope of Pettit’s account makes it particularly appropriate that it is an account of concept possession. According to the response-dependence story about possession, the relevant response is the manifestation of the disposition (but see my earlier remarks about what ‘disposition’ might mean in this context) to notice that a thing seems similar in some germane respect to others already observed (and classified) and to extrapolate from those similar cases to the novel one. So as Jackson and Pettit point out, response-specificity is not a universal feature of concepts that are response-dependently possessed. The types of response relevant to concept possession may be varied, and possession of any particular concept may be associated with more than one type of response.\(^{95}\)

But to what extent does the concept possession story differ from the extension determination story? In saying that possession is response-dependent are we in fact saying that in acquiring the concept we learn that seemings under favourable conditions are a, not merely reliable, but canonical guide to how things are? If so, then possession is a matter of learning about the relationships that determine concepts’ extensions, even though one need not know the rules governing a concept’s extension to count as a competent user thereof. Indeed, the project sits within a recent tradition, which finds manifestation in (inter alia) the reception of and responses to Kripke’s theory of reference that take the concept acquisition process to act as a determination process.\(^{96}\) In his earlier

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\(^{95}\) See Pettit 1998b, p. 119 for a series of examples of various types of response.

\(^{96}\) Gareth Evans points out the way in which Kri kpe’s Causal theory of reference (a title with which Evans takes issue) tends to be extended (conflated with) to become a Photograph Model of Mental Representation. See 1982, pp. 76-79. The teleosemantic project also falls within this tradition in so far as it tells a story about the history of the bearer, either in an individual or in a species, and the bearer’s role, from which emerges a story about why the bearer has the extension it does.
work on response-dependence, Pettit makes explicit his adoption of Peacocke’s theory of concept possession, according to which concepts are individuated via their possession conditions. The incorporation of the possession conditions approach to concepts into a response-dependence account means that, as Peter Menzies has put it, the biconditional ‘encapsulates’ the possession conditions (1998, p. 263). Possession conditions represent features of our practice that are essential conditions of competent possession of the concept in question. For a colour concept, for instance, the possession conditions will be i) that colour experience is a primary criterion for application of colour concepts and ii) that criterion is (or can be) defeated when experience takes place under less-than-suitable conditions. These features – experiences under certain conditions constituting the primary criterion for correct use of a colour concept – are also the determinants of their extension. Rather than two distinct questions, then, what we have are two different presentations of the same factors, one directed at giving an account of learning, the other aimed at giving an account of extension determination: the same factors turn out to be crucial to both (at least in the case of secondary quality concepts.)

The notion of denominability is introduced to make perspicious the contrast between the Pettitian and the Johnstonian accounts. By Pettit’s lights the response-dependence claim sets out the conditions under which something is denominably T, by Johnston’s the conditions it sets out are those under which something is T. As we have seen, the latter is explicitly concerned with claims of property identity. But in their response to the noumenalism charge, Jackson and Pettit manifest a misplaced concern with the nature of the property determined by a response-dependent concept. Recall, that in their discussion of the extent of response-opacity, they argue that (for at least some concepts) the nature of the property determined is not opaque, it is the idealised realiser of an idealised role, not the instantiated realiser of an idealised role. But do they need to answer the charge at all? Ought noumenalism to matter if our interest is in concepts rather than properties?
In taking the charge seriously, they seem to conflate the (Johnstonian) question of what makes the thing T with the question of what makes it denominably T, precisely the questions that they are careful to distinguish at the outset. As Pettit himself acknowledges, one of the advantages of taking a response-dependence thesis to be concerned with concept possession or extension determination, is that it can account for the role of responses in the extension determination, acquisition or application conditions of various of our concepts while remaining neutral with regard to the ontological status of the properties they determine:

[O]n our approach [Pettit’s ethocentric approach] the assertion that a concept is response-dependent is, precisely, an assertion about the concept: not an assertion about the property or object or operation in question. Pettit 1991, p. 609. 97

And, with the exception of Pettit’s confession that he believes that the property picked out by ‘red’ is a realiser property (1998a, pp 60-61), he has remained consistent with this reminder, remaining scrupulously neutral on ontological issues. If our interest (also) lies with the nature of the properties determined by our response-dependent concepts, the response-dependent account smoothes the way for us to defend an account of their natures that is unrestricted by our account of our concepts of them. A response-dependence account of the possession or extension determination of the concept SWEET, for instance, is consistent with both a secondary and a primary quality story about what sweetness is. A response-dependent account of FLEXIBLE is consistent with a dispositional and a categorical construal of flexibility. Whereas a Johnstonian response-dispositional account of what it is to be T does not enjoy this neutrality precisely because it is concerned with ontic issues. On the other hand, a response-dependence account of a concept might be taken to motivate a particular ontic account of the property it determines. That would be all well and good, but the point to bear in mind is that it is not

97 See also Smith and Stoljar, 1998, p. 86
required to be consistent with some prior ontic commitment about that property. My point is not that the defence against the noumenalism charge is flawed, only that it is unnecessary. Indeed, elsewhere when responding to the noumenalism charge Pettit has more appropriately counseled the exercise of (Kantian) epistemological humility with respect to our ability to know the essence of the world’s properties in their entirety.98

§7 Issues: Basic Concepts
Recall that in Pettit’s terms, response-dependence covers all basic concepts and those concepts are basic (for a community or an individual) in so far as they were mastered via a process that involves ostension and which makes thinkers aware of items in their extension via their experiences of them; they are, that is, response-dependently possessed. If the basic concepts idea does not hold up or if only very few concepts are found to be basic, then the scope of the response-dependence claim is significantly limited.

The basic concepts idea appears vulnerable on two fronts: (i) the plausibility of the ‘basic’ tag for many of those concepts said to exemplify the response-dependence pattern of possession and (ii) the fluidity and instability of the class of basic concepts. In response-dependent narratives about the possession of basic concepts ostension is prior to and necessary for possession. The plausibility of the ‘basic’ tag, then, can be interrogated by asking whether, on a case-by-case basis, ostension is prior to competence, where competence is understood as the ability to use the concept according to the possession conditions. Response-dependence accounts of the possession of some of the concepts Pettit takes to be basic are perfectly plausible, but the implausibility of other examples suggests that the scope of the response-dependence claim is indeed more limited than envisaged. Concepts such as those of secondary qualities and of shape and size, which we

98 Pettit 1998b, p. 130. The phrase ‘Kantian humility’ is borrowed from Rae Langton, see her 1998, especially pp 41-43.
are likely to acquire as a result of primitive perceptual experience of the world, naturally lend themselves to a response-dependence analysis of our acquisition thereof. Other examples, however, are less obviously basic. One of Pettit’s examples is the pair of concepts JUST and UNJUST. But an account of their possession that makes appeal to ostension and to responses (the formation of a belief) under favourable conditions can (at the very least) be resisted here. To be a correct representation, such an account would require that concept learners learn the concepts on being presented with exemplars of just/unjust acts or situations on the basis of which their disposition to extrapolate to similar cases is triggered. But because such cases aren’t literally perceived as just/unjust in the way that a red post box is perceived as saliently similar to the robin’s breast, it appears we need a theory in place in order to discern what’s relevantly similar between the putatively just actions/situations. That is, we need an understanding of what sorts of features to look for that indicate that an action or situation is likely to count as a just one. Such a theory would connect just actions/situations with fairness and impartiality, for instance. Elucidations of thin moral concepts might fare better in so far as we might gain a tentative grasp on GOOD or RIGHT from being introduced to a series of exemplars that elicit approving responses from us.

Explaining the basic concepts idea in ‘Noumenalism and Response-Dependence’, Pettit equivocates in respect of ostension:

The idea was that everyone’s vocabulary must include some terms that are introduced to them in *a non-definitional, more or less ostensive manner* and that mastery of such basic terms, and possession of the corresponding concepts is dependent on that person’s being responsive in a certain way to the referents of those terms: say, to the properties picked out by them. 1998b, p. 113 (my emphasis)

Perhaps, then, there a more charitable reading of this account of concept possession is available, according to which it is sufficient for some *quasi* ostensive practice to occur in
the introduction of a basic concept, the crucial factor being that the practices remain non-
definitional. Quasi ostension might involve verbal descriptions of exemplary cases, say, rather than the show and tell introductions that are intuitively invoked by the ostension idea. But it is not at all clear that even such descriptions would be effective in introducing concepts such as JUST and UNJUST to novice thinkers. Even if we parade a series of descriptions in front of the learner – imagine if I took your toys away even though you’d been a good boy; imagine if I gave Benny some chocolate cake, but I didn’t give you any; imagine if all the other children from crèche went to the zoo for the day, but you had to stay behind, all of those would be unjust – we are unlikely to have done enough for them to be able to go on to apply the concept to novel cases. I suspect that we don’t really grasp it and become competent in its use until it is explained to us (or we are able to explain it to ourselves) in terms of related concepts, such as FAIRNESS and IMPARTIALITY, that is, not non-definitionally.

In his 1999 paper, ‘A Theory of Normal and Ideal Conditions’ Pettit states that he assumes the truth of the ethocentric story, for ‘at least many of the terms and concepts we deploy in ordinary life’. At the outset of the paper, however, he lists secondary quality concepts, aesthetic concepts, moral concepts, other types of evaluative concepts and modal concepts as among those that have been given the response-dependence treatment and that are, by implication, ostensively introduced (Ibid, p. 21). What seems to be in play here is the assumption that concepts for which an account that makes an a priori connection between responses under favourable conditions and its extension is plausible are also concepts for which a response-dependence account of their possession, an account that claims that they are ostensively introduced, is equally plausible. In short, if their extensions are determined via responses, they are also acquired via a process that

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99 Pettit 1999, p. 33. Although he does not use the term ‘basic concept’ here, it is clear from the context that in talking about concepts deployed in ‘ordinary life’ he means those concepts that we acquire on the basis of ‘exposure to examples’. See Pettit 1999, p. 28.
involves ostension. But in many cases the two accounts come apart because the claim that ostension is essentially involved in their acquisition is implausible. In addition to thick moral concepts such as JUST, modal concepts are prima facie unlikely to be introduced and then acquired by ostension. For the possibility or necessity of a relation or a state of affairs is a feature that can’t be observed or experienced in the sense apparently required by the ostension element of the response-dependence story of the acquisition of basic concepts (2002, p. 97; p. 105). The response-dependence account of modality developed by Peter Menzies, an account that, like Pettit’s, derives the biconditional from a concept’s possession conditions, elucidates the concepts of possibility and necessity in terms of (in)conceivability. He suggests the following biconditionals:

\[
\text{It is possible that } p \iff \text{an ideal conceiver could conceive that } p \\
\text{It is necessary that } p \iff \text{an ideal conceiver could not conceive that not-}p
\]

If POSSIBLE is a basic concept, as Pettit alleges, then it looks as though we would also need to ostend (in the sense discussed above of giving a series of descriptions) CONCEIVABLE in order to grasp POSSIBLE. The alternative seems to be that one’s understanding of what it is for something to be conceivable would have to be inculcated in a learner via a combination of the concept of conceiving and the concept of possibility. For we would have to say to the learner, ‘you know what’s meant by conceiving, think about what might be conceived, that is, about what it is possible to conceive’. In ostending conceivability, then, we invoke possibility, but, given the elucidation of the concept in terms of response-dependence, possession of the latter was supposed to invoke the former. It might be argued that the two concepts are learned in association with each other, that they are part of a local holism of modal concepts. Even if that were so, it remains difficult to see how a plausible account of their introduction via ostension (however charitably we interpret that idea) is available.

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100 This should be a familiar point since it was originally raised by Hume in relation to the idea of ‘necessary connection’ (1978, pp 165-67).
On the other hand, a number of the concepts that we can reasonably take to lend themselves to elucidation in terms of response-dependence are implausibly so if they must also be understood as basic concepts. One such example is POISONOUS. It is, as we have seen, not unreasonable to suppose that something is poisonous (for a species or sub-species) just in case, under suitable conditions, it poisons them. But in the usual run of events, the relevant response is (it is to be hoped) a rare one, one the elicitation of which we seek to avoid, so the incidence of suitable exemplars that can serve in the process of ostension is pretty rare. Indeed, we teach the concept to children on the basis of a counterfactual, we warn them of the effects that poisonous things would have on them were they to be ingested or touched, or whatever. And the only thing that apparently makes things that are poisonous to a species or sub-species relevantly similar to each other is the effects that they would have if respondents were to interact with them in ways that should be avoided. It is not as though we can acquire the concept of the poisonous by extrapolation from exemplars of red berries or yellow plants.

By the same token, not all of the patient concepts of those properties that are traditionally taken to lend themselves to dispositional analyses are plausibly construed as basic in Pettit’s terms. While it may be plausible to suggest that SOLUBILITY-IN-WATER, say, could be grasped via a series of ostended examples of substances dissolving in water, from which the novice learns to extrapolate;\(^1\) or that FLEXIBILITY be picked up via exposure to experiences of things flexing under the impact of certain forces, not all such response-dependent patient concepts can be learned in this way. For, like POISONOUS, their relevant responses may be ones we generally seek to avoid. Something is fragile just in case it is apt to break when dropped or knocked or some such under certain conditions.

\(^1\) An indeterminacy lurks to undermine the plausibility of this account, however, for the exemplars will manifest both the solubility of the salt and the ability of the water to dissolve it. Jackson’s and Pettit’s way around indeterminacy (discussed earlier) will not suffice here, because the properties apparently instantiated in the sample cannot be distinguished in perception, they are manifested by a single interaction.
But we tend to want to avoid manifestations of that particular disposition, so the availability of exemplars that could serve the ostension process is limited. Instead, we acquire the concept on the basis of having explained to us what would happen if we were to drop or knock something rather than on the basis of getting directly to experience what does happen.

Reflection on such cases, then, invites general reflection on the scope of Pettit’s account. We might conclude that while response-dependence as an account of the possession of basic concepts shows that response-dependence is, as Pettit has it, both ‘ubiquitous’ and ‘unsurprising’, (Pettit 1998b, p. 114; Jackson and Pettit 2002, p. 97), what is surprising is that concepts of some of the properties that have traditionally lent themselves to an analysis that is a forerunner of response-dependence accounts, that is, to dispositional analyses, are ruled out as response-dependent by this account, because they can’t plausibly be construed as basic. Similarly, some of the concepts for which response-dependent treatments are available in the literature – such as moral and modal concepts – aren’t response-dependent by the lights of Pettit’s theory, pace his all-embracing list of examples – because like POISONOUS and FRAGILE, the idea that they come to be possessed by a process involving ostension doesn’t bear up to scrutiny.

One response to all this would be to take the line that Pettit’s account is useful in demonstrating the surprising fact that some of the concepts the extensions of which are determined response-dependently, or which are response-dependently determined and also concepts of properties that are themselves response-dependent, are not response-dependently possessed. Alternatively, we might take the view that in failing to include all of those concepts the extension determination of which is a priori connected with responses under appropriate conditions, the response-dependence theory of concept possession is less than useful in elucidating the role of responses in all of those concepts which it is reasonable to suppose are response-involving.
A further difficulty for the basic concepts idea is the degree of indexicality inherent in the claim that a concept is basic. The idea is that for each thinker, some concepts are basic. The Pettitian position allows for both inter- and intra-person variation such that a concept might be basic for one person but not for another and such that it might be basic for a person at one time, but not at another (2002, p. 97). So the claim that a concept is basic is indexed not only to a particular thinker (x) but also to a particular time (t). Strictly speaking, then, a concept is basic-for-x-at-t, not basic simpliciter.

A corollary of *intra-*personal variation is that a concept could start out as basic-for-x-at-t, but then they learn it by definition so that their possession no longer relies on the ostension process. This could cut both ways, a concept first learnt by definition, such as POISONOUS or FRAGILE could later be (re)grasped via ostension. The latter pattern seems likely in cases where a concept could not be learnt by ostension because no examples were available at the relevant time and place, but then they became available, and also in cases where a thinker was unable to experience the examples but later becomes able to – someone whose sense of taste becomes (re)established, say.

A corollary of *inter-*personal variation is that, given that according to the possession conditions account of concepts, possession delivers individuation, a concept that is basic-for-x-at-t but not for y-at-t, will have (at least) different possession conditions for each of them, and so will be two different concepts even though their extensions may be the same. Suppose x learns SWEET via ostension, but y learns it non-experientially because she lacks the ability to taste things. SWEET, then, is basic-for-x-at-t, but not for y-at-t and so response-dependent-for-x, but response-*in-*dependent-for-y. They each have a concept of sweetness, let’s suppose they both call it ‘sweet’, but it is not the same concept.
For the sake of convenience, Jackson and Pettit make (what they take to be) the harmless assumption of convergence on the part of ordinary users on which concepts are basic for them. I would argue, however, that this degree of indexicality and the ensuing possibility of divergence and variation in what constitutes a basic concept have a greater impact than assumed. For it makes for a troubling instability in the class of response-dependent concepts such that it is no longer appropriate to talk about a *class* of such concepts at all. The best we can say about basic concepts is that a concept may be basic for a particular person at a particular time. The best we can say about response-dependence, then, is that some concepts are response-dependent for some people some of the time, which seems to dilute the global response-dependence claim somewhat – response-dependence is common and it is everywhere, but the only thing many concepts described as response-dependent have in common is the way in which they come to be possessed by some thinkers. Perhaps, though, this is a cause for satisfaction and the reason why Jackson and Pettit present their latest paper as an attempt to bust myths and dissipate anxiety about response-dependence: response-dependence is common and it is everywhere, but many response-dependent concepts have nothing more in common than the way in which they may come to be possessed by some thinkers.\(^{102}\)

As we saw earlier, the basic concepts idea involves a requirement of non-conceptualisation. Non-conceptualisation requires that the relevant response can fulfill its role in concept possession without itself being conceptualised. A thinker need not even be conscious of the response for it to fulfill that role. If the requirement cannot be satisfied, the basic concepts idea is in a pickle. For putatively basic concepts cannot be basic if concepts of responses need to be learnt first. Non-conceptualisation, however, is conflated here with (linguistic) non-articulation. Pettit fleshes out non-conceptualisation in terms of the response going un-named and unspoken (1998b, p. 120). But concepts

\(^{102}\) Clearly, another myth they hope to dispose of is the assumption that a concept’s being response-dependent entails the non-objectivity of the *property* it determines. This issue is addressed in Chapters VII and VIII.
often outrun our vocabulary; instances where we have a concept but no word to articulate it are not uncommon. In many cases we pick up the appropriate term from someone who is able to articulate the concept in question, it might be the word for a concept of a feeling or of an emotion, of an unusual in-between shade of a colour, of a sound…. Indeed, one might reasonably think that part of the motivation for the creation and consumption of poetry and creative writing generally is the potential for finding ways of articulating concepts for which some of us lack a term. Indeed we have already considered a case where concepts outrun vocabulary, a case within response-dependence itself: In our consideration of Johnston’s theory, we saw that we might worry that the basic equation is circular because the same term is used to name both the concept to be elucidated and the response mentioned in that elucidation, But, as we pointed out, the difference between the concept and the concept of the response (as Johnston’s theory has it) simply outruns the vocabulary available with which to refer to them. This conflation between non-conceptualisation and non-articulation is, I suspect, a microcosm of the conflation of terms and concepts that manifests in a tendency to assume that what is true of a term will also hold good for its ‘corresponding’ concept, as Pettit puts it, (1998b, p. 113).

§8 Summary
This chapter has traced the development of the Pettitian descriptive account of response-dependence, showing how in its most recent incarnation, it is explicitly an account of the acquisition of basic concepts, an account that tells us what it takes for something to be denominably T, rather than T. We have considered three sub-species of response-dependence: response-relationality, response-specificity, and response-opacity and seen 1) that Johnston’s response-dispositional account takes in only those concepts that are response-relational and 2) that not all concepts that are response-dependent by Pettitian lights are response-specific, or response-relational or response-opaque. Employing some points developed in the taxonomy proposed in Chapter I, I discussed and critiqued the notion of basic concepts and the not inconsiderable role they play in this account. In the
final chapter of this middle, exegetical, section of the thesis, I turn to Wright’s *Order of Determination* distinction, a close relative of the response-dependence accounts considered thus far.
Chapter VI – Wright’s Order of Determination Distinction

§1 Introduction

Crispin Wright is the last of our pioneering trio of writers on response-dependence. His project finds its beginnings in a paper on rule-following and is further developed in relation to the morals/secondary qualities analogy and subsequently in his writings on realism, irrealism and antirealism (work that continues to mine a rich seam of ideas first developed by Michael Dummett.) The most detailed and extended expression of his thesis appears in his 1992 book *Truth and Objectivity* in which his account of truth and its relation to realism is fully worked through. He has developed an *Order of Determination* constraint (or test) that is akin to a distinction between response dependence/independence in that it too captures the interesting sense in which some concepts’ extensions are determined by responses under appropriate conditions, and relies on a priori biconditionals as a means of representing the relationship between extension determination and those responses. Unlike Johnston and Pettit, however, Wright’s work on response-dependence is not intended as a stand-alone theory that may be used to illuminate issues about realism, objectivity or rule-following, rather it is part of a broader project the aim of which is to demonstrate how sets of judgements, or discourses, that prima facie are minimally truth-apt may in fact display one or more of the features Wright identifies as characteristic of a more robust notion of truth, an identification that he considers to be ‘congenial’ with David Wiggins’ characterisation of the constitutive ‘marks’ of truth. He considers that a set of

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103 See his ‘Rule-Following, Meaning and Constructivism’ (1986); ‘Moral Values, Projection and Secondary Qualities’ (1988a); ‘Realism, Antirealism, Irrealism, Quasi-Realism’ (1988b); ‘Wittgenstein’s Rule-Following and the Central Project of Theoretical Linguistics’ (1989); *Truth and Objectivity* (1992); ‘Realism: The Contemporary Debate – W(h)ither Now?’ (1993a) and ‘Realism, Meaning and Truth 2nd Ed. (1993b). As I will explain in due course, it is important to note that the version of his thesis that appears in 1993a precedes that which is developed in 1992, the collection in which the paper appears having taken a long time to appear in print.

104 Wright applies his account of truth to discourses, which he takes to include both linguistic and epistemic behaviour. Consistent with our focus on concepts rather than terms, I will refer to judgements and consider the account as it pertains to them. ‘Discourses’ will crop up from time to time when accurate citation so demands.

105 Wright 1992, p. 73, n.2. Indeed, Wright’s account of truth is constructed against the backdrop of Wiggins’ essay, ‘What Would be a Substantial Theory of Truth’ (1980)
judgements for which a more robust account of truth can be maintained has better prospects for a realist construal. Hence the characteristics of robust(er) truth that are his focus are also appropriately thought of as \textit{realism relevant} characteristics. On Wright’s account, the truth predicate as it pertains to a set of judgements becomes more robust as it earns characteristics associated with a robust sense of correspondence.

\textbf{§2 Minimal Truth}

The order of determination constraint, then, comes into play once the minimal truth aptness of a set of judgements has been established. Wright believes that the minimal truth aptness of a set of judgements is earned on the back of the assertoric form of the utterances by which they would be expressed. By dint of the conceptual relation between truth and assertion, the intuition that there can be a gap between the judgement that p and its being the case that p already encompasses the idea that the judgement is truth apt. To make a judgement just is to commit to the claim that some proposition or other is true. Wright argues, then, that any set of judgments – about, say, the comic, the moral, the coloured, the scented, the shaped, the mathematical - that are expressed assertorically can be deemed minimally truth-apt. Although the notion of truth employed here is deemed \textit{minimal} by Wright, it is more substantial than the deflated, metaphysically content-free notion of truth captured by a disquotational schema (and sometimes labeled ‘minimal’ by other authors). According to Wright’s account, truth, even minimal truth, \textit{is} a genuine property. This notion of minimal truth is drawn from what Wright supposes are a set of intuitive judgements, or \textit{platitudes}, about the property picked out by the predicate ‘is true’. The platitudes express the content of our ordinary concept of truth but are not intended to perform a definitional analysis of the notion of truth. Rather they make perspicuous
connections that we ordinarily make between the concept of truth and those of assertion, negation, correspondence and justification:

i) That to assert is to present as true

ii) That any truth-apt content has a significant negation which is likewise truth-apt

iii) That to be true is to correspond to the facts

iv) That a statement may be justified without being true, and vice versa

Wright 1992, p. 34. [Numbering added]

The correspondence platitude (iii) is key to the expansion of truth from minimalism to substantiality. For satisfaction of the constraints identified by Wright serves to fill out the notion of correspondence in such a way that sets of judgements meet ontic and epistemic guarantees that can be associated with a realist construal of the practices within which they are made. Thus according to Wright’s account of what a theory of truth should look like, minimal truth is inimical to both a verificationist and a pragmatist account of truth.

§3 Beyond Minimal Truth

Order of determination is one of a quartet of constraints on the relation between epistemic states and truth. According to Wright, the satisfaction of each of these constraints signals that a set of judgements moves further towards being a candidate for the application of a more-than-minimally construed truth predicate, one that supports a robust construal of the correspondence relation. Evidence Transcendence, the crux according to Dummett’s influential account, of realist/anti-realist debates, distinguishes between those sets of judgements for which the fact that truth conditions are met can outrun our epistemic access to it, and those for which the discovery of the truth is within our epistemic capabilities. Cognitive Command establishes whether or
not a set of judgements track the relevant facts - whether or not a judgement is *commanded* of us by those facts. Judgements that display cognitive command, then, can plausibly be thought to be reality-directed (even though, as we shall see, it may turn out that they are not directed at states of affairs wholly independent of subjects or their practices). *Wide Cosmological Role*, an idea we have already encountered (though not under that name) in our consideration of Pettit’s and Jackson’s notion of response-specificity (Chapter V §3.2), meanwhile, is an explanatory constraint associated with the robustness of the states of affairs that are tracked by judgements that (already) display cognitive command. Before going on to a detailed discussion of the order of determination constraint, I will consider each of the three other members of the quartet of *realism relevant* characteristics of (more-than-minimal) truth.

§3.1 Evidence Transcendence

Made central to discussions of realism by Michael Dummett, this constraint distinguishes between those sets of judgements the satisfaction of whose truth conditions may go over and above our epistemic capacities for discovering that they are satisfied and those for which satisfaction of those conditions is (in the usual instance) within our ken. In practice, then, the truth values of judgements for which the truth conditions are evidence transcendent remain indeterminable, but we may well look to assertibility as a criterion for their correctness in the absence of (what is taken to be) certainty. For instance, if mathematical posits and the states of affairs in which they occur are conceived of in a platonistic way, then mathematical judgements are good candidates for truth conditions that are evidence transcendent. This might mean, for instance, that a claim like Goldbach’s conjecture could have a truth value determined by the mathematical facts, even if it is not in our power ever to know its truth value. Similarly, if we take the view that religious practices are truth-apt, then beliefs about the gods, about angels, about punishment and redemption, and so on, are
also candidates for truth conditions the evidence for the satisfaction of which eludes us. By contrast, judgements regarding whether or not one is in pain are unlikely candidates for evidence transcendent truth conditions given the reliance of the truth of such judgements on phenomenological facts.\textsuperscript{106}

Prima facie this constraint is of least relevance and interest with respect to response-dependence. The motivation for our interest in the concepts under consideration is the degree of subject-involvement in the determination of their extensions, which suggests a similar element of subject-involvement in the issue of the satisfaction of truth conditions of judgements in which they occur. It is more or less impossible, then, for sets of judgements involving response-dependent concepts and sets of judgements the extension of the truth predicate for which is determined by best opinion, to have truth conditions the satisfaction of which are evidence transcendent, unless as Wright notes, the status of an opinion as ‘best’ is itself indeterminable (1993a, p. 84, n. 22).

\textbf{§3.2 Cognitive Command}

The cognitive command constraint is concerned with the direction of fit between a set of judgements and the relevant region of reality. Mere convergence in judgements is insufficient to meet the constraint. Rather, the source of convergence is what is at stake. The thought underlying the constraint, then, is one familiar in discussions of realism (in its epistemic guise): any agreement in judgments should be the result of convergence on the same facts of the matter rather than on convergence of taste or attitude. When satisfied, cognitive command provides an epistemic guarantee of correspondence with the relevant states of affairs. Whether or not a set of judgements

\textsuperscript{106} Later, however, I raise some doubts about whether reports of our own pain are legitimately characterized as expressions of judgements.
is a candidate for cognitive command can be determined by focusing on the sources of failures to converge – are they due to cognitive error, to errors of fact, where a subject ought to have made the judgement commanded by the facts – or simply to differences in tastes and attitudes? We are on the look out, then, for genuine error, which, according to Wright can occur as a result of one of three cognitive shortcomings:

A discourse exhibits Cognitive Command if and only if it is a priori that differences of opinion arising within it can be satisfactorily explained only in terms of “divergent input”, that is, the disputants working on the basis of different information (and hence guilty of ignorance and error, depending on the status of that information), or “unsuitable conditions” (resulting in inattention or distraction and so in inferential error, or oversight of data and so on), or “malfunction” (for example, prejudicial assessment of data, upwards or downwards, or dogma or failings in other categories already listed). Wright 1992, p. 93

Some such differences might not be put down to genuine cognitive failures if it turns out that they can be excused by

vagueness in a disputed statement, or in the standards of acceptability, or variation in personal evidence thresholds. Ibid, p. 144

Disagreement on the comic is considered by Wright to exemplify judgements that fail of cognitive command. He argues that when a set of judgements enjoys cognitive command, disagreements will be such that considerations independent of that conflict itself will settle the dispute with the result that one or both of the judgements will be withdrawn. So, for example, if Smith judges a floor tile to be square, while Jones thinks it is rectangular, the matter can be settled by measuring the sides of the tile and the angles where they intersect and either Smith or Jones (or neither of them) will be
correct in their judgement. Assuming a certain degree of rationality and absence of
stubbornness, one of them should, and will, withdraw their judgement. With the
comic, Wright argues, things are different. Judgements about the comic are, as he
nicely puts it, ‘innocent until proven guilty’ (1992, p. 103). So a divergence in
judgements as to what is funny is not prima facie a reason to revise them. Other non-
comic (usually moral) factors may come into play – a joke may be callous or
offensive and someone who found it funny might be persuaded that they ought not to
find it so. Generally, though, in matters of comic judgement, what seems funny to a
subject is funny. If Smith finds images of a large bowler-hatted man whacking a
smaller top-hatted man with a rolled-up newspaper belly-achingly funny, while Jones
considers it infantile nonsense, their disagreement will come down to differences in
sensibility – in sense of humour – not to cognitive error of one or more of the three
types identified by Wright on the part of one of them. This need not mean that there
cannot be some kind of community agreement on what’s funny. Wright claims there is
a community of comic sensibility such that there exists a consensus as to what it is
acceptable to find funny and this provides a standard for which we aim in our
judgements – we aim for comic judgements that are irreproachable on those grounds.
Moreover, the presupposition of community in operation here does not operate at the
level of a correctness condition for judgements that might be thought of as objective.
Rather, it works to keep judgements in check with respect to aspects of our practices
concerning what is acceptably found funny and what is considered beyond the pale.107

It is in this connection that Wright notes that we don’t tend to express judgements
about what is funny in a way that makes explicit their indexicality. We don’t in the
usual case say ‘I find that funny’, but simply ‘That’s funny’. But as we saw in Chapter

107 In Chapter VIII I provide a detailed analysis of the ontic and epistemic constraints imposed by realism on
practices involving response-dependent concepts of the category to which FUNNY belongs.
I with respect to similar cases, the absence of explicitly indexical language in the expression of comic judgements need not mean that the concepts in play are not to some degree relative. The concepts expressed by the term ‘funny’ function in this respect in the same way as the triplet concepts exemplified in our taxonomy by ATTRACTIVE ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X and ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X-AT-T. That is, judgements that use the concept expressed by ‘funny’ can be ascribing one of a trio of related concepts. Firstly, something could be what tends to be found funny by respondents under suitable conditions. Secondly, it could be FUNNY-FOR-X and thirdly, it could be FUNNY-FOR-X-AT-T.

Once we see this, though, we also see that judgments involving concepts of the first (simpliciter) type can be subject to ignorance and error and so satisfy the cognitive command constraint. Whereas, something may be FUNNY-FOR-X – it makes her laugh – but it is not the sort of thing that respondents under suitable conditions ought to find funny – torturing cats, say – and so does not count as FUNNY. The respondent’s failure to keep her sense of humour in check can be explained in terms of her ignorance of the standards of decency the community applies to the humorous, there is a fact of the matter of which she is not aware or which she has misunderstood. Judgements of the latter type, then, may be (self) disciplined by bearing in mind what would be deemed FUNNY by respondents under suitable conditions.

§3.3 Wide Cosmological Role

In branches of the literature on response-dependence and realism, explanatory propriety is afforded an important role in establishing the ontic status of the features posited by a practice. In Chapter IV, we saw how Johnston’s Missing Explanation Argument serves to put into play the idea that for his response-dependence project to be successful, response-dispositional properties should be explanatorily respectable in
the sense that they can be properly explanatory of instances of the relevant response; that is, of subjects’ dispositions to respond. Then in Chapter V we encountered the notion of Wide Cosmological Role as a way of thinking about the extent of explanatory pull enjoyed by the states of affairs that are reflected by certain types of judgements.

Although Wright’s cognitive command constraint may go some way to establishing that the cognitive relation between a set of judgements and the states of affairs they are about manifests an appropriate direction of fit, further characteristics of that relationship need to be established if the notion of truth and the notion of correspondence that underlies it are to go beyond minimalism. In particular, what is required is a source of justification for the claim that failures of convergence are a result of cognitive failures – failures to get in touch with the facts - of the three types identified by Wright. Judgements’ independence, in respect of truth, from thinkers’ epistemic states is strengthened if explanatory constraints are met because the use of relevant states of affairs in explanations of the correctness of those judgements is a means of earning the right to speak of those states of affairs as ‘the facts’ in virtue of which those judgements are true. The underlying idea is that the ability of the relevant state of affairs to be explanatorily efficacious in an explanation of a judgement’s truth signifies that the judgement is a result of epistemic interaction with that independent state of affairs, that it is true in virtue of the existence of that state of affairs. Thus the objects, properties and relations that figure in those judgements are confirmed as the source of our judgements’ truth. Wright’s third constraint, Wide Cosmological Role, is formulated with a view to providing this confirmation, thereby looking to explanatory considerations to provide the ontic bridge to states of affairs that is required by a more-than-minimal construal of the correspondence platitude.
Wright developed his Wide Cosmological Role constraint out of the version of the Best Explanation constraint employed by Gilbert Harman to differentiate the ethical from the scientific (1982, pp 6-9) and identified by Wiggins as one of the marks of substantial truth (for a set of judgements) (1980). Wright’s constraint requires the states of affairs with which true judgements correspond to have a wider explanatory scope, it is more liberal in so far as the explanations they provide can be *sketches* in a Hempelian sense (1965, pp 415-25). The relationship between Wide Cosmological Role and Best Explanation is more a matter of the genesis of his thought than of the views he eventually endorses, so for present purposes, I don’t discuss his account of the relationship.

A set of judgements satisfies Wide Cosmological Role if the states of affairs that would explain their truth would also explain the truth of judgements other than those that are simply reflections of their explananda. When states of affairs assume a wide explanatory role by contributing to the explanations of a variety of distinct phenomena, this indicates that these states of affairs interact with each other – *out there*. It thereby also indicates their place in an explanatorily circumscribed realm that is reality. A set of judgements that satisfy Wide Cosmological Role, then, will correspond with states of affairs that qualify, in a strong sense, as good explainers.

Accordingly, Wide Cosmological Role is defined thus:

> Let the *width of cosmological role* of the subject matter of a discourse be measured by the extent to which citing the states of affairs with which it deals is potentially contributive to the explanation of things *other than, or other than via*, our being in attitudinal states which take such states of affairs as objects. Wright 1992, p. 196

So when considering the potential of a set of judgments for more-than-minimal truth-aptness,
The crucial question is [... the question] of what else there is, other than our judgements, of which the citation of such states of affairs can feature in good enough explanations. \textit{Ibid}

Thus, if the state of affairs in which the soccer ball is spherical is also explanatory of the ball’s rolling as a result of its having been kicked; that it makes a (roughly) round hole when kicked through a window and that it will not pass through the (smaller) square-shaped holes of the goal net, and so on, then that state of affairs demonstrates explanatory currency that is reflective of its Wide Cosmological Role.

Unlike the Best Explanation constraint out of which it developed, Wide Cosmological Role permits acausal explanation and does not require the explanations in which states of affairs with Wide Cosmological Role occur to be the most fundamental explanations available (1992, p. 198-99). Indeed, they may be partial or sketch explanations that contribute to a complete explanation. Thus there may be states of affairs that meet Wide Cosmological Role, but not Best Explanation, because although explanatory of a wide range of states of affairs and propositional attitudes, they are not \textit{causally} explanatory or are not the most fundamental explanations thereof. For example, mathematical states of affairs can, Wright thinks, be explanatory in a number of contexts. The fact that there is a prime number of tiles available explains why the tiler is unable to use them to tile a rectangular surface without remainder. Similarly, the fact that a traffic light has turned red explains why the driver applied the brakes; the fact that the whistle sounded shrill explains why the child put his hands over his ears; the fact that the coffee tasted bitter explains why she poured it away; the fact that he was attractive explains why the viewers of \textit{American Idol} voted for him; the fact that the smell of the rotting meat was nauseating explains why she covered her nose and mouth; the fact that the toy was inflatable explains why it floated in the bath, and so on.
§3.4 Order of Determination

The order of determination distinction seeks to mark a difference between those sets of judgements the truth conditions of which involve subjects’ best opinions and those the truth conditions of which are independent of best opinion. Wright, like Johnston (1989, p. 171), recognises his distinction as a descendant of that dividing the protagonists in Plato’s *Euthyphro*: while their concern was whether or not an act is pious because it is loved by the gods or loved by the gods because it is pious, the order of determination distinction attempts to crystallise a difference between judgements the truth values of which are determined in a way that is subject-involving and judgments the truth values of which are subject-independent. The sought after order of determination distinction, then, is between judgements the extension of the truth predicate among which is determined in conceptual independence from the verdicts of best opinion, and judgements among which the extension of the truth predicate is, at least in part, conceptually constrained by what the verdicts of best opinion would be. 1992, p. 120

In Wright’s terminology then, the distinction crystallised by the constraint is said to be between extension determining judgements and extension reflecting judgements. In *Euthyphro* itself, Euthyphro tries to argue that an act’s piety is determined by its being loved by the Gods, while Socrates takes the line that its piety is what engenders their love for it. Wright, then, is apt to dub extension-determination and extension-reflection (respectively) ‘Euthyphronism’, or ‘Projectivism’, and ‘Detectivism’. I will use the former labels apart from where direct citation requires otherwise. Wright’s distinction roughly corresponds to the kind of distinction that the term ‘response-dependence’ tends to highlight.108 In attempting to delineate the two sides of the

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108 However, given the variation of the extension of ‘response-dependence’ between theorists, we ought not help ourselves to the claim (however tempting) that the distinction parallels the response-dependent/response-independent distinction.
distinction, he employs the working assumption that secondary quality judgments (he uses the colour case) will exemplify the extension-determining side of the distinction, while judgements about shape (visually discernible shape, at least), though able to be represented by a biconditional of the form taken by basic equations, will be located on the extension-reflecting side of the fence, as will moral judgements. Much of the work that Wright undertakes in relation to the order of determination distinction consists in establishing how the distinction might be clearly drawn such that colour and shape fall out on different sides. As both extension-determining and extension-reflecting judgements will sustain articulation by means of biconditional basic equations, the challenge faced by Wright’s project is to find a significant point of difference within the biconditionals for each type of judgement. To this end, Wright applies four requirements that biconditionals for sets of judgements that are extension-determining should meet: Substantiality – the requirement that the biconditional basic equation be filled out non-trivially avoiding a whatever-it-takes understanding of appropriate conditions; Independence – the requirement that suitability be specified independently of facts about the relevant subject matter; Apriority – the requirement that the truth of the biconditional be knowable a priori - and Extremality – the requirement that the a priori guarantee of correctness of best opinion is derived from the role of best opinion in determining truth values rather than from any other features of a case that might confer infallibility on best opinion. The crux of the order of determination distinction will be established by the requirement(s) that are met by biconditionals for extension-determining judgments but not by those for extension-reflecting judgments. In what follows, I begin by considering the nature of the terrain that the distinction is intended to map and the relation of this distinction to what are by now more familiar distinctions between concepts. I go on to examine the four requirements adumbrated here together with Wright’s case for rigidification and for provisoed equations.
Finally I consider differences between this thesis and those previously considered along with some issues arising from Wright’s Order of Determination distinction.

§3.4.1 The Order of Determination of What?

Previously, where the response-dependence claim has been a claim about how concepts’ extensions get determined (the thesis I develop in Chapter I, Johnston’s thesis in its earlier incarnations and, arguably, Pettit’s), it has been a claim about the determination of the extension of a target concept (or family of concepts) itself. Located within his wider-ranging project of attempting to secure more-than-minimal truth for sets of judgements, Wright’s distinction is concerned with, what he takes to be, a significant difference in the direction of extension determination for the truth predicate as it applies to different sets of judgements. By his lights, unless it is determined in a particular, subject-involving way, the set of judgements in question are simply extension reflective, where the extension in question is that of the truth predicate. So the concept the extension of which is determined by best opinion is TRUTH as it applies to a particular set of judgements. But of course this amounts to the same thing as the determination of the extensions of the family of target concepts that are ascribed by that set of judgements. Where the set of judgements in question is that of judgements about the tastes of things, then, the question of the determination of the extension of the truth predicate as it pertains to those judgements is the same as the question of the direction of determination for the extension of the relevant concepts; that is, SWEET, SOUR, BITTER, AND SALTY. As we shall see, where best opinion is deemed to be extension determining for a set of judgements, best opinion as to whether or not a judgement p is true will be the same as best opinion as to p; that is, best opinion determines p’s truth value. Thus if the set of judgements in question are judgements about the tastes of things, then best opinion about whether or not it is true that the milk is sour will be the same as best opinion about whether the milk is sour,
which will be derivative of how the milk tastes to respondents under appropriate conditions. So the judgements that are the target of our interest will, under appropriate conditions, constitute the best opinions that determine the extension of the truth predicate as it applies to them.

§3.4.2 Substantiality

On this account, then, the relevant, extension-determining, response is a judgement (in Wright’s terms a subject ‘forms a belief’). Thus, the biconditional takes the form exemplified by that Wright gives for Red:

\[ x \text{ is red iff if S knows which object } x \text{ is, and knowingly observes it in plain view in suitable perceptual conditions; and is fully attentive to this observation; and is perceptually suitable and is prey to no other cognitive disfunction; and is free of doubt about the satisfaction of any of these conditions, then if S forms a belief about } x \text{’s colour, that belief will be that } x \text{ is red.} \]

1993a, p. 79

The biconditional is filled out to meet the substantiality condition and thus avoid a trivial, whatever-it-takes understanding of the suitability of respondents and of environmental conditions. As we have seen elsewhere, the fulfillment of conditions on respondents and environment ensures the credibility of the relevant response. According to Wright’s theory, a belief formed knowingly and attentively by a suitable respondent in a suitable environment will qualify as a best opinion and thus as an extension-determining response with respect to the truth predicate applied to the relevant judgements. The truth of judgements about the colours of things, then, will be dependent upon the best opinions formed about them by suitable respondents under suitable conditions. The question of whether or not something is red is the question of whether or not the best opinion that would be formed by suitable respondents under suitable conditions would be that the thing in question is, indeed, red.
The substantial biconditional (see above) uses the notion of suitability – suitability of perceptual conditions and suitability of respondents – and, as we have seen, in order for the biconditional to be properly substantial, these place-holders must themselves be filled-out substantially, even though the full specification need not appear in the biconditional itself. Wright’s treatment of this issue has been discussed in Chapter II in relation to how the ‘appropriate’ place-holder might be filled-out.\textsuperscript{109} As we saw there, ‘Suitable perceptual conditions’ is cashed out as

\begin{quote}
Conditions of lighting like those which actually normally obtain out-of doors and out-of-shadow at noon on a cloudy summer’s day. 1993a, p. 79
\end{quote}

The qualifier ‘normally’ is construed ‘broadly statistically’ and rules out those occasions when suitable conditions are disrupted by rogue events such as ‘solar eclipses, nuclear explosions, and so on’. The perceptual suitability of respondents, meanwhile, ‘involves nothing more than having perceptual capacities which fall within the range of statistical normality among actual human beings.’ (\textit{Ibid})\textsuperscript{110}

\section*{§3.4.3 Independence}

In \textit{Truth and Objectivity} Wright places the additional \textit{Independence} requirement on conditions on respondents and environment (hereafter C-conditions). Independence requires that suitability be specified independently from facts about the relevant subject matter. C-conditions for (extension-determining) best opinions about the tastes of things, for example, should be specified without recourse to any facts about taste. The requirement is invoked to pre-empt an objection, to which Wright, unlike

\textsuperscript{109} Remarks on Wright’s construal are made there.
\textsuperscript{110} The presence of ‘actually’ and ‘actual’ in these specifications signals Wright’s preference for rigidifying on ‘suitable’ within the biconditional. This point will be dealt with in due course.
Johnston and Pettit, believes we ought to give some countenance. 111 If the objection doesn’t actually arise, and turns out to be a straw man, the Independence requirement need not be respected. The thought motivating this independence requirement is that best opinion cannot be determinative of truth value if the credibility of judgements *qua* best opinion is determined (even partially) by appeal to facts other than those determined by best opinion, for then best opinion (at least partially) is tracking some facts of the matter (about taste, say) that are not dependent upon best opinion. Wright puts the matter thus (with respect to colour concepts):

> If what it needs to make the relevant opinions ‘best’ under certain circumstances is represented as depending on facts about the actual extension of colour concepts in those same circumstances, how do we answer a critic who questions whether, in presupposing that those facts are fully determinate, we are implicitly presupposing some mode of constitution of colour facts which is conceptually unconstrained by best opinion and hence potentially at odds with the Euthyphronist’s central claim? 1992, p. 121

If the independence requirement is not met and whether or not a judgement qualifies as best opinion is determined by appeal to other facts of the matter, learned a posteriori, then the a priority of the biconditional is undermined. Wright’s thought, then, is that a substantial a priori biconditional is achievable only when the independence requirement is met.

In earlier versions of his account (1989, 1993a), Wright had argued that the specification of C-conditions for biconditionals for colour concepts would satisfy the independence requirement because whether or not C-conditions were fulfilled could be

111 As Wright acknowledges (p. 123, n. 29) neither Johnston nor Pettit think that Independence (or something like it) need be respected.
ascertained by someone who lacked colour concepts altogether. His most recent treatment of the issue, recognises, probably in response to critics, that an independence problem arises for biconditionals for colour concepts as well as for extension-reflecting concepts such as PEAR-SHAPED, for which the problem arises as follows:

While substantially construed biconditionals that make manifest the role of best opinion can be constructed for sets of judgements that fall on the extension-reflecting side of the distinction, such as the following:

**Pear-shaped:**

\[ x \text{ is pear-shaped iff for any S: S knows which object } x \text{ is, and knowingly observes it in plain view from a sufficient variety of positions in suitable perceptual conditions, and is fully attentive to these observations, and is perceptually suitable and is prey to no other cognitive disfunction, and is free of doubt about the satisfaction of any of these conditions - then if S forms a belief about } x \text{’s shape, that belief will be that } x \text{ is pear-shaped.} \]

1993a, p. 80

suitability cannot be specified substantially without compromising an independence constraint. Once that constraint is compromised, the a priority of the biconditional is undermined. So a possible test for order of determination would be whether both substantiality and a priority can be sustained. Where it could be, the relevant set of judgements would fail the order of determination test, best opinion is extension-determining with respect to the extension of the truth predicate as it applies. Where the biconditional is substantial yet a posteriori, best opinion would be merely extension-reflecting with respect to the truth predicate as applied to the relevant set of judgements.

112 Wright 1993a, p. 79. It is worth remarking here, however, that the question of knowing whether or not they are fulfilled is somewhat otiose, given that the biconditional is intended only as a theorists’ tool that represents a
However, in contrast to the colour case it is not possible substantially to specify ‘suitable perceptual conditions’ for the perception of things’ shapes without violating the independence constraint. In the case of judgments about the three-dimensional shapes of things, facts about shape turn out to be relevant to specifying the conditions that are best suited to eliciting best opinions about shape – what makes them best opinions about the shapes of things is determined by their pedigree, which in turn is (at least partially) determined by shape facts. This being so, at least some truths about shape must be determined independently of our best opinions regarding shape.

Opinions about things’ shapes will only count as best opinions, Wright points out, if the stability of something’s shape is maintained throughout the various observations – first from this perspective, then from that, and so on - that drive those judgements. The stability of something’s shape through a series of observations is an a priori condition of a judgement about that shape counting as an instance of best opinion. Wright argues that we end up with a dilemma, both horns of which require that we draw on facts about shape in order to determine whether or not a judgement is an instance of best opinion.

Given that requirement of stability, stability of objects’ shapes must be ensured throughout the observations upon which judgements that are candidates for best opinion are based. One means of achieving this would be to specify suitability conditions that would entail stability throughout observations. The satisfaction of such conditions would, however, imply that there is some one shape that the object has throughout and which must be revealed by all observations that are the basis for opinions that may come to count as best. If we take this route, then, facts about practice. There is no onus on the practitioner herself to be aware of the role of C-conditions qua C-conditions or of whether or not they are fulfilled in any particular instance.
objects’ shapes enter into the determination of whether or not a judgement qualifies as a best opinion and this undermines the thought that best opinions themselves could determine the extension of the truth predicate in judgements about objects’ shapes.

Alternatively, we could specify suitability conditions so that the stability of an object’s shape is not entailed by their satisfaction, but this will leave open the possibility that objects’ shapes undergo changes that go unnoticed during observations. This threatens the correctness of any opinions based upon observations made under such conditions. And this, in turn, undermines the a priori connection between satisfaction of the conditions and the correctness of judgments made under those conditions, the upshot being that there would be no guarantee that opinions reached under such conditions were best after all.

With respect to giving substantial specifications that meet the independence condition, for C-conditions for biconditionals for colour concepts, the (possibly straw man objection) is as follows: Suppose an object x is a solid and a judgement p about its colour – ‘X is red all over.’ – is a candidate for best opinion. Attempting to construct a biconditional for p, we include among the C-conditions the stipulation that x’s colour remain stable throughout a series of observations from different perspectives. Because the stipulation is part of the specification of more comprehensive conditions under which, we believe, best opinion determines the extension of the truth predicate for colour judgements, the fact of x’s colour stability should likewise be conceivable as best-opinion determined. But, Wright continues, the claim that x’s colour is stable throughout $t_{1...n}$ just is the claim that x has some colour that x is throughout. An explanation of the fact of x’s being that one colour throughout $t_{1...n}$ cannot be given in terms of best opinions about x’s colour during that
period because we need the notion of colour stability for an independent characterisation of what makes an opinion best.

Wright offers two solutions in the face of the envisaged objection. The first is the obvious, but impracticable, approach of avoiding the use of the target concepts altogether. The second is to permit the target concepts to figure in the specification of C-conditions but only within the scope of intensional operators, such as already occurs in the biconditionals in Wright’s account, in which the relevant response is expressed as ‘S judges/believes that p.’ The proposed solution would involve including in the basic equation respondents’ beliefs about the satisfaction of the relevant C-conditions. Suppose that the judgement under consideration as a candidate for extension determination is ‘x is red all over.’ (where x is a solid object). The basic equation, then, would include the stipulation that S believes (among other things) that x is stable in colour throughout her observations; that is, that it remains red throughout $t_1...n$. This solution allows something other than facts about colours, something more internalist, such as beliefs about an observed object’s colour stability, for example, to determine when C-conditions obtain.

However, this solution is inconsistent with what theorists generally take to be the purpose of the basic equation and the C-conditions device. C-conditions are a theorists’ apparatus. They are part of a theoretical attempt to elucidate the practices associated with making a certain set of judgements and are not intended as a representation of knowledge that practitioners actually bring to bear when making such judgements. The inclusion of practitioners’ alleged beliefs about C-conditions in elucidations of concepts’ extension determination, then, would be misleading and would make for less than accurate elucidation of the relevant practice(s). As we have seen, practitioners can be competent with a concept without being aware that C-
conditions obtain. Indeed, they can be such that they qualify as suitable respondents in respect of a concept or family of concepts; that is, respondents whose responses under suitable conditions are determinative of those concepts’ extensions, and be unaware both that they are so suited and that the conditions under which they respond are suitable.

§3.4.4 Rigidification and A Priority

We have previously encountered the question of rigidification on terms such as ‘suitable’ and ‘normal’ within the basic equation in relation to the account developed in Chapters I and II and to the Johnstonian and Pettitian accounts. Wright believes that rigidification is the correct move, but that the ensuing effect on biconditionals’ modal status undermines the possibility of treating modal status as a crux according to which the order of determination distinction could be drawn.

In the case of colour judgements (and mutatis mutandis, judgements about other secondary qualities) Wright argues for rigidification on the term ‘standard’ on the grounds that it preserves the naturalistic intuition that the colours of things supervene on their physical character.¹¹³ The inclusion of the rigidification device ‘actually’ has the effect of constraining the extension-determining response to the responses of actually standard subjects under actually standard conditions. This rules out the possibility, counter-intuitive to those with even rather modest naturalistic inclinations, that the colours of things could change according to the changing visual effects they have on standard subjects or according to changes in the standard conditions of observation without any corresponding change occurring at the level supervened upon; that is, without any change in their physical characteristics. For if standard

¹¹³ However, as I argued earlier, the case for rigidification is less clear cut in cases of other types of concepts that are good candidates for response-dependence and which, given Wright’s working assumption are likely to fall out on the extension-determining side of Wright’s distinction.
subjects were to become colour-blind or standard conditions become those we tend to experience in thick smog, say, the judgements standard subjects would have made about things’ colours were they or conditions as they actually are would not have changed and, all other things being equal, the extension of the truth predicate for the relevant judgements would remain unaffected.

From the outset, Wright had hoped that the modal status of the relevant biconditional would emerge as the point of difference between extension determination and extension reflection with the former turning out to be necessary truths knowable a priori and the latter to be contingent and knowable a priori. For, he argues, if we claim that best opinion is a conceptual ground for truth with respect to a set of judgements,

It ought to be necessary that the deliverances of best opinion are true. 1992, p. 112

Whereas if best opinion is the conceptual ground for truth, which is the situation relevant to extension determination,

It ought to be necessary that any truth [pertaining to the set of judgements in question] is accessible to a best opinion. Ibid

By contrast, if best opinions are truth-tracking, Wright argues, it is possible that the conditions of opinion formation which qualify them as best, and ensure that they track the truth, might not have done so. Thus, it will be at least a sufficient condition for a set of judgments to be extension-reflecting that the basic equations elucidating them are contingently true. However, once we rigidify on the appropriate terms in the biconditional for colour, Wright argues, we may overdetermine its necessity, for while the truth of P is a contingent one, the truth of ‘P is actually true’ is necessary, with the effect that similarly rigidified biconditionals for shape judgements would also be necessary and any potential point of contrast lost.
A solution he explores is that of restricting the scope of the rigidifier so that instead of rigidifying the whole biconditional claim to generate the following necessary truth (where P is a shape judgement and CS stipulates that S is a standard subject observing things under standard conditions:

Actually: P iff (if CS, then S would judge that P)

the rigidifier acts only on (what are on Wright’s account) the statistical elements in the specification of C-conditions:

P iff (if S were in the same condition as one who is actually C, then S would judge that P). 1992, p. 115

We may not assume, Wright avers, that the restricted scope rigidifier will affect modal status in the same way as the wider scope rigidifier. This can be seen from comparing ‘Actually the Queen of England is prim.’, which must be true in counterfactual worlds because whatever world we’re talking about, the world is always filled in as the actual world, with ‘The actual Queen of England is prim.’, which is contingently so, she may not have been.

Restricting the scope of the rigidifier turns out to be of little help, however. Wright argues that when we stipulate that S’s observations occur under the same conditions as a respondent who is actually C, such a complex set of conditions on her, on the background conditions and on the prevailing laws must be imported into the counterfactual worlds under consideration that it is ‘quite obscure’ how the biconditional could not be true there and hence necessarily so (1992, p. 116).

In response to the difficulties surrounding the establishment of a point of difference in terms of the modal status of the relevant biconditionals, Wright returns to the approach taken in his unpublished (but much referred to) manuscript ‘Notes on Basic
The fall back position is the introduction of the third condition on biconditionals for extension-determining judgments – Apriority. ‘It is certain’, he argues that the truth of propositions that owe their necessity entirely to the employment of an ‘actually’ operator cannot be known a priori (1992, p. 116). And this contrasts with the claim that if the extension of colour concepts are determined by best opinion, they

ought to be accessible purely by analytic reflection on those concepts, and hence available as knowledge a priori. *Ibid*, p. 117

If biconditionals for colour judgements are necessary, then, their necessity must have some other source. In the absence of an alternative account of their necessity, the apriority condition would draw the requisite extension-determination/extension-reflection distinction by letting it be a *sufficient* condition for appropriate biconditionals to involve extension-reflecting judgements that their truth *cannot be knowable* a priori; and a *necessary* condition for them to involve extension-determining judgements that their truth *be knowable* a priori.  

The unknowability of the a priori truth of the biconditional arises as a problem on Wright’s account because of the strict requirement imported by substantiality. By his account, substantiality requires that those in possession of a concept have a non-trivial a priori grasp on the nature of the C-conditions that actually count as suitable for the occurrence of extension-determining responses. Ostensibly, the problem arises because such detailed knowledge is an empirical matter. But Wright’s somewhat strict construal of the demands of substantiality is also at the root of the perceived difficulty here. For the demands of substantiality to be met, competent users of a concept are apparently required to have a priori knowledge of the detailed set of C-conditions that

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114 A manuscript that remains unpublished in that particular form, but is often referred to in the literature.
are actually suitable. Their a priori understanding of such conditions would be such that they could articulate it in terms of 'C-conditions'. If, however, we take a more relaxed stance on substantiality, the problem is dissolved; that is, substantiality would be satisfied if what is knowable a priori is that there is a connection between responses of subjects who are actually suitable – whoever they happen as a matter of empirical fact to be - under conditions that are actually suitable – whatever those conditions happen as a matter of empirical fact to be. What practitioners know a priori, then, is that the connection considered vital to extension-determination/response-dependence obtains in the case of a particular concept and this is reflected by the relevant a priori biconditional. This more modest construal of substantiality is more consistent with an understanding of the biconditional apparatus as a theoretical tool rather than as a representation of competent practitioners’ understanding of the relevant concept.

§3.4.5 The Extremal Condition

When satisfied, Wright’s fourth condition on biconditionals for extension-determining judgements serves to ensure that the a priori guarantee of the correctness of best opinion is a result of its role in determining relevant truth values and not as a result of infallibility conferred by other aspects of the case in question. First-personal judgements concerning pain provide the case with which Wright demonstrates the condition. Due to infallibility, one might be tempted to think that best opinion determines the extension of the truth predicate with respect to first-personal judgements about whether or not we are in pain. That is, we might be tempted by the following (provisoed, see below) equation:

\[\text{Two dimensionalism can be used to give force to the claim that the necessity of the colour biconditional is different from that of the shape biconditional: No matter the actual world, the colour biconditional is true, not so the shape biconditional. See Davies and Humberstone 1980.}\]
If S has the concepts requisite in order to entertain the judgment that she is in pain, then \( (S \text{ is in pain at } t \iff S \text{ judges that she is in pain at } t) \).

*Ibid*, p. 124

To resist that confusion, Wright imposes the extremal condition to constrain extension determination to those cases where we cannot explain the a priori guarantee that best opinion is on track by appeal to features of the states of affairs that they successfully track in such a way that the guarantee is a consequence of those features.

A possible objection arises if we take seriously Wittgenstein’s reminder that we don’t really make *judgements* with respect to our own pains. The objection that Wright foresees if the extremal condition is not applied becomes (another) straw man. Wittgenstein shows us that when we claim to be in pain, we can’t be wrong about it and, hence, it doesn’t entirely make sense to say that we’re right either – if we seem (to ourselves) to be in pain, we are. There is no seems right/is right gap when it comes to first-personal attributions of pain; phenomenology is all.\(^{116}\) ‘I am in pain.’, then, is less an articulation of a judgement, more an avowal. If this is right, then the pain case does not present a genuine risk of confusion with extension-determination, for despite the *feel* of first-personal pain attributions, infallibility doesn’t really come into play. Whereas in the extension determination case, because we don’t know whether or not C-conditions obtain, we don’t know whether an opinion is best or not. Indeed even if we have the feeling of infallibility, it is misplaced. Although, given that the conditions on me and on the environment of my perception seem suitable, it is commonsense not to deny that the wall in front of my desk is yellow, the possibility remains that the conditions under which I observe it are less than they ought to be and that I am

\(^{116}\) The objection may arise that there is more to pain than phenomenological feel; that is, pain is also (or simply) a physical state, and thus, first-personal reports could be wrong – one might feel pain in the absence of the appropriate physical state. The objection can be met by revising the claim to say that we cannot be wrong about whether or not we *feel* pain, thereby making the pain case more or less the same as the cases of first-personal reports of how things appear to us and first-personal attributions of emotional states, which are considered below.
mistaken. I could not, of course, be mistaken that the wall looks yellow to me. First personal reports of how things appear are another instance of the sort of case Wright has in mind as at risk of being confused with those of extension-determination. Reports of our own emotional states – that I feel happy, sad, despairing, confused – provide a further instance. We may require reflection in order properly to articulate the state we are in, but we can’t properly be said to be mistaken.\footnote{A Freudian-type objection might appear relevant here – mightn’t we be sub-consciously self-deceived about how we are feeling? But given the impossibility of verifying claims about the sub-conscious, it doesn’t undermine the claim that we can’t be said to be wrong in our attribution of emotional states to ourselves.}

### §3.4.6 The Basic Equation Must Go

Wright believes that difficulties regarding subjunctive conditional analyses put the familiar biconditional basic equation under pressure. The ‘moral’ he argues, is quite clear: a priori correct subjunctive-conditional characterisations of the truth conditions of the kinds of statements in which we are interested are not to be had. The Basic Equation has to go. 1992, p119

The upshot of relinquishing the biconditional in favour of a provisoed equation – where the a priori connection between judgement and extension determination is upheld only if C-conditions obtain – is that best opinion is at best a partial determinant of the extension of the truth predicate for the relevant judgment set.

As Wright has things, the biconditional has an embedded conditional (where S is the respondent and C are conditions on both respondent and environment):

\[
P \text{ iff } (\text{if } S \text{ were in the same condition as one who is actually } C, \text{ then } S \text{ would judge that } P)
\]

The difficulty Wright has in mind occurs as a result of the possibility of the phenomenon that Johnston calls ‘altering’ - where something that would behave thus
and so fails to exhibit the relevant paradigmatic behaviour under suitable conditions because it has been altered in some way as a result of the conditions occurring, but would still be counted as having the disposition to behave thus and so. A familiar case of the altering phenomenon, employed by Frank Jackson, is that of photo-sensitive paper (1998, pp 98-100). Photo-sensitive paper is white before exposure to light or to a combination of light and appropriate substances. But note that according to the appropriate biconditional for such colour claims, the paper is white if and only if it would look white to a respondent if viewed under suitable conditions. However, when suitable conditions occur; that is when light conditions approximate normal daylight, the paper’s colour alters – it turns black if exposed to conditions of light approximate to daylight and a variety of other shades if exposed to light together with chemicals used in photographic processing. If the truth conditions of the relevant judgment ‘The paper is white at t.’ were correctly captured by the subjunctive conditional embedded in the biconditional, then we would have to say that the paper is not white in the dark.

The possibility of altering threat en the claim that it is a priori that best opinion determines the truth value of P because our determination of the colour of the paper seems to be determined by theoretical facts about how the paper behaves rather than by how it appears to observers in certain conditions. Thus it cannot be a priori that its truth conditions are captured by the conditional analysis.

These finkish cases are statistically rare, however, sufficiently so not to threaten the overall plausibility of the response-dependence elucidation where it serves as an elucidation of colour practice. Here, finkish cases show up as anomalies and our practices have evolved to deal with them as such. If, however, the response-dependence account is such that the response-dependence claim identifies a colour,
say, as a response-dependent property, then the finkish cases are problematic because the identity claim should be correct in every case that occurs in the actual world.\textsuperscript{118} Wright’s solution is to replace the original biconditional, which has a conditional right-hand side, with a conditional with a biconditional consequent. Altering in the truth value of P, which might happen even if C conditions were to obtain, is unproblematic if what S is to judge when she is under C-conditions is P’s truth value under C conditions. It is the chameleon’s colour under suitable conditions, then, that a respondent (under suitable conditions) judges. The provisoed equation, then, takes the following form:

\[
\text{If CS, then (it would be the case that } P \iff S \text{ would judge that } P)\]

1992, p. 119

where ‘CS’ stands for conditions on respondents and environment.

The upshot of so amending the equation is that judgements’ truth values are only partially determined by best opinion because provisoed equations say nothing about constraints on the truth value of P when C-conditions don’t obtain. Yet things are determinately coloured, for example, under less-than-C conditions. Another, more familiar, way of putting the point is that we do not enjoy a complete guarantee of freedom from error with respect to the truth values of judgements for which best opinion is extension determining. Only where opinion qualifies as best, that is, where the antecedent is satisfied, is there a guarantee of a judgement’s correctness. As we have seen elsewhere, it can plausibly be supposed that we cannot assume with any certainty that the antecedent is so satisfied and thus tend to proceed epistemically as though fallibility reigns.

\section*{§4 Summary}

\textsuperscript{118} But see Wright 1992, pp 118-19, which might offer a response to this point.
We have seen that much of Wright’s work with respect to the order of determination distinction is directed towards finding a point of difference between judgements for which the extension of TRUTH is determined by best opinion and judgements for which the extension of TRUTH is reflective of the relevant states of affairs. This objective is shaped by the working assumption that colour and shape will fall out on opposite sides of the distinction. Any such point of difference should be reflected in differences in the biconditionals for each of the two types of judgement. Thus Wright develops and applies four requirements that ought to be met by biconditionals for judgements for which the extension of TRUTH is best opinion-determined. As we have seen, this is not to say that all of those requirements will not be met by biconditionals for judgements for which TRUTH is extension-reflective. Indeed, in the final analysis, only one – a priority – comes close to generating the point of difference Wright seeks.

Substantiality provides insurance against the triviality of the biconditional by ensuring that C-conditions are not specified in a whatever-it-takes manner. With a proper specification of C-conditions in place, we can be confident that judgements that occur under such conditions would count as best opinion. However, in the most recent (1992) version of his theory, Wright added the closely related requirement of Independence. Like substantiality, independence is a requirement placed on the specification of C-conditions, it requires that they be specified without recourse to facts about the relevant realm of reality. The extension of TRUTH as it applies to colour judgements, then, cannot be determined by best opinions, the thought goes, if what counts as best opinion must itself be specified by appeal to something other than facts determined by best opinion. If it can be, then something other than best opinion is (at least partially) involved in the determination of the extension of TRUTH as it applies to colour judgements. Wright concludes that independence can be met by biconditionals for such judgements by allowing the target concepts to figure in the
specification of C-conditions only within the scope of intensional operators.\textsuperscript{119} I raised the objection that this is inconsistent with the generally accepted purpose of the biconditional.

Wright considers the modal status of the respective biconditionals as a crux upon which the order of determination distinction may be able to be drawn: those for extension-determining judgements turning out to be a priori necessary, those for extension-reflecting judgments turning out to be a priori contingent. Modality, however, turns out to be a vexed question once we rigidify on terms in both types of biconditional in order to respect certain intuitions about supervenience. Even if we restrict the scope of the rigidifier, Wright argues, we end up with a priori necessary biconditionals on both sides of the putative distinction. Hence, Wright turns to a priority as a likely point of difference by which the distinction could be drawn. It will be a sufficient condition for extension-reflection that the truth of the relevant biconditionals \textit{not} be knowable a priori and a necessary condition for extension-determination that the truth of the relevant biconditionals \textit{be} knowable a priori. This will only work, however, if the necessity of biconditionals for judgements for which the extension of \textsc{Truth} is determined by best opinion is derived (at least partially) from some source other than rigidification. For the truth of such biconditionals, Wright argues, could not be known a priori. Here I raised the objection that what needs to be known a priori is not the specification of actual C-conditions, but rather that there is a determinative connection between judgements made under such conditions and the extension of \textsc{Truth} as it is applied to the relevant judgements.

\textsuperscript{119} Recall that Wright develops the Independence requirement in response to an objection that he admits need not necessarily be heeded, though he does take it seriously enough to develop Independence.
Wright’s fourth requirement is *Extremality*. This is introduced to prevent confusion between genuine extension-determination on the part of best opinion and infallibility such as might, arguably, be conferred in respect of judgements about our own pains and other phenomenological states.

With that apparatus in place, however, Wright argues that the basic equation should be modified in order to meet familiar difficulties regarding subjunctive conditional analyses. The replacement, provisoed, equation is a conditional with a biconditional consequent instead of the original biconditional with a conditional appearing on the right-hand-side. The provisoed equation, then, properly articulates the limited ambit of the relation between best opinion and extension-determination; that is, that extension determination by judgement only occurs when C-conditions obtain. Further, if the requirements developed by Wright are not to come to nought, the provisoed equation for judgements for which the extension of TRUTH is best opinion determined ought to be rigidified to the actual world by the application of the ‘actually’ operator, its truth ought to be a priori knowable and it should satisfy extremality.

§5 Issues

Wright’s project is principally concerned with truth. Order of Determination is just one of a set of distinctions that are applied to the truth predicate with the aim of seeing how far beyond minimal truth it can expand. Satisfaction of *Cognitive Command* confirms that a set of judgements aims at tracking the facts of a matter. A set of judgements the truth conditions for which satisfy *Evidence Transcendence* display complete separation of truth from our epistemic capacities and hence will not be extension-determining. By confirming the properly explanatory role of corresponding states of affairs, *Wide Cosmological Role* provides a bridge between the epistemic features that underlie cognitive command and the ontological security provided by knowing that judgements are about states of affairs that are part of an
explanatorily circumscribed realm. It indicates not only that a set of judgements is reality-directed but also that the states of affairs to which they are directed are genuine.

The fourth distinction – *Order of Determination* – is the most closely aligned with a response-dependence/response-independence distinction and, hence, has been the principal focus of this chapter. In applying the order of determination distinction, we ask what determines the extension of the concept TRUTH as it is applied to a particular set of judgements. Is it determined by the states of affairs with which the judgements are concerned? If so, it is ‘extension-reflecting’ in the terms of the distinction. On the other hand, if it is (partially) determined by best opinion – judgements made under substantially (and possibly independently) specified C-conditions – it is ‘extension-determining’ in the terms of the distinction. In the former case, truth remains independent of epistemic capacities, in the latter, *Euthyphronist*, case, truth is in the hands of those judges whose opinions under certain conditions count as best. Satisfaction of cognitive command, however, ensures that judgements aim to track the relevant facts, so where a set of judgements also satisfies cognitive command, best opinion is at least prompted by reality. We should note, however, that these facts may turn out to include facts about our practices. Moreover, if extension-determining best opinion alights on states of affairs that satisfy Wide Cosmological Role, as Wright indicates states of affairs involving the colours of things would, then there may be a further sense in which, with respect to the truth of a set of judgements, best opinion is tied to reality.

Clearly, then, the aims of Wright’s project are more wide-ranging and, hence, ambitious than those of response-dependence theories. Even though it has tended to
be treated as such in the literature, it doesn’t merely seek to elucidate the relationship between responses and certain concepts or between responses and the properties determined by those concepts, rather the order of determination distinction is merely one element of a framework for a theory of substantial truth. Its apparatus, however, is borrowed from response-dependence, and against the background of this preoccupation with truth, the desiderata of Wright’s wider theory make demands on that apparatus that cannot be sustained. And the language of truth in which the order of determination distinction is couched tends to blur the differences between extension-determination and the construction of states of affairs.

In the course of re-constructing Wright’s theory in the preceding sections I have articulated objections against those of Wright’s moves that are precipitated by his attempting to make his apparatus achieve more than it is capable of. The demand for the biconditional to command necessity derived from a source other than rigidification is caused by expecting too much knowledge of C-conditions on the part of practitioners. In similar vein, the move to dump the basic equation in favour of the provisoed equation would not be necessary if it were recognised that our aim should be not to give analyses of the properties determined by the relevant concepts, but the (arguably more modest one) of articulating the role of responses in determining the extensions of certain of our concepts.

In its examination of Wright’s four characteristics of more-than-minimal truth, in particular the order of determination distinction, this chapter has provided a bridge between the theories of response-dependent concepts developed or examined in chapters I through V and the issues surrounding the interaction between realism and response-dependence with which the following chapters are concerned.

120 This issue is dealt with in detail in Chapters VII and VIII.
Wright’s focus is on the determination of the extension of the truth predicate as it pertains to particular sets of judgements. His working assumption has it that truth as it pertains to colour judgements will turn out to be determined by best opinion, whereas the extension of the truth predicate of judgements about the shapes of things will turn out to be a reflection of reality and be thus constrained. As we saw earlier, the question of what determines whether or not ‘x is red all over’ is true amounts to the same question as that of what determines whether or not x counts as something that is red all over; that is the question of the extension of the truth predicate for a set of judgements amounts to the question of the extension of the principal concepts that are applied by those judgements. So if our interest is colour judgements, then the relevant question will be about colour concepts. This is borne out by the way in which Wright oscillates between talking about the extension of the truth predicate and talking about the relevant concepts themselves. The reason we might be able to say of a set of judgements that best opinion is determinative of truth as it applies to them is because best opinion determines the extension of the concepts used when we make the judgement in question. That is, best opinion determines whether it is true that x is red all over because best opinion determines whether or not x is RED. But, as we saw previously, this does not amount to saying that best opinion determines that x is red, that is a matter for reality to determine, and Wright’s own commitment to this intuition is borne out by his invoking supervenience as a reason for rigidifying on terms in the biconditional. Although it is unavoidable given the wider aims of the grander theory of which it is a part, the vocabulary of truth tends to blur the difference between the question of whether best opinion determines whether something falls within the extension of the concept F with the question of whether best opinion determines whether something is F. When we talk, as Wright does, of best opinion determining truth values (1993a, p. 83), of x’s colour being ‘a function of our
judgement”¹²¹, and when we characterise extension-determination using the label ‘projectivist’ (1992, p. 108), it is easy to see how one might form the misleading impression that in the cases of judgements falling on the extension-determination side of the order of determination distinction, best opinion *invents* the truth and in the cases of those that turn out to be extension-reflecting, best opinion *discovers* the truth. Given that any such set of judgements has already satisfied minimal criteria for truth which include correspondence with the facts, invention should not come into play as a metaphor that accurately portrays those judgements. Wright has not really captured the crucial distinction between best opinion’s being reflective of truth values and best opinion’s being determinative of truth values because he tends blur the distinction between whether or not best opinion is reflective/determinative of the facts of the matter or of the facts of the matter about extension determination.

¹²¹ 1992, p.126. Wright is canvassing a possible objection here, but the phrase in question is part of the envisaged objector’s summary of Wright’s position and, as such, is uncontested.
Chapter VII – Realism

§1 Introduction

We have now traced the landscape of response-dependence theses focussing in the first instance on distinctions between different types of concepts that can plausibly be taken to be subject-involving in a way that is absorbed by the term ‘response-dependent’. Subsequently, two alternative approaches to response-dependence, those developed by Johnston and by Pettit, together with Wright’s attempt to draw a related distinction have been the subject of explanation and commentary. Although the relationship between response-dependence and realism, specifically the issue of whether practices involving response-dependent concepts admit of realist construal, has remained in the background of these discussions, it arises within the development of each of the alternatives considered. Johnston starts out with (what he eventually decides is) the vain hope that response-dependence will provide a route to a ‘qualified realism’ (1989a, p. 144). One of Pettit’s most substantial and significant contributions to the literature on response-dependence deals with the issue of the response-dependence-realism relationship (Pettit 1991); while the aim of Wright’s order of determination distinction is to provide one of a set of cruces according to which the credentials of a set of judgements as robustly truth apt, and hence realist according to some understandings, can be determined.

This chapter, then, begins to address the nature of the realism-response-dependence relationship by dealing with the realism element. It will map out the topology of the realist landscape such that it can be overlaid on the terrain of response-dependence, enabling us to determine where response-dependence and realism intersect and where they are in tension. Taking common sense intuitions as a starting point, we begin by
sketching a general characterisation of realism about aspects of reality, in order to achieve a *broad* picture of what is at stake in realism, of why one might be motivated to a commitment to realism rather than to a non-realist doctrine. We are merely *sketching* such a characterisation because it would be misleading to present an account of realism as though it were the single true account thereof. Realism is contested territory and there is little agreement within the literature about what realism is. Some theorists who regard their commitments as realist are considered arch anti-realists by their opponents – Devitt on Putnam, for example – while others such as Berkeley, whose commitments have historically been considered anti-realist, would probably have considered themselves realist had the notion been available to them. Moreover, realism is not exclusive with respect to its domain of interest. One can take a realist position in relation to any old X, and that X might be all the objects that populate the external world, or a kind of thing, or a theory. That position might be global or local in scope. It might cover everything there is or just, say, moral properties, or mathematical objects or abstract objects, or…

In order properly to see how response-dependent concepts can remain consistent with realist commitments, then, it is necessary to distinguish a variety of commitments from within the cluster that tends to be included under the heading ‘Realism’. To that end, I construct a taxonomy of realisms and their opponent doctrines. With the realist taxonomy in place, in the following chapter I track the intersections between the varieties of realist commitment identified there and the varieties of response-dependent concepts identified via the taxonomic exercise undertaken in the first two chapters. I then briefly consider which, if any, of the alternative versions of a response-dependence thesis considered earlier is most likely to be not inconsistent with the realisms I have identified. I argue that
the modest, extension-determination approach is least likely to conflict with most realist commitments.

§1.2 Realism: A First Look

Even at the level of our common sense construal of realism (not necessarily qua REALISM), a philosophically familiar idea emerges as key, an idea of separateness or independence from our cognitive practices – things that are real exist independently of our interacting with them through thought, talk or other activities. The metaphysical and epistemic value we apparently attach to independence is a reflection of a mixture of deference and self-assurance with which we approach our relationship with the world. As Wright puts it,

It [realism] modestly allows that human kind confronts an objective world, something almost entirely not of our making, possessing a host of occasional features which may pass altogether unnoticed by human consciousness and whose innermost nomological secrets may remain forever hidden from us. However, it presumes that we are by and large and in favourable circumstances, capable of acquiring knowledge of the world and of understanding it. 1993b, p. 1

Such an approach arises, I would argue, because of the spectre of a naïve sort of scepticism, which manifests both ontically and epistemically, raising the threat that what commonsense takes to be real might not exist at all outside of our experiences and that, even if it does, we can’t achieve knowledge of it. In the face of this we feel on the one hand a need to show that at least some of what commonsense takes to be real is, indeed, part of the fabric of a world that is thus and so more or less independently of our relations
with it; and on the other that we can achieve (at least some) knowledge of whatever turns out to be real. Realism combines the ontic presumption that something not of our making is real, and the epistemic presumption that we can be successful in our strivings to know and understand it, with epistemic deference that what we know is directed by that reality together with a dose of humility that accepts that such knowledge does not come easily, but requires ‘honest toil’.\textsuperscript{122}

When philosophical discussion of realism comes on the scene, then, it takes up the hard graft of providing a more fine-grained account, identifying the key notions, issues and distinctions that emerge from our realist sense that we can and do describe, think about, know and understand reality and that reality is not entirely of our own making, it is independent in some way from our interactions with it. The ongoing result of that philosophical enquiry is not a monolithic One True Realism, but a cluster of theses and commitments that adopt stances that are

**Semantic:** Does our talk, thought and behaviour with respect to a particular domain manage to describe - to track some of the relevant facts about – that domain, as we deferentially assume it does?

**Ontic:** How much of (what we take to be) reality are we entitled to presume?

**Epistemic:** Are we right to be deferential in respect of our relations with a particular domain of reality or is correctness in the hands of the knower?

In the next sections we consider these semantic, ontic and epistemic realisms, in the main approaching what’s at stake for them via the doctrines that oppose them. This strategy

\textsuperscript{122} Kroon 1994, pp 198 - 99 emphasises the element of ‘honest toil’ and striving that is required of any epistemic project the results of which are worthy of the label ‘knowledge’.
develops ideas first clearly laid out by Pettit in the context of locating his version of response-dependence with respect to realism. With this account in place, we will be well placed to consider the realism-response-dependence question with respect to the types of response-dependent concepts delineated in our first two chapters and subsequently to Johnston’s, Pettit’s and Wright’s theses.

§2 Realism’s Semantic Stance

Realism about some thing X or domain D or kind K in a semantic guise claims that the linguistic or conceptual component of the practice in question makes moves that are properly descriptive of a relevant domain of facts. It is self-assured in so far as it assumes certain of our practices are capable of accurate descriptions of the world, deferential in so far as it assumes that their accuracy is determined by that world.

One might follow Pettit in attributing to realism’s semantic stance an additional non-reductivist commitment, according to which, as well as being successful in providing descriptions of some domain of facts, a practice manages to make a distinctive contribution to an account of the relevant ontology. An example of the type of purely conceptual reduction in play here is provided by our concept of acceleration in so far as it reduces a priori to a concept of increased velocity over time and distance travelled, and, ultimately, to time, distance and direction. If appropriately construed as realist, says Pettit, a practice results in adding *sui generis* content to our understanding of the elements of that ontology and only makes sense when those elements are the *sui generis* posits that the practice in question represents them as being. This additional commitment is not essential to realism when it adopts a semantic stance and the requirement that the
linguistic component of a practice enjoy descriptive success can be met independently of any anti-reductivist constraint.

The realist’s semantic commitments find opposition from theories that deny that a practice - commonsense generally, moral judgements, aesthetic judgements, mathematical judgements, theoretical claims in science, secondary quality judgements, causal judgements, modal judgements, meaning ascriptions, claims about the psychological – is successful in its factuality. Such opposition can take the form of either conceding the descriptive nature of the expression of the relevant judgements while denying that they make a *sui generis* contribution to a description of ontology or of denying the descriptive nature of their expression altogether, arguing instead that despite appearances, such moves are merely expressions of feelings or projections of subjective responses. So torture isn’t wrong as a matter of fact, rather it is something to which we feel a sense of disapproval or outrage; the sun setting over the ocean is not beautiful as a matter of fact, rather it is something that pleases or moves us; a ripe banana is not sweet as a matter of fact, rather it induces a sweet taste for those who eat it. These anti-realist positions can usefully be distinguished under three headings: *reductivism*, *non-factualism*, and *quasi-realism*. Before we consider these anti-realist positions in detail, let us turn once more to realism and give more consideration to the cruces that are brought to bear when realism takes on a semantic guise.

**§2.1 Truth Aptness**

Probably as a result of the impact of non-cognitivism in post-Linguistic-Turn ethics, the issue of the truth-aptness of sentences that constitute the linguistic element of a practice
has tended to be treated as the crux that is characteristic of realism in its semantic guise. As we will see, all of the realism-non-factualism oppositions are played out against the background of the truth-aptness issue; the questions they raise can be posed in terms of truth-aptness. What does it mean to say that a discourse is truth-apt beyond saying that the expressions of which it is comprised admit of truth conditions? A helpful account appears in Jackson’s, Oppy’s and Smith’s 1994 paper ‘Minimalism and Truth Aptness’ in which they argue that a minimalist account of truth such as that devised by Wright (among others), which we discussed earlier, cannot be used as a quick route to truth aptness for moral and conditional sentences.123 An upshot of their view is that moral discourse, for example, cannot, pace Wright, earn truth-aptness simply on the back of the assertoric form of its expressions.

Jackson, Oppy and Smith (hereafter JOS) argue that as an exercise in conceptual analysis, a desideratum of an account of truth aptness is that, like any corresponding account of truth, it should respect all of our relevant platitudes. For an expression to be truth apt is for it to have truth conditions, but argue JOS, the type of truth conditions that can be generated via a disquotational approach are insufficient as a platform for truth-aptness. If, as the non-factualist does, we already deny the truth aptness of the expression that appears on the right hand side of the biconditional, then it cannot give us the truth conditions of that on the left. Attempting to use it in that way merely begs the truth-aptness question. The particular truth conditions that a sentence has are determined in part by facts about language use; there are clear occasions when we can use a word or a construction and these restrictions on use have a role to play in determining whether or

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123 Other truth minimalists addressed in the paper are Mark Boghossian, Paul Horwich and Lloyd Humberstone.
not a sentence is true when asserted in a particular context. To have truth conditions and count as truth-apt, then, an expression must sit within a sufficiently rich pattern of usage that is (partially) determinative of its truth conditions.

At this point the JOS account has not yet satisfied the desideratum of mopping up all of our platitudinous beliefs about truth-aptness. One such concerns a connection between truth aptness and belief. A belief is a state that aims to track the truth and as such, it ought to find its expression in language that is truth-apt. An account of truth-aptness, then, needs to make space for an analytical connection between belief and truth-aptness. To this end JOS define truth-aptness thus:

A sentence counts as truth apt only if it can (barring problems about sentences that are too long to be understood, obvious contradictions and self-refutations, and the like) be used to give the content of belief, specifically, the belief of someone who asserts the truth apt sentence. *Ibid*, p. 294

The question of the truth-aptness of an expression, or of a set thereof, then, will include the substantial question of whether or not someone who gives voice to the expression is in a state that is properly considered a belief. Such a state, JOS argue, must be one that is designed to fit the way things are, which guides us in realising our desires, and which tends (*tends*) to evolve rationally. *Ibid*, p. 297

Placing truth-aptness at the centre of realist-non-factualist opposition sits slightly awkwardly with the project in hand – an investigation of the realism-response-dependence relation. For we are concerned with *concepts* and the practices in which they
are used, that is, their appearance in the formation of beliefs and judgements, and ultimately with whether or not a response-dependence account of the concepts undermines a realist construal of the relevant practice(s). So our focus has been on the content of states (whatever they turn out to be) that give rise to expression in sentences, not to the expressions themselves and we have been careful not to assume that what goes for words also goes for concepts (and vice versa). By the standards of truth-aptness adopted above, a state’s being a belief – being a state that aims to track the truth – is analytically connected to the possibility of its truth-aptness. The application of the question of truth-aptness to judgements, then, seems somewhat inapposite, for a content-bearing state is required to generate the possibility of the truth-aptness of a related expression. According to the account of truth-aptness we have adopted, then, the more fundamental question is whether or not the state that gives rise to the expression in question is one that aims to track the truth, to describe some relevant fact of the matter.124

In so far as those states constitute judgements, they occur within practices; the practices consist in the making of judgements. In so far as we are interested in content, then, that interest is of a piece with our on-going interest in and focus on practices. In the discussion of the three forms of opposition to factualism that follows, we will focus on this question while also showing, where appropriate, the way in which the issues raised are also couched in terms of truth aptness.

124 That is not to assume that facts themselves are easily defined. As Huw Price (1992) points out, those on either side of semantic realist oppositions owe us an account of the factualist/non-factualist distinction.
§2.2 Reductivism

Some writers on realism, Pettit, for instance, attribute to the realist about Xs the claim that the practice of talking and thinking about Xs makes a distinctive and autonomous contribution to our understanding of reality. The reductivist challenges this claim on the grounds that in attempting to track relevant facts of the matter, the moves of the practice fail to track sui generis facts. Rather they concern a domain of reality that is already tracked by some other practice to which the practice in question is reducible as an a priori, and hence, semantic matter. If the practice in question did not exist, the things it picks out would still get picked out by the practice to which it reduces.

The reductivist, then, sees the realist as overly self-assured about a linguistic or cognitive practice with respect to its ability to track a realm of facts that can’t be wholly tracked by some other linguistic or cognitive practice. In so far as she might focus on the expressions of a set of judgements, the reductivist does not deny the truth-aptness of those expressions. Rather she argues that they are reducible to a set of expressions that describe the domain of reality to which the domain described by the practice reduces.\textsuperscript{125}

Why does Pettit require a realist to be an anti-reductivist? It is likely that he has in mind theorists of a certain kind who are usually regarded as opponents of realism. These include phenomenalists who think that physical objects like tables and chairs are nothing more than, or can be explained entirely by the existence of, sense data, and scientific empiricists who think that theoretical entities like electrons are nothing more than constructions of some sort out of observations or observable matter. All such theorists

\textsuperscript{125} An exception is the reductivist element of instrumentalism. I consider this relationship in the next section.
think that a priori analysis yields the relevant dependence of one group of entities on another, supposedly more basic, bunch of entities.

Whether one goes along with Pettit and regards anti-reductivism as part of realism’s semantic stance depends on what the topic of the realism is. If it is merely realism about tables or electrons, say, then a realist can surely be a reductivist, contra Pettit. She can say: ‘Of course there really are tables. It’s just that they are constituted by, or otherwise dependent on, sense data. And of course there really are electrons. It’s just that they are nothing over and above observable objects.’ However, if the thesis we are considering is a realism about physical objects or a realism about theoretical objects, then plausibly the non-reductivism is built a priori into the categories we are considering. A realist about such things cannot be a reductivist, so Pettit is right. A realist of this stripe is likely to say: ‘If tables and all other so-called physical objects are nothing over and above sense data, then there just are no physical objects. Yes, there might be tables, but they are not physical because when we say we believe in physical objects, we have in mind a category of stuff which is something over and above the phenomenal. Mutatis mutandis, for theoretical objects and the observable.’

In the philosophy of mind, phenomenalism, in its verificationist guise, provides analyses of commonsense thought and talk about the objects that we take to inhabit the external world that provide a good example of the reductivist-realist opposition. Where common sense talk posits tables, chairs, trees and so on, phenomenalism is committed to an ontology comprising only percepts and according to which commonsense objects are nothing more than bundles of percepts. Tables, chairs, trees, and so forth reduce to these
posits and commonsense talk and thought involving concepts like TABLE and CHAIR fail of semantic realist construal on the grounds that they make no distinctive nor meaningful contribution to our account of the world; the work they apparently do can be effectively undertaken by thought and talk about percepts. The reductivist’s commitment to the a priori reducibility of the linguistic component of a practice seems to be underlaid by an ontic claim with respect to the reducibility of the posits – talk about a set of posits is reducible to talk of another set because the posits talked about are themselves reducible. This ontic underpinning is present in all of the examples Pettit cites: if phenomenalism is true, commonsense discourse about physical objects and scientific discourse about unobservable entities reduce to talk at the phenomenal level; if non-cognitivism is true, moral discourse reduces to talk about the attitudinal; if behaviourism is true, mental discourse reduces to talk about the behavioural (1991, p. 590). The relation between reductivism and realism’s ontic commitments is considered in due course. The reductivist can allow that the conceptually supervenient practice need not be redundant, however, for our understanding of reality might still be enhanced by our exercise of that practice. It might draw attention to connections among or between objects and us to which it would be difficult to draw attention in its absence. Frank Jackson takes a line such as this with respect to ethics. Ethics, he believes, reduces a priori to a set of descriptive facts, captured by our descriptive practices, but ethical practice is not entirely redundant with respect to enhancing our understanding.\footnote{Jackson 1998, especially Chapter 6.}

Although variants of idealism will be discussed in connection with realism’s second, ontic, stance, it is interesting to note that under one of two available interpretations, the
second of which will be considered later, Berkeleyan Idealism may also be understood as a rejection of this strand of the realist’s semantic stance. The Berkeleyan position adopts a conceptual reductivist stance towards common-sense practice regarding material objects and their properties, arguing that it reduces to a practice that posits percepts, the ultimate cause of which is God. On this view, it would follow, then, that commonsense talk and thought about commonsense objects is not required for a full understanding of reality and could be replaced via reduction to talk and thought about percepts.

§2.3 Non-Factualism

Where the reductivist denies that a practice’s moves fail to be about sui generis facts, the non-factualist denies that they are about any set of facts whatsoever. According to this view, and pace Wright and fellow minimalists about truth, the assertoric form of expressions of moves in such a practice implies nothing about its factual status. Despite the syntactic appearances that drive our self-assurance that a practice is factual, those moves fail to describe because they fail to represent any domain of reality at all; rather they are expressions of subjects’ attitudes or feelings towards agents, acts or objects (in the moral or aesthetic case), projections of sensory responses (in the secondary quality case), formulaic devices for calculating likely predictions (in the theoretical scientific case). Non-factualism, termed ‘non-cognitivism’ in the meta-ethics literature and ‘instrumentalism’ in philosophy of science, is familiar in post-linguistic-turn moral theory, finding its expression in expressivism, emotivism and prescriptivism. According to the first, when we express what we tend to take to be the judgement that

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127 They must posit some entities, though, just not a special set. If we judge that torturing the cat was cruel, we still posit the existence of the cat and the act of torture, just not, according to the moral non-factualist, the act of torture qua cruel act.

128 The loci classici of which are Ayer 1946 and Hare 1952
cruelty is immoral, what we in fact do is express con-attitudes towards cruelty; the apparent judgement that kindness is moral is, according to expressivism, an expression of a pro-attitude towards kindness. According to emotivism, when we express the apparent judgement about cruelty, we don’t describe some moral fact of the matter, rather we merely express our emotive reactions to cruelty, the expression of our sadness at the pain suffered by the victims of cruelty, say. According to prescriptivism, when we express the apparent judgement that cruelty is immoral, we don’t describe some moral fact of the matter, rather we prescribe the avoidance of cruelty.

As we saw in the discussion of truth aptness, non-factualism usually addresses the linguistic element of a practice and is thus easily couched in terms of the issue of truth-aptness. But it is transferable into talk about judgements in so far as the non-factualist can be understood as arguing that the phenomenology of our interactions with the relevant parts of reality and the practices that they give rise to is such that we tend to think (mistakenly) that the states we’re expressing are judgements, when they are in fact emotions (or feelings more generally) or sensations. In the moral case, then, the question will come down to whether or not a cognitivist or non-cognitivist account of our practices is the correct one. So there is a sense in which the truth-aptness question becomes redundant.

Moral non-factualism also involves reductivism. For it also claims that notwithstanding their assertoric appearance, the expressions in question are liable to wholesale reduction: in the expressivist and emotivist cases to a discourse that is merely expressive of emotional attitudes towards actions, agents and objects and in the prescriptivist case to a
discourse the moves of which are prescriptive rather than descriptive. It differs from the straightforward reductivist position described earlier because of its denial that a disputed practice tracks any domain of facts (other than facts about emotions and attitudes), rather than accepting that it manages to track facts, but that they turn out to be indistinguishable from those accounted for by some other, independent, practice.

Although non-factualism can involve reductivism in this way, the doctrines should not be conflated. Non-factualism is merely a negative doctrine requiring only that the practice in question is not tracking actual facts. Once expressivism, instrumentalism, et al come on the scene, we have a positive account about what the practice is doing. Non-factualism itself can remain quietist with respect to giving a positive account of the practice.

A further position is available according to which one rejects non-factualism in favour of a commitment to one element of the realist’s semantic stance, namely that the practice in question is genuinely descriptive, but remains agnostic with respect to the reducibility of the entities it describes. Someone might, for example, be committed to the descriptive credibility of statements about the mental while remaining committed to behaviourism. Reflection upon the availability of non-non-factualist yet potentially reductivist positions highlights the way in which reductionism and non-factualism are distinct doctrines.

Within the landscape of realist-anti-realist doctrines logical space exists for (but is not actually filled by) a doctrine, which might be labelled a ‘semantic error theory’, according to which a practice is entirely meaningless. Such a doctrine would make no ontic commitments with respect to the practice’s posits even though the practice...
apparently gestures at some set of posits; indeed, if the practice were totally meaningless, it would be impossible to tell what its posits were supposed to be. Such a doctrine offers a plausible account of a linguistic practice the moves of which are merely expressions of nonsense, such as those that children might invent for fun.

The classical error theoretic position is primarily an ontic doctrine, the locus classicus of which is Mackie’s *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, but can also include a non-factualist element. Mackie’s analysans is moral practice, which, he argues, is subject to systematic error such that it assumes an objectivist position with respect to its posits. Mackie is also committed to the positive non-factualist view that the syntax of the expressions of a practice leads us into systematic error concerning their semantics – we mistakenly assume they are truth-apt and we mistakenly assume they track some factual domain, when in fact, according to the error theorist’s substantive ontic claim, there is no such factual domain. The semantic error theorist need not be committed to any particular positive account of meaning for the contested practice. In the moral case, for instance, he could take the position that it is expressivist, but equally that it is assertoric but meaningless, quasi-realist or relativist.

§2.4 Quasi-Realism

The quasi-realist agrees with her non-factualist cousin’s claim that, despite the assertoric form of the sentences that express them, a practice’s moves fail to track any facts of the matter, because there are no such facts. She agrees, then, that the linguistic component of the practice is not truth-apt. Where she diverges from the simple non-factualist line is on

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the question of what the consequences of the practice’s non-factualist status should be. Moral non-factualism tends towards revisionism in the sense that with respect to most of the practices upon which it focuses, the natural consequence of recognising the real nature of its linguistic moves as merely expressions of attitudes, feelings or prescriptions would be the revision of the practice better to reflect the non-fact-tracking psychological states that give rise to the practice.\textsuperscript{130} The quasi-realist does not make this revisionist move. Even though she agrees that no distinct realm of facts is described by the practices in question, only the projections of our own responses, she seeks to vindicate the fact-tracking/stating appearance of the practice on the grounds that its expressions have assertoric characteristics sufficient for an account of speakers’ understanding of them to be given in terms of a notion of quasi-truth, thereby giving us licence to continue with our practice as though things were ontically as the practice implies that they are. Quasi-realism, then, has us thinking like non-factualists while continuing to behave like realists.

With respect to moral, comedic, modal and causal practices quasi-realism is most readily associated with Simon Blackburn’s work. A more detailed account of his thesis will enable us more clearly to see how a practice might earn the right to quasi-truth. Blackburn’s doctrine amounts to a denial that there are any relevant facts of the matter, no moral facts, for instance, coupled with the assertion that the linguistic practice is, nonetheless, truth-apt.\textsuperscript{131} It seeks to earn practitioners

\textsuperscript{130} Notice that while revisionism is a natural consequence of moral non-factualisms, it is not a necessary element of non-factualism generally. Consider for example instrumentalism in the philosophy of science, according to which some scientific theory, quantum mechanics, for instance, is merely a useful calculating device for working out facts about macro-level phenomena.

\textsuperscript{131} As he makes clear (1993, pp 4-5), Blackburn does not see quasi-realism as some kind of third way doctrine situated between realism and anti-realism. Rather, it may require modification of the theoretical space in which those debates take place in order to accommodate what he views as its insights concerning our use of the language of truth, fact, independence, objectivity and description with respect to our moral practice.
The right to think of moral judgements as true or false. 1981, p. 185

And licence to

Use the concepts of truth and objectivity which delude people into realism.

_Ibid_, p. 165

Like the expressivist, Blackburn starts from projectivism, taking seriously Hume’s thought that we spread our sentiments on the world, but are led by the phenomenology of our interaction with the world to think we are encountering what are really only the results of that projection, the wrongness of cruelty, say. Moral practice, however, goes on as though there are right and wrong sentiments. We give expression to that assumption by treating moral expressions as truth-apt: Brown avers that ‘Cruelty is wrong’, Jones agrees, ‘That’s true’. Quasi-realism squares projectivism with the reality of the practice by giving an account of a criterion of correctness (and truth) for moral linguistic practice that involves neither a commitment to a realm of moral facts nor a denial of the surface grammar of moral language. Blackburn thinks that moral practice should be understood as the operation of an input/output process constrained by an internal criterion of correctness. Moral judgement is best explained as a process in which an input of information regarding some non-moral state of affairs elicits a reaction as an output. Being a moral agent consists in committing oneself to the appropriateness/inappropriateness of certain input/output pairs and this is reflected in language that is rightly thought of as truth-apt. So the ‘judgement’ that cruelty is wrong is really the pairing of the input of information about a non-moral state of affairs – setting fire to a cat, say – and the appropriate output – disapproval. This standard of correctness ensues, according to Blackburn, from our sense of the possibility of refining and improving upon our moral reactions. We come to disapprove of reactions we recognise
could be improved upon and approve of those which do not seem in need of betterment, those which are unfailingly obvious to all moral agents and beyond debate. The notion of improvement constrains moral practice, Blackburn believes, because it derives from a core of moral attitudes the possession of which is constitutive of moral agency and it is in this sense that the criterion of correctness is internal.

Correspondingly, quasi-realism attempts to legitimise our use of ‘true’ and ‘false’ with respect to moral talk without committing us to a realm of moral facts. Moreover, it retains its commitment to a non-cognitivist account of the states that give rise to moral talk, permitting us to treat expressions of moral commitments in the same way that we would treat expressions of genuine beliefs. The notion of truth at work here is more than merely apparent though, for it still supports truth functional rules, enabling us to assess the truth values of sentences in which unasserted moral sentences are embedded, and can be used to specify the conditions under which moral utterances are true. Truth functions as a regulative constraint governing the use of moral language, but without making any corresponding ontic commitments:

The sentence ‘a is good’ is indeed true, in English, if and only if a is good. That is, if and only if we are committed to the goodness of a will we allow that the English sentence is true. That is its rule of use. But saying this tells us nothing about the kind of commitment it is: it is quite irrelevant to the metaphysics. 1981, p. 180

132 Thus enabling quasi-realism to surmount what Geach has called the ‘Frege Point’ – the problem, for the expressivist, of explaining the meaning of moral assertions when they are embedded in semantic contexts in which they remain unasserted, for example in conditionals such as ‘If it is wrong to tell lies, it is wrong to get your little brother to tell lies.’ The moral proposition ‘it is wrong to tell lies’ has the same meaning in each context in which it is asserted, as we see when it appears in a deductive inference such as a modus ponens. See Geach 1954; Blackburn 1984, pp 189ff.
According to the quasi-realist, the use of truth talk to regulate moral talk, then, amounts to a convenient label for the assessment of our commitments to various moral attitudes, a label that there is no good reason to relinquish despite the absence of any reality that determines truth values aside from that of our practices and the core of moral attitudes that Blackburn holds to be constitutive of moral agency.

§2.5 Summary

These sections have identified a semantic stance from within a cluster of theories that fall under the heading ‘realism’. We have seen that realism in a semantic guise involves a commitment to the factual status of a practice in so far as its moves, be they thought, talk or behaviour, are consistent with the self-assurance that they track some realm of facts. We have also considered how the key issue for the semantic stance has tended to be couched in terms of the truth-aptness of a (linguistic) practice and questioned the appropriateness of such an approach given the nature of the project undertaken here.

Three strands of opposition to the realist’s semantic stance – reductivism, non-factualism and quasi-realism - were identified and distinguished from each other in order better to show the semantic positions that the realist must defend. That is, she must show that the practice for which she claims a (semantic) realist construal tracks the facts in so far as it (i) confounds the non-factualist or quasi-realist by being genuinely fact-tracking (or truth-apt) and (ii) confounds the reductivist by tracking sui generis facts. In short, the realist is trying, in the face of revisionist and sceptical opposition, to vindicate our intuitive deference and self-assurance with respect to the ability of a practice to track the facts. In the following sections we consider how realism functions when it adopts an ontic stance.
§3 Realism’s Ontic Stance

In its ontic guise, realism asks questions about whether certain things exist; whether things of certain kinds exist; and whether the world really is the way that certain theories claim it to be. Whether or not we should take a realist view of those things, kinds or accounts of the world can, very broadly, be thought of as having to do with their existing and being thus and so independently and separately from thinkers. So the first-come-to-mind notions that we tend to associate with a realist outlook on a practice are perhaps more immediately recognisable when realism adopts its ontic stance than when it takes on the semantic guise we have just considered. Indeed, the issues that arise when realism is ontic include most of those that have traditionally been associated with realism pre-linguistic-turn, and some influential contemporary realist theses such as Michael Devitt’s insist that ontic claims are essential and central to realism.133

In its ontic guise, realism manifests our intuitive self-assurance and deference in the thought that something not of our making is real. The question the realist poses here, then, is how much of what we ordinarily take to be real are we entitled to presume? Its subject matter is purported entities posited by a practice rather than the practices themselves. But what do we mean by ‘real’ in this context? As a beginning, we can usefully think of something’s being real in terms, first, of its existing and second (so long as the thing in question is not itself a mental entity), of its existence and features being independent of thinkers. As we will see, however, to get beyond existence and independence, we need more fine-grained distinctions.

133 Devitt defends a realist account of the physical, external world within which ontic questions must be settled prior to any other (semantic, epistemic) issues. See Devitt 1997.
The existence criterion is more easily cashed out than the independence one. What realism demands in this respect is that there really is *such a thing* as the entity or kind of entity posited by a particular practice (or strand thereof). Important questions about the ontic status of fictional objects notwithstanding, relatively uncontroversial examples of purported entities that would fail of ontic realist construal, then, are witches, unicorns, Martians, taniwha and ghosts. Where the semantic stance may, but does not necessarily, include a denial of a priori conceptual reduction, the ontic stance may, but does not necessarily, include a denial of a posteriori ontic reduction.

The independence criterion is more complex and can be better captured if we distinguish two types of independence to which realism is committed in its ontic guise. Often, the independence dimension is cashed out in terms of mind-independence and/or objectivity. Indeed, the former tends to be used to cash out the latter.\(^{134}\) The notion of *mind*-independence can prove problematic, however, when we come to consider the ontic status of mental entities, such as beliefs, desires, pains and ideas themselves. What the realist is trying to capture here is that to count as real, an entity and the features by dint of which it is thus and so must not ontically depend (as opposed to merely causally) for their existence on processes or objects that in some way ensue from thinkers. Such a dependence relation, then, can manifest in two distinct ways.\(^{135}\) Firstly, an entity’s existence or features might depend on some process or power that we apply to reality and that entity would not figure in reality were there not such a process or power. In the most

\(^{134}\) See for example Pettit 1991, p. 590; Devitt 1997, p. 15.

\(^{135}\) In Pettit’s account of realism these are conflated under the heading ‘idealism’. See 1991, p. 591.
extreme form of this relationship those practices are constitutive of entities and/or their features - words, thoughts and deeds construct them. What the realist seeks in this respect, then, is the practice-independence of entities and their features, where the practices upon which reality might turn out to depend could be concepts, theories or languages.

The second type of dependence relation that vitiates a realist construal of a practice is more directly concerned with the mental. Here the realist is concerned to ensure that the entities associated with a target practice are not dependent upon mental stuff, or, at the extreme of mind-dependence, not constituted entirely of mental stuff, that they are not, for instance, nothing but ideas in someone’s mind, as Berkeleyan idealism would have it with respect to material objects, or merely constructions out of sense data as phenomenalism would have it, also with respect to material objects. This need not rule out the reality of the ideas or sense data (or other mental entities) themselves, rather it rules out as real, because not mind-independent, any apparently non-mental objects or features thereof that turn out to be constituted of mental stuff and/or reducible to the mental. The fact of something’s independence from our practices does not imply its independence from the mental, while the fact of something’s independence from the mental does not guarantee that its existence and features are practice-independent. As we will see from a detailed consideration of the various doctrines that oppose realism in its ontic guise, lack of independence from either practices or the mental is usually sufficient for a practice to fail of construal as realist in the ontic sense.
We will adopt a more precise understanding of the independence notion by developing an explicatory account that avails itself of a notion of supervenience, according to which, a set of entities or features S is independent of a set of entities B if and only if there is a supervenience base for the S-stuff that contains no B-stuff. A set of entities or features S, then, is dependent on a set of entities or features B just in case any supervenience base for that set must contain elements of the B type stuff. So an independence claim would be the claim that a minimal supervenience base for the S-type stuff does not include the B-type stuff, in other words, the pattern of S-type properties instantiated in the world can vary in any of the ways possible for it without that variation entailing any variation in the pattern of B-type properties instantiated in the world. The practice-independence of a kind of entity, then, entails that the kind can always vary without this entailing some variation in practices. The mind-independence of a kind of entity entails that the kind can always vary without this entailing some variation in mental stuff.\(^{136}\)

Doctrines that oppose realism’s ontic stance fall under three distinct headings. The error theorist denies that the entities or features associated with a practice meet the first, existence, criterion. They are false posits.

The constructivist denies that they exist and are thus and so independent of practices. This commitment to dependence involves a commitment to the claim that any minimal supervenience base for the set of entities under consideration includes facts about languages, conceptual schemes or practices more generally. A more extreme purely

\(^{136}\) References to variation in a kind ‘in any of the ways possible for it’ refer, of course, to variation in intrinsic features of the kind and do not refer to mere Cambridge variation.
constitutive claim is captured by a notion of dependence according to which a set of entities or features $S$ is \textit{constitutively} dependent upon a set of entities or features $B$ just in case the supervenience base for the set $S$ is exhausted by $B$ type entities or features. Constructivism involves the claim of constitutive dependence.

The \textit{idealist}, meanwhile, denies that the features or entities exist independently of the mental, and is thus committed to the claim that any minimal supervenience base for the set of entities under consideration includes mental facts. In its paradigmatic and most extreme form, idealism will be committed to the constitutive dependence of the features or entities on mental facts.

Take bananas, for instance: The error theorist about fruit will deny that bananas exist; the constructivist (in extremis) will claim that our (or someone’s) concepts, language or theories are constitutive of bananas’ existence qua bananas, that is, facts about bananas supervene on a set of facts about practices, while the (paradigmatic) idealist will deny that bananas exist in and of themselves, rather they (only) exist qua banana ideas or as some other kind of mental stuff, that is, facts about bananas supervene on a set which comprises only mental facts. If we think of realism about something as a view that attempts to strike a balance between deference on the one hand and self-assurance on the other, then Error Theory, by denying the existence of the posits in question, tips the balance towards deference. It is scepticism about our pre-theoretical ability to know what the world is really like. It maintains that, despite appearances, the world might not contain the things about which we are debating. Meanwhile theses that deny independence tip the balance towards self-assurance: the world as it appears really is the
way the world is because the world emanates, at least in part, or with respect to the subject of the debate, from our thoughts about it or conceptions of it. Of course, epistemological stories are required to show why these anti-realist views should be countenanced and those stories crop up later in this chapter when we consider realism in its epistemic guise. Meanwhile, I turn to a more detailed consideration of error theory, constructivism, idealism, and sub-species thereof.

§3.1 Error theories

The realist’s error theorist opponent is committed to the complete denial of the existence of the entities, features or relations associated with a practice. She believes that we are too presumptuous in our ontic commitments – there are just none of the kinds of things we are thinking or talking about. Once the error theorist has made her claim that a practice makes false posits, she can develop her position in three ways: she can go the eliminativist route and argue that we should remove them from our ontic account of the world. She can go the fictionalist route and deny their existence while insisting on maintaining them in our account for pragmatic reasons. Or she can simply remain agnostic about how to deal with them beyond her initial denial of their existence.

In his Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong, Mackie argues that moral practice is subject to systematic error such that it assumes an objectivist position with respect to its posits when in fact such a position is vitiated (i) by their metaphysical queerness and (ii) by their relativity to communities. He also suggests that Hume was committed to an error theoretic view of moral practice (1980, pp 51-2; pp 71-75.) and interprets Locke’s primary/secondary qualities distinction as an error theory of thought and talk about the
secondary qualities (1976, p. 11; pp 15 –16). Mackie’s error theory remains agnostic as to whether or not the contested posits should remain in our ontic account of the world.

Error theory finds what is probably its most familiar application in the Churchlands’ doctrine in the philosophy of mind – eliminative materialism. They deny the reality of mental states – propositional attitudes, ideas, pains, all those states that we might locate in the realm of the mental. A correct ontic account of reality would not include mental states. It would include only those neurophysiological states that would be identified by a complete neuroscience. Moreover, mental states are not identical with or reducible to physical states or to functional roles, the eliminative materialist leaves no space whatsoever in her ontology for the contested entities, features or relations. Within the philosophy of mind, that is what distinguishes her position from physicalisms and functionalisms. Error theory is also available as a stance towards the entities, features and relations associated with most of our practices. God, for example, is a frequent whipping boy for the error theoretic position. An error theory with respect to secondary qualities, meanwhile, would deny that bananas are sweet on the grounds that there is no such property as being sweet. An error theory about commonsense material objects would deny that the banana is sweet on the grounds that there are no such things as bananas. Quine takes an error theoretic position with respect to linguistic meaning, arguing that intensional facts are otiose and that a full account of the aspects of reality that we describe in terms of meaning can be given simply by appeal to the extensional. On one interpretation, Berkeley is an error theorist with respect to commonsense objects and their features, preferring an ontology containing only ideas that exist in God’s mind and the

137 See Churchland 1981; 1985
minds of his creatures. These ideas are real enough, but they and the minds that contain them amount to the totality of reality.

The fictionalist will agree with the eliminativist with respect to the ontic status of the contested posits, yet take a more benign, pragmatic view of talk and/or thought that assumes their existence on the grounds, say, that it serves the practitioners well or fulfils an important function in their lives. Such a position might appeal with respect to spiritual posits and their practices, where pragmatic and cultural value might outweigh accuracy of a practice’s ontic commitments, whereas the eliminativist position might be a more appropriate (and moral) outcome of an error theoretic stance towards witches. Many of us (and some older children, in particular) are fictionalists about Santa Claus. Arguably, we are fictionalists about centres of gravity and Newtonian mass: they don't really exist, but we act as though they do. In these sorts of cases, the fictionalism might contain some noncommittal nonfactualism: the discourse about centres of gravity can't really be assertoric, but we might as well pretend it is and that there are such things. David Velleman is a fictionalist with respect to free will. He thinks that the lesson from natural science is that there is no such thing, but there is a systematic illusion of freedom which means that we can usefully continue to believe in it. Furthermore, we should because the illusion tracks the behaviour which, for consequentialist reasons, is the behaviour we ought to praise and blame people for.\authorcite{velleman1989}

\footnote{See Velleman 1989}
§3.2 Constructivism

The realist’s constructivist opponent denies that the entities associated with a practice exist and have the features they do independently of those practices; at least some important variation at the supervenient level cannot occur without variation at the subvenient, practice, level. The constructivist is concerned to show that, contrary to ontic deference, a contested entity does not exist independently of our cognitive activity, but is 

…constituted by our knowledge, by our epistemic values, by our capacity to refer to it, by the synthesising power of the mind, by our imposition of concepts, theories or languages. Devitt 1997, p. 15\footnote{Clearly Devitt has the more extreme, constitutive, position in mind and the examples he cites demonstrate a commitment to the constitutive dependence of reality on (variously) discourse, media production, the ‘artful creativity of scientists’, social relations and activities (\textit{Ibid}, p. 256, n. 2, 3, 4 & 6). He tends to conflate these positions with less extreme positions that, while committed to practice-dependence, are not committed to constitutive practice-dependence. Elements of actual or possible practices would appear in any supervenience base for the features or entities under ontic scrutiny, but they need not exhaust the minimal supervenience base.}

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The \textit{anti} realist magnitude of extreme constructivist theses is perhaps best grasped when we see that the constructivist is apparently committed to the truth of a counterfactual that serves to cash out the supervenience relation associated with constitutive practice-dependence:

\footnote{Clearly this is a disjunctive list. The constructivist does not think (and Devitt is not claiming that she so thinks) that it takes knowledge, epistemic values, reference, synthesis, concepts, theories \textit{and} language to construct an entity. Just one constitutive power will do just fine.}
There would not have been plants, lions, tigers, rocks, water, oxygen, gravity, or...if there had not been people.

In extremis the constructivist is committed to the idea that these kinds of things are imposed upon a previously undifferentiated reality by our ways of talking, thinking, theorising or knowing about them. From the perspective of those realists for whom ontic doctrines are the only game in town, constructivism rather than idealism has become the opponent doctrine that receives the most attention. Thus Devitt describes it as

[A] candidate for the most dangerous contemporary intellectual tendency.

1997, p. viii

By his lights, it is pervasive in intellectual discourse. He finds it lurking in: socio-linguistics in the form of the Sapir-Whorf thesis, in a ‘particularly obscure’ form in structuralism, post-structuralism and ‘French thought in general’, ‘literature departments around the world’, ‘all the social sciences’, “‘the sociology of knowledge’”, underlying ‘various political movements’ and ‘even’ in feminism (Ibid, pp 235-36). 140

Kant’s noumenal realism/transcendental idealism can be understood as a proto-example of constructivism with respect to our commonsense worldview, then, in so far as he holds that we bring concepts to bear on sense data (intuitions) in order to bring into being what we ordinarily take to be material objects, their features and relations between them. 141 Without concepts, then, the accessible world-according-to-Kant would include little but unclassified sense data or pure content. Kant does not deny that commonsense objects exist, but holds (in Berkeleyan fashion) that they are nothing more than patterns of

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140 See Devitt’s notes for examples of constructivist hegemony in each of the areas he lists.
141 See Kant 1929, A51, B75.
representation: they are ‘empirically real’, but ‘transcendently ideal’ (1929, A366ff). His ontic commitment to a brand of proto-constructivism is derived from an epistemic commitment to a kind of scepticism. Kant posits a practice- and mind-independent realm of noumena, of things in themselves - in this respect his view is realist – but denies that we are capable of knowing those posits, they remain hidden from our epistemic purview, while what we are able to know via experience is mediated through the application of our concepts. The Kantian epistemic response to scepticism regarding knowledge of the noumenal world, then, is one of complete deference or humility. By contrast the Kantian ontic response presumes the existence of the noumenal world as something independent of our ministrations but is less ontically deferential in respect of the representational objects that come about as a result of the impact of our concepts on our experiences, and which we are capable of knowing and understanding.

If Kantian proto-constructivism includes a role for noumena such that, although we are unable to characterise noumena in any way, shape or form, some differences in the noumenal realm are sufficient for a difference in phenomena, then we can characterise it as involving a commitment to the more moderate non-constitutive form of practice-dependence. For facts about something other than practices – facts about noumena (whatever they are) – would be included in any supervenience base for the posits of our practices. If on the other hand, noumena have no such role to play and the only force shaping the phenomenal realm of experiences is that of our concepts, then Kantian proto-constructivism is committed to the more extreme form of constitutive practice-

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142 Rae Langton has characterized the Kantian position in terms of the virtue of humility. See her *Kantian Humility* (1998), especially Chapter 2, §6.
dependence according to which any supervenience base for a practice’s posits is comprised only of facts about those practices.

Since the late 1970s Putnam has developed a position with respect to our commonsense worldview that has Kantian echoes. This doctrine, which he labels ‘internal realism’, does not include a commitment to the extreme constructivist doctrine of a constitutive role for practices. Unlike more extreme constructivists (below) Putnam does not think that concepts impose a cookie-cutter like scheme on an as yet undifferentiated reality that supplies us with as yet unconceptualised experiences. Neither does he believe that there is a realm of things in themselves that are forever beyond our ken. Rather, he takes the view that experience itself comes to us already conceptualised. Experiences are ‘themselves to some extent shaped by our concepts’. (1981, p. 54) He is committed to a global practice-dependence, according to which, there is nothing in the world that’s not shaped (at least ‘to some extent’) by our concepts. Thus, he argues, it only makes sense to ask the question ‘what objects does the world consist of?’ within a theory or a description (Ibid, p. 49).

It should be noted that Putnam locates internal realism within realism. He believes that it or something similar is the only type of realism that is tenable. By his lights it is a realism freed from what he alleges to be realism’s untenable metaphysical and epistemic commitments such as the idea that reality can only be properly known from the perspective afforded by a God’s Eye view which encompasses both known and knowers. Putnam believes that the best characterisation of our relationship with reality is in terms not of a separation of world from mind but a partnership through which mind and world
‘jointly make up the mind and the world’ (1981, p. xi). John McDowell has developed a position that is similar to Putnam’s in so far as it is an attempt to extend Kant’s insistence on the role of concepts in shaping experiences of reality. McDowell expresses the mind/world relationship in terms of *interpenetration*.\(^{143}\)

Thus far we have seen that constructivism can include a commitment (i) to an (a priori unknowable) realm of things in themselves, as the Kantian strand does; (ii) to the idea that the objects, features and relations with which we take the world to be populated are constituted by our actual or possible concepts (or talk or theories) and (iii) to the idea that all of these objects, features and relations are practice-dependent in a non-constitutive way as the internal realist strand does. Further versions of constructivism include a commitment to (iv) an ontic relativism according to which different concepts, languages or theories will give rise to different ontologies and, hence, to different worlds. A commitment to ontic relativism need not entail a commitment to a non-realist position with respect to the ontic status of the objects that populate the different ontologies. Quine, for instance, is committed to ontic relativism, according to which what objects there are in the world is dependent upon what theory one uses to explain the world, but his commitment to physicalism means that he believes that the objects in those ontologies are physical and, hence, real.\(^{144}\) Constructivisms that include the second and fourth commitments include Goodman’s doctrine of ‘world-making’ and Kuhn’s paradigm-shift story with respect to science.\(^{145}\) I say something about each of these views below. Putnam,

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\(^{143}\) See his 1994, especially Lectures I and II. The interpenetration idea is first canvassed in his 1986.

\(^{144}\) See Quine 1969

\(^{145}\) Theses located beyond the boundaries of philosophical discourses, such as Whorf’s linguistic doctrine (1956) and Dale Spender’s account of allegedly patriarchal world construction in her *Man Made Language* also include the second and fourth commitments.
meanwhile, is committed to (iii) and to a pluralistic view according to which there are constraints on which conceptual schemes are rationally acceptable, but no single scheme is considered to be the One True Account of Reality. I discuss this in a little more detail below.

Goodman’s doctrine that worlds are made rather than discovered affords us little in the way of deference with respect to the role of our practices in determining of what kinds of things the world is comprised. According to Goodman, we make world-versions, each of which makes its own classifications and, hence, its own ontology. He argues for a plurality of such versions, but denies that his ‘radical relativism’ allows for an anything goes approach (1978, p.21). While a successful world-version should not be considered a true one, a version will attain rightness in so far as it meets constraints of consistency and coherence and ‘offends no unyielding beliefs’, such as

- long-lived laws of logic, short-lived reflections of recent observations and other convictions and prejudices ingrained with varying degrees of firmness. Goodman, 1978, p. 17

World-making results in contrasting right versions that are not all reducible to one right world. There is, then, no single right version and ontic differences cannot be insignificant.\(^{146}\) World-versions may be world-descriptions, world-depictions and world-perceptions and so are just as likely to be provided by the sciences as by the arts and by the ‘man-in-the-street’ who has ‘jerry-built’ his ‘familiar serviceable world’ from

\(^{146}\) Goodman does allow that reduction has a place in helping to illuminate the interrelationships between world-versions (1978, p. 5).
‘fragments of scientific and artistic tradition and from his own struggle for survival’ (Ibid, p. 20).

The varieties of world construction fall under five headings: Composition and Decomposition, Weighting, Ordering, Deletion and Supplementation and Deformation. Composition and decomposition establish kinds of things, make parts from wholes, combine things into complexes and do so by means of labels: names, predicates, gestures, pictures. Worlds will differ, then, in respect of the kinds found in them. According to one world-version that includes things of the kind EMERALDS, they are classified as green, according to another that also includes them, they are classified as grue. Differences in emphasis or accent, weighting as Goodman labels them, also contribute to world-making. Weighting will influence which kinds of things are considered relevant, which irrelevant. Differences in emphasis can also result in a difference in kinds distinguished. Goodman provides the example of two portrayals of Christ from different schools: a Piero della Francesca and a Rembrandt. Each, he says, belongs to a different world, organised into different kinds (Ibid, p. 11). A third process by which worlds may be constructed is that of ordering, which is not “found in the world”, ‘but built into a world’. Ordering may include order of derivation, ordering discourse, orderings of perception such as orderings of the brightness and hue of colour and the ordering of tone by pitch and octave, building plans or maps from observational data, the transformation of maps, plans or scores into journeys, buildings or musical performance, measuring things, including time. Deletion and supplementation participate in the construction of worlds by weeding out existing material and filling in new material. The replacement of old European currencies such as the French Franc, the Deutsch Mark and the Italian Lire by the Euro, for example, had the
effect of deleting those measurements of monetary value from the ontologies of the world-versions in which they appear. *Deformation* constructs worlds by corrections or distortions (whether one or the other is determined according to point of view, Goodman says). The surrealist painter, for example, produces distorted or exaggerated images that illuminate their subject thereby changing the world-version of which they are a part. Goodman’s five varieties of world-making all qualify as means of constructing reality. The kinds that appear in the ontologies made by world-versions would not exist were it not for the processes involved in making those versions. Goodman’s doctrine, then, is properly located under the constructivist head. It is also explicitly committed to the fourth, relativist, strand of constructivism.

Goodman’s constructivism appears to be committed to the extreme, constitutive form of practice-independence, because when explicating the means by which worlds are constructed, he considers only processes, but not whatever it might be that they process. So the form of practice-independence to which he appears to be committed can be understood to involve a supervenience claim according to which processes exhaust the supervenience base for a practice’s posits. His doctrine of world-making would be more coherent, however, if it did have space for something or other upon which the processes act. If processes operate on mental representations, then Goodman is committed to some kind of mind-dependence and it would be possible for the posits’ supervenience base to include only mental stuff and processes. If, on the other hand, the processes are not mental stuff, but artefacts of practices, then we have a combination of mind and practice-dependence. However, if all the processes have to operate on is mental stuff, it is hard to
see how there could be non-mental processes, so plausibly Goodman’s doctrine would amount to a form of extreme idealism.

In the field of philosophy of science, Kuhn’s paradigm thesis involves a commitment to practice-dependence that is characteristic of constructivism. Paradigms are generic or global theories that play a central role in the practice of science, some examples of which are Newton’s mechanics, Darwin’s theory of evolution, the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics. They determine which data are relevant, the content of observations, the significance of problems and the acceptability of solutions, thereby supplying the methodologies, standards and values according to which science is practised. Each paradigm should be understood as a scientific worldview with its own ontology and methodology covering the specific field of interest. A theory becomes paradigmatic in Kuhnian terms when it has sustained success in problem solving sufficient for the judgement of members of a scientific community to converge upon it as the hegemonic theory at a particular time. In time, a revolution will occur such that that paradigm and its ensuing ontology will be superseded by a different paradigm, the ontology of which may well turn out to be incommensurable with that of the previously hegemonic paradigm. The new paradigm may not necessarily be an improvement on that which it has superseded and their incommensurability may run so deep that it is incoherent to attempt a comparison between them.

147 If it is incommensurable, then it is debatable whether it can be better. This is one of the significant issues that arise when one tries to assess the worth of Kuhn’s account relative to other, better or worse, accounts.
What exists, then, only exists within a paradigm. So when phlogiston theory was paradigmatic, phlogiston existed – it was real: Now that theory has been superseded, phlogiston either no longer exists, or never did exist. Electrons did not exist when past paradigms were hegemonic, but thanks to currently hegemonic paradigms, they do. The existence of scientific posits, then, is dependent on paradigms and paradigms are simply theories, that is, practices. Thus, Kuhn’s position is constructivist in so far as the question of what counts as real is determined by which paradigm is hegemonic at the time in question - if there were no theorists, there would be no electrons; if there had not been theorists there would not have been phlogiston, and there isn’t anymore because the relevant theory is defunct. Another of the marks of constructivism Kuhn’s position displays is a commitment to the relativity of ontologies and hence, worlds. As Kuhn’s constructivism does not involve a denial of any interaction with reality, it amounts to a moderate non-constitutive form of practice-dependence. Elements of practices appear in any supervenience base for posits of various scientific paradigms, but they do not exhaust those bases.

§3.3 Idealism

For the paradigmatic (extreme) idealist the target entities are mentally constituted and are thus constitutively mind-dependent in a manner that vitiates a construal of the relevant practices as realist in an ontic sense. Unlike the eliminativist, the idealist still seeks to make sense of those practices. She does not argue for their elimination, nor for their reduction nor for an error theory thereof. Rather she disputes the common-or-garden assumption of ontic deference, that is, that the world exists independently of mental processes and entities – ideas in our minds or some greater mind or sense data. While
Kantian and neo-Kantian doctrines can be understood as bringing the mind and world into a co-dependent relationship, idealism brings the world into the mind, making the former dependent upon the latter.

On one interpretation, (different from that explored in connection with realism’s semantic stance) Berkeley is an idealist who holds that contrary to the underlying assumptions of common sense talk and thought, objects are not material at all, rather they are ideas in God’s and our minds. Something’s existence as real relies upon its being perceived, implying that it would not be thus and so were it not for the perception of a perceiving subject.

Within idealism we can distinguish a difference in commitment with respect to which mind(s) things rely upon for their existence and features. For instance, whereas in both Berkeleyan idealism and Kant’s proto-constructivist transcendental idealism, the focus is on individual minds, Divine or human respectively, Hegelian absolute idealism identifies reality with a universal self-consciousness or ‘Geist’, which Hegel recognises to be socially and historically located with the result that the Absolute thought that is reality is socio-historically shaped and influenced. Thus Hegelian idealism can be understood as ‘Kantianism, minus the thing-in-itself, plus a social theory of the mind.’ It vitiates realism in its ontic guise by dint of its commitment to the constitutive role of the mental (spirit) with respect to the existence and features of the world and, hence, their mind-dependence. While we should generally take care not to conflate mind- and practice-

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148 Norman 1976, p. 112. As Norman points out, Hegel’s idealism may be more (pan)theistic than the account here suggests, for in places, especially in his later work, Hegel seems to suggest that Geist is identical with the Divine mind.
dependence, Hegelian idealism represents an instance of their intersection. For in so far as the ‘Geist’ is a social mind, its being thus and so is determined by social practices and thus reality’s being thus and so is (indirectly) determined by those practices.

There seems to be logical space for a doctrine that is committed to non-constitutive mind-dependence according to which any supervenience base for a practice’s posits must contain mental elements, but they never exhaust those bases. Such a doctrine with respect to the ontic status of mental states themselves is perhaps manifested by a non-reductive monism, or token identity theory of the mind, such as that developed by Colin McGinn (1982, pp 27-30). According to this approach to the mind/body problem:

> every mental event is identical with some physical event, though the properties in virtue of which an event is mental are not themselves physical properties. 

*Ibid*

The mental, then, supervenes on both the mental and the physical. Elements of both will appear in any supervenience base for mental states/events, but neither will exhaust those bases.

Phenomenalism should also be identified as a doctrine that opposes realism in its ontic stance. Phenomenalism differs from the idealisms considered thus far, however, in that it identifies commonsense objects as bundles of actual or possible percepts rather than as ideas. Phenomenalists such as Ayer and C. I. Lewis hold that contrary to our ordinary assumptions, common sense objects reduce to collections of actual or possible sense
While, as we have seen, this implies a commitment to a semantic doctrine of reductivism according to which commonsense thought and talk about objects reduces to thought and talk about sense data, and indeed many who have held phenomenalist views have also been committed to verificationism and have thus believed that the intelligibility of talk about the physical world is preserved only through semantic reduction, still the central commitment here is an ontic one, a commitment to the idea that the world is constituted of collections of actual or possible sense data, structured in such a way as to form what we take to be ‘objects’. In so far as sense data are located, they are located within the realm of the mental and as such, phenomenalism involves a commitment to the mind-dependence of the entities of which the world is comprised.

§3.4 Summary

In these sections we have considered the two strands - existence and independence (from the mental, from practices) from which realism’s ontic stance is woven. We have considered error theory - the doctrine that opposes the first strand; and varieties of constructivism, according to which reality is at least dependent upon and at the extreme constituted by various of our actual or possible practices; and varieties of idealism, according to which reality is at least dependent upon and, paradigmatically, constituted from various types of mental stuff.

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149 See Ayer 1952 and Lewis, C. I., 1942. Russell’s Logical Atomism also includes a commitment to phenomenalism. See his 1956.
§4 Realism’s Epistemic Stance

While realism in its ontic guise values independence from practices and from mental constitution with respect to objects’ being thus and so, when realism takes an epistemic stance, the focus shifts to independence from practices with respect to the determination of judgements’ truth values. When she takes an epistemic stance, the realist is concerned to show that we are right to be deferential in respect of our cognitive relations with reality (or a relevant domain thereof) and that, contrary to any self-assured attitude we might be tempted to adopt, judgements’ truth is not in the hands of the knower. Where realism under an ontic guise can be understood as attempting to establish that we are not the authors of reality in the sense of inventing it, realism under an epistemic guise can be understood as attempting to establish that we are not the authors of reality in the sense of authorising our own judgements about that reality. Where the realist’s claims are borne out, then, her epistemic stance confounds the sceptic’s claim that reality (beyond our own minds and practices) is beyond our ken, because it is committed to the possibility of knowledge, yet it also goes a piece of the way with scepticism in so far as it accepts that knowledge of such reality is impossible in the absence of the possibility of error.¹⁵⁰

Epistemic independence encompasses two questions: firstly, whether the moves of a practice can be subject to error, and if that is possible, then secondly, to what extent error, and hence, judgements’ truth, is determined by the relevant domain of reality and to what extent practices play a role in that determination. We can conclude that a practice is realist in an epistemic sense, then, if it allows the possibility of genuine error, where

¹⁵⁰ I will talk simply about ‘error’ rather than ‘error and ignorance’, as Pettit does, on the grounds that ignorance – failure to know the truth about something – is a type of error.
genuineness is determined by how we answer the second question - by the extent to which judgements’ truth is determined by the reality it purports to describe rather than the practices employed for doing so. Where genuine error is possible, our relationship with the relevant domain of reality can be said to be one of what Phillip Pettit has called ‘epistemic servility’ according to which

In seeking out knowledge in a given area, we have to strive to attune ourselves to an independent reality. 1991, p. 611

The contrast the realist is seeking is between striving to attune to reality that is independent in an ontic sense and striving to attune to some standard determined by us or by some other subject who assumes the authority to do so. Such a standard might be determined simply by the opinions or whims of an individual or group or by standards that are less epistemically fickle, but nevertheless internal to the practice rather than externally determined by reality.

§4.1 The Relationship between Realism’ Epistemic Stance and the Axes Identified in Chapter I

In the taxonomy of response-dependence concepts constructed in Chapter I, we identified an axis upon which we could position all concepts, both response-dependent and response-independent, and which differentiates the deferential from the self-assured. Towards the deferential end of the continuum sit those concepts involved in practices that are conducted in maximal deference towards the external world, for example primary quality concepts and patient concepts of dispositional properties. The ultimate deferential end point of the continuum would be occupied by those concepts that could plausibly be thought to be included in an Absolute Conception of reality (see below). By contrast, the
concepts that appear towards the self-assured end of the continuum reflect a relationship with the world that is less modest with respect to the external world. At the maximally self-assured end of the scale we find concepts such as ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[\-AT-T]. It is this difference that is denied by Putnamian internal realism: According to that account, the deferential part of the axis simply collapses into the self-assured part. Without threat of inconsistency, however, Putnam could still allow degrees of self-assurance.

This distinction between deferential and self-assured concepts articulates the distinction at the heart of realism’s epistemic stance, that between criteria of correctness the source(s) of which is external to a practice and those the source of which ensues from within the practice. This is similar to the distinction that Wright’s Order of Determination constraint aims to demarcate. The universal availability of deferential concepts means that their extensions are determined independently of anyone’s responses (except in so far as the patients for response-dependent patient concepts such as FLEXIBLE are persons). So when we consider what makes the judgements generated by the practice in which such a concept is involved correct, we see that the practice is a deferential one, the criterion of correctness has a source external to the practice – reality. By contrast, self-assured concepts are not necessarily universally available.\footnote{But they could be, if their relevant target population were all human, or rational, agents.} They require certain responses in order for their extensions to be determined. So when we consider what makes judgements generated by the practices in which they are involved correct, we see the practice is one in which there is a degree of self-assurance thanks to the role of responses (under certain conditions) in determining the extensions of the relevant concepts. So the criterion of correctness is not wholly external to the practice. This brief discussion, which serves to
position the distinction identified in Chapter I with respect to realism’s epistemic stance, prefigures the discussion of realism and response-dependent concepts that follows in Chapter VIII.

§4.2 Epistemic Realism in Extremis: The Absolute Conception

At its most extreme, realism’s epistemic stance is manifested by an Absolute Conception or View from Nowhere picture. The Absolute Conception idea has its roots in Cartesian epistemology. More recently Bernard Williams has argued that the ideal of an Absolute Conception is foundational to the possibility of knowledge of reality, while a similar idea is expressed by Nagel’s picture of a View from Nowhere.\(^{152}\) The Absolute Conception picture functions as an ideal rather than as an account of knowledge and reality that could be acquired by and is accessible to human thinkers as they actually stand epistemically.

As the Absolute Conception can serve as an ideal for knowledge, it also serves to shape realism at the extreme of its epistemic stance. The idea follows from the thought that the most perfect, most complete knowledge possible would be knowledge of reality as it is irrespective of any of the perspectives and experiences of any group of epistemic subjects – as Williams puts it, a conception of the world ‘that is there anyway’ (1985, p.138). An Absolute Conception would abstract away from any perspectives and experiences peculiar to any species of thinkers and perceivers and it would have to include an explanation of all of those perspectival conceptions of reality and our (and others’) grasp of them. It will be, writes Williams,

a conception consisting of nonperspectival materials available to any adequate investigator, of whatever constitution, and it will also help to explain to us, though not necessarily to those alien investigators, such things as our capacity to grasp that conception. 1985, p. 140

Although primarily appearing in an epistemic context, the Absolute Conception picture has both ontic and epistemic components, the former required to support the claim of the latter that knowledge (proper) is possible. The ontic component emphasises the possibility of a reality that would exist and have at least some of the features it does now in the absence of any subjects whatsoever, that is, the ontic component assumes the truth of realism in its epistemic stance, but only in so far as the independence dimension of that stance is understood in the strongest possible manner. That is, where the reality of an object or feature thereof requires absolute independence from practices and from mental stuff. The epistemic component of the Absolute Conception idea focuses on the thought that proper knowledge of this absolute reality would be perspective-free and experience-independent and, of course, the truth of judgements about that reality would be determined wholly by that reality. Epistemic self-assurance would be absent, epistemic deference would be total.

The primary qualities have often been thought to be plausible candidates for inclusion in the reality with which the Absolute Conception would correspond. This has the implication that knowledge of primary qualities could be achieved via concepts capable of acquisition by any rational observer regardless of their perceptual capacities and their interests.
An understanding of realism’s epistemic stance that takes the criterion of realist construal to be the ability of a practice to play a role in the acquisition of knowledge of reality according to an Absolute Conception thereof is the most extreme interpretation of epistemic realism. It may well turn out that realistic construals of practices that fail to meet this very demanding model are still possible. This question will be addressed in detail in the following chapter when we bring our taxonomies of response-dependence and realism together. In the meantime, we can gain a more sophisticated and complete understanding of the types of practice-implicated determination of truth values that realism’s epistemic stance seeks to avoid by examining opponent doctrines which either deny the first component of epistemic realism, that is, which deny that error is possible within a particular practice, or deny the second component by allowing the possibility but implicating practices in the determination of judgements’ truth values in such a way that the error is not the genuine kind generated by failing to track reality, rather it is the phoney kind generated by failing to keep in step with community or individual norms. The majority of these opponent doctrines are already familiar, as elements thereof provide opposition to either the semantic or the ontic stances of realism.

§4.3 Non-Factualism Revisited

The epistemic commitments inherent in non-factualism amount to a denial of the first component of epistemic realism’s requirement of epistemic independence. Recall that the non-factualist claims with respect to some particular practice that despite any assertoric form its linguistic moves may display, they fail to be about any set of facts. Instead of stating facts, such practices generate expressions of subjects’ attitudes or feelings towards agents, acts or objects (in the moral or aesthetic case), projections of sensory responses
(in the secondary quality case) or sets of formulaic devices for calculating likely predictions (in the science case). Because such practices are not fact-stating, there is no sense in which they can fail to track the facts and thereby no sense in which the move that we might (mistakenly) label a ‘judgement’ can be erroneous or false. According to the non-factualist’s analysis, all we do within such practices is either give voice to our responses or create theoretical devices, activities that fail to admit of reality-tracking error.

§4.4 Quasi-Realism Revisited

By contrast, the quasi-realist allows himself a notion of quasi-truth as a means of saving the appearance of certain of our practices (pertaining to the moral, the modal, the comedic and the causal) by enabling us to earn the right to evaluate the moves we make in them in terms of truth and falsity. Thus far, then, error seems to be possible, the first component of epistemic independence is achieved. But is it merely chimerical - quasi-error - the possibility of which is gerrymandered from the notion of quasi-truth?

Recall that according to Blackburn’s account, using a notion of truth to regulate moral talk (for example) amounts to a convenient label for the assessment of our commitments to various moral attitudes. Assessment thereof is regulated by a standard of correctness that flows from our sense of the possibility of improving upon our commitments. The notion of improvement, Blackburn argues, derives from a core of moral attitudes the possession of which is constitutive of moral agency. Thus, on the quasi-realist account, the criterion of correctness that regulates moral commitments and our expressions thereof is an internal one and error is not genuine in the sense required by the realist when she
adopts an epistemic stance. Commitments are not assessed in terms of their ability to reflect some moral fact of the matter, but in terms of how well they measure up to the constitutive attitudinal core of morality.

§4.5 Constructivism Revisited

Our discussions of the varieties of constructivist doctrines as opponents of realism in its ontic stance have already provided us with hints as to their epistemic commitments. According to most (all?) of those doctrines, standards of error are possible, but relativised to a conceptual scheme (Putnam), to a world version (Goodman) or to a paradigm (Kuhn).

Putnam stresses that internal realism does not involve an ‘anything goes’ relativism according to which all conceptual schemes are as good as each other, a conceptual scheme according to which humans could fly would, if acted upon, prove less useful than a scheme that encourages us to respect the law of gravity (1981, p. 54). Thus conceptual schemes are under constraints in addition to that of internal coherence. But none of the experiential contents that give rise to epistemic endeavour come unshaped by concepts and none are open to a description that is independent of any particular conceptual scheme. Moreover, according to the internal realist picture, it is likely that experiences can be appropriately accounted for within various different conceptual schemes. Rather than open slather relativism, then, internal realism involves a commitment to pluralism with respect to the issue of whether there could be more than one rationally acceptable conceptual scheme and to relativism with respect to the question of what makes a
particular judgement correct, for it will be correct relative to the conceptual scheme within which it is made.

Internal realism appears to sit in opposition to realism’s epistemic stance in so far as it is committed to internal standards of correctness for judgements. However, Putnam maintains that conceptual schemes remain subject to some external constraints, constraints that depend upon our biology and our culture, and from which ensue ‘objectivity for us’ (*Ibid*, p. 55). The upshot of this is that the source of correctness of judgements will derive both from within the conceptual scheme itself and from standards laid down by this *objectivity for us*, which is itself always already conceptual and which serves as an enabling framework for conceptual schemes that are rationally acceptable in terms of internal coherence and fit. So while sources of correctness are not entirely independent of practices, they may well be far removed from actual practitioners. Putnam, of course, does not see internal realism as an anti-realist doctrine, but as the only plausible construal of realism, once we relinquish an externalist *God’s Eye View* picture of our epistemic relation to reality.

Within Goodman’s doctrine of world-making, the question of epistemic independence arises on two levels, firstly on the level of world versions themselves - is there the possibility of making a world-version that’s incorrect? And then on the level of claims and judgements within a world version – is there the possibility of making a claim or judgment that’s false?
For Goodman, the criteria for success in making a world are that it be internally consistent and coherent and not inconsistent with ‘unyielding’ beliefs and with its own maxims (Goodman 1978, p. 17). Such a world version may be considered a right one, but not a true one and right versions are many and irreducible to a single right world. Which world is ‘real’ will depend on which we take to be so given the purpose we wish to achieve, so for the physicist, the real world is that made by physics, for the ‘man-in-the-street’ the real world is that built from ‘fragments of scientific and artistic tradition’ and from ‘his own struggle for survival.’ (Ibid, p. 20) Reality, then, is relative, but world making can result in right or wrong versions in so far as the latter lack coherence and/or consistency, that is, they simply don’t make sense. Worlds are not assessed in terms of truth or falsity because, as we have seen, they can be made in ways that do not involve truth-evaluable practices. Art and literature can make world-versions, but they do so by showing, exhibiting and manifesting rather than by saying anything literal. That does not mean, however, that they cannot be evaluated in terms of their rightness, which consists in ‘their relevance and their revelations, their force and their fit’ (Ibid, p. 19). In so far as error is possible in the process of world-making, then, it occurs when a world-version fails to make sense, is irrelevant to our needs or interests, fails to make revelations that add to our understanding or fails to fit with experiential inputs. The standards to which the world-maker strives to attune her creative endeavours, then, are internal to those practices rather than provided by a world that enjoys ontic independence from them.

Like the variants of constructivism considered in this context so far, Kuhn’s paradigm theory should be identified as a doctrine that stands in opposition to realism in an epistemic guise. Recall that Kuhn’s account includes a commitment to ontic relativism –
what exists does so relative to a paradigm - and a commitment to scientific standards and values relative to the paradigm according to which science is practised. On the Kuhnian account erroneous theories, the predictions of which are never borne out, are possible, but they will be wrong according to standards internal to the paradigm in which they developed, rather than wrong according to some external standards exerted on the practices by reality. The relativity of error is made perspicuous by considering Kuhn’s account of revolutions whereby a hegemonic paradigm is replaced by a successor. Post-revolution a theory that was erroneous in the previous paradigm may be correct according to the successor. Thus, understood in terms of Kuhnian paradigms, the theory according to which the Earth revolved around the Sun was incorrect under the pre-Copernican paradigm, but correct following the Copernican revolution, which for Kuhn constitutes a paradigm shift. Error in these terms, then, does not meet the criterion of genuineness that realism puts at the heart of its commitments when it takes an epistemic stance.

§4.6 Coherentist Interpretationism

Donald Davidson’s interpretationism can be understood as opposing realism’s epistemic stance. Operating according to the principle of charity, the interpretationist holds that our account of reality should include only those posits about which the majority of participants in a practice can reasonably be interpreted as being right. Thus error is possible - the first criterion of epistemic independence is met – but it is determined according to standards of correctness that are internal to a practice, so the second criterion is not met. Furthermore, according to this doctrine, truth is a matter of coherence so thought and talk will count as true according to whether or not it is consistent with and

153 Davidson’s doctrine is developed in papers that appear in his 1984, especially Essays 9-12.
does not disrupt the account of which it is a part. Thus truth is determined by standards that are not external to the practices that seek to establish truths about the way the world is. Coherentism differs from constructivism in this respect, however. For Davidson remains committed to the idea that, although constrained in the first instance by internal standards of coherence, thought and talk remain externally determined by the causal order of the material realm. For the truth conditions of a proposition are identified with the cause of its being uttered or thought in a particular context.

§4.7 Summary
In these sections we have considered doctrines that should be identified as opposing realism’s epistemic stance, the two-fold commitment of which is the possibility of error within a practice and the genuineness of that error, the criterion of which is that error should occur as a result of a failure (of a practice’s moves) to track reality, rather than as a result of a failure to meet some internal standards of correctness. We have seen that non-factualism with respect to a practice opposes the first element of this commitment, while constructivism in its various forms opposes the second and coherentism also opposes the second but holds that thought and talk are causally constrained by the material realm. In the next sections we locate Wright’s realism-relevant distinctions (discussed at length in Chapter VI) within the framework of the tripartite division of realism developed thus far.

§5 Wright’s Realism-Relevant Distinctions
In the previous chapter, we undertook a detailed consideration of four distinctions that Wright applies to practices in order to assess their more-than-minimal truth aptness.
Evidence transcendence, cognitive command, wide cosmological role and order of determination are characteristics distinctive of practices that employ a truth predicate that is more substantial than that derived from ordinary platitudinous beliefs about truth. Although we have located the issue of truth-aptness itself within realism’s semantic stance, for the sake of completeness it is worthwhile locating each of the characteristics identified by Wright within the framework of the three stances – semantic, ontic and epistemic – distinguished here. The characteristics are realism- as well as truth-relevant in so far as they suggest that a practice has features that make it apt for a realist construal of some sort. By placing Wright’s distinctions within our framework, then, we can better understand what is at stake within them while at the same time further illuminating the cruces that divide realism in its various guises from its opponents and to see whether his distinctions highlight additional realist cruces not yet recognised by the taxonomy constructed thus far.

§5.1 Evidence Transcendence

The evidence transcendence constraint distinguishes between those sets of judgements the satisfaction of whose truth conditions goes over and above our epistemic capacities for discovering whether or not they are satisfied and those for which satisfaction of those conditions is (in the usual instance) within our ken. Clearly the distinction with which evidence transcendence is concerned is an epistemic one – our ability (or not) to know whether or not truth conditions are satisfied. However, it is not a distinction with which realism is usually concerned when it adopts an epistemic stance, despite the fact that, as we saw in Chapter VI, Dummett thinks that it is at the heart of the realist-anti-realist opposition. One might be tempted to think, however, that the distinction mirrors a
distinction between those concepts that might plausibly be expected to be part of an Absolute Conception of the world and those that would fail to be included in such a conception. But consideration of some examples demonstrates that the notions of transcendence in play here are significantly different. Evidence transcendence involves transcendence of our epistemic capacities. Thus mathematical judgements are plausible candidates for evidence transcendent truth conditions. Mathematical concepts are also plausible candidates for inclusion in any Absolute Conception of the world. The cases of religious and primary quality judgements, however, show how evidence transcendence and the Absolute Conception idea can come apart. Suppose we take the view that religious judgements are truth-apt, then beliefs about the gods, about angels, about punishment and redemption, and so on, are candidates for truth conditions the evidence for the satisfaction of which eludes us. However, the concepts involved in those beliefs do not transcend perspectives and would most likely not be available to any thinking subject irrespective of background or experience. Conversely, primary quality concepts are, as we have seen, usually treated as plausible candidates for inclusion in the Absolute Conception, but in practice the truth conditions of judgements about objects’ primary qualities are not evidence transcendent, even if perception alone may not always provide an entirely precise account of an object’s primary qualities. (I say ‘in practice’ because our primary quality practice is such that we generally assume we can make accurate enough judgements about things’ primary qualities on the basis of the plentiful evidence available. The question of whether or not something really is perfectly square, however, is not something that we can ever have the evidence to settle for sure, just like any other mathematical fact. Judgements regarding perfected primary qualities, then, would be a good candidate for evidence transcendent truth conditions.) The evidence transcendence
constraint, then, is not comfortably located within the tri-partite taxonomy of realism we have developed. It does concern a distinction that can be characterized as epistemic, but that distinction does not reflect a crux that is central to any of the three realist stances we have identified. None of those stances identifies the nature of truth conditions and our epistemic relationship to them as key to realist-anti-realist opposition. Rather the introduction, on Dummett’s part, of evidence-transcendence as a realist crux was an attempt to reconceptualise realism within the context of an approach to philosophy that placed linguistic analysis centre-stage.

§5.2 Cognitive Command

In so far as cognitive command is concerned with judgements’ direction of fit with the relevant region of reality, it appears to mirror the issue at the centre of realism’s epistemic stance. However, Wright’s focus is on judgements’ convergence and the explanation thereof. The upshot of this is that he locates the line of the distinction differently from that drawn by the criterion of genuineness of error.

The focus of the cognitive command constraint is on the source of agreement (and disagreement) in judgements. Failures of convergence in judgement must be explained by cognitive error - errors of fact, where a subject ought to have made the judgement commanded by the facts - not by differences in tastes and attitudes. The distinction picked up by Cognitive Command, then, mirrors that between cognitivists and non-cognitivists in ethical theory, the former arguing that a lack of convergence in judgements results from (at least one of) the judgements’ failure to track the facts, the latter that it is down to a difference in attitudes or feelings.
As the interest here is in divergence rather than error, the distinction is between cognitive and non-cognitive sources of *divergence* in judgements, whereas, epistemic independence is concerned with the source of *error*. So practices that are correctly analysed as generating expressions of feelings or attitudes are ruled out by the first criterion of epistemic independence – they are not considered capable of erroneous moves, and thus we have no interest in the source of error with respect to those practices. Wright’s project requires a distinction that marks this difference because in applying a notion of minimal truth derived from what are claimed to be the platitudes we believe with respect to truth, it grants minimal truth aptness to those discourses that admit of non-cognitivist construal (such as ethical and aesthetic discourse according to some analyses) as well as those that are best understood as cognitivist. It is unsurprising, then, that the Cognitive Command constraint mirrors non-cognitivist/cognitivist distinctions, for in concert with Wright’s other distinctions, it is required to establish which minimally truth apt discourses are candidates for the use of a more-than-minimal truth predicate. The work undertaken by Cognitive Command is made perspicuous when we see that were one to opt for the non-factualist route with respect to practices such as the ethical and the aesthetic, the Cognitive Command constraint would be redundant. It is only required once such discourses are deemed (minimally) truth-apt. In allowing such discourses to clear the first hurdle of truth aptness, but then showing how they fail at that provided by Cognitive Command, Wright’s analysis is very similar to that of Quasi-realism in so far as it accounts for their assertoric form and truth-directed nature while also providing an explanation of convergence and divergence of agreement within the discourse in terms of
convergence/divergence in attitudes. It differs, however in that, with a notion of minimal truth in place, Wright’s approach needs no recourse to a notion of quasi-truth. The issue of the source of error, then, will mark a further distinction amongst those practices involving judgements that satisfy Cognitive Command, for while a set of judgements might exercise cognitive command, the facts that they track may turn out to be relative to some conceptual scheme, world version or paradigm and thus any errors will not count as genuine by the criteria of epistemic independence applied by the realist under an epistemic guise. Cognitive Command, then, can be satisfied by practices for which a constructivist analysis is appropriate, but not by those for which a non-factualist analysis is correct and so on the epistemic realist landscape practices that satisfy Cognitive Command remain in the hinterland between realist and anti-realist territory until such time as they are shown to satisfy further constraints that locate them more firmly within the borders of one or the other.

Although Cognitive Command is an epistemic distinction, it kicks in earlier in the piece than the criteria for epistemic independence that we have identified as central to realism’s epistemic stance. For Cognitive Command can be satisfied by practices the source of error in which turns out to be internal to our practices. Thus practices that satisfy Cognitive Command cannot (yet) be located on one or other side of a border separating realisms from anti-realisms. This vindicates Pettit’s choice of epistemic servility as a (epistemic) realist goal over Wright’s strategy of employing Cognitive Command to mop up considerations about the reality-directedness of a practice, because epistemic servility gives us the tools to distinguish those practices that genuinely attempt to get in step with
a mind and/or practice independent reality from those that merely have the appearance of doing so.
§5.3 Wide Cosmological Role

Wide Cosmological Role is an ontically focussed constraint the aim of which is to establish the explanatory efficacy of the states of affairs associated with a practice. The standard of explanatory efficacy applied is relatively high in so far as a state of affairs is required to pull its weight in explanations of a range of states of affairs and propositional attitudes other than those that are simply judgements about the state of affairs itself. The motivation for the constraint is the thought that the efficacy of a state of affairs in a wide range of explanations is a reflection of its part in an ‘underlying unity of phenomena’ (1993, p. 76). The more general underlying idea here is that the ability of a state of affairs to be explanatorily efficacious in explanations of judgements’ truth signifies that the judgement is a result of epistemic interaction with a state of affairs that is independent of the judgement in the sense that judging that p does not make it the case that p. The state of affairs that is the subject of a judgement, then, does not occur as a result of its being judged to be so. Rather, the Wide Cosmological Role constraint confirms it as the source of the judgement, and potentially that of others. Once it has been established that a practice satisfies cognitive command, if it can then satisfy Wide Cosmological Role, we have an account of how it is able to satisfy the former constraint. That is, in satisfying Wide Cosmological Role, a practice shows that it can earn us the right to talk of ‘the facts’ that are required if that practice’s thought and talk are to have anything to fit other than subjects’ non-cognitive states.

While the issues giving rise to the Wide Cosmological Role constraint are ontic ones in so far as they are concerned with establishing the explanatory pull and, hence, factual status of the states of affairs associated with a practice, the standard of ontic adequacy
they are required to meet is typically weaker than that applied by realism in its ontic
stance. Realists about the mental might be content with the weaker standard. For while
the existence criterion must be satisfied, it makes no sense to demand that the mental be
independent of mental stuff. Such realists might, though, continue to demand that the
mental stuff not be constituted by moves in practices, or by paradigms, or by worldviews
or by ways of knowing. We have seen that when realism adopts an ontic guise it requires
that a practice’s posits demonstrate both existence and independence, independence that
is from practices and from mental stuff. We have also seen that the independence
criterion positions the realist in opposition to two types of doctrine in all their varieties:
constructivism and idealism. Neither of these is inconsistent with the satisfaction of Wide
Cosmological Role. Although the constructivist is far less deferential than the realist and
claims that reality is (at least to some extent) made and made relative to a conceptual
scheme, world version or paradigm for instance, that does not mean that the states of
affairs of which reality is comprised cannot be explanatorily efficacious in the sense
required by Wide Cosmological Role. The ‘underlying unity of phenomena’ in which
they participate will also be the result of ontic construction. Similarly, the states of
affairs associated with a target practice may satisfy Wide Cosmological Role, but they
may be constituted from mental stuff as the idealist claims. They may be, as they are on
one interpretation of Berkeley, ideas in the mind of God, or constituents of some
universal self-consciousness, as Hegel would have it, or percepts, as the phenomenalist
would have it. Their being constituted from mental stuff precludes neither their
explanatory efficacy nor their existence; there are still facts of a matter despite their being
constituted from mental stuff.
The Wide Cosmological Role constraint, then, establishes that, if a practice satisfies cognitive command, the states of affairs associated with it are credible candidates for inclusion in an account of reality - that they would be included in an inventory of ‘the facts’. If the states of affairs amount to the facts, then the posits that figure in them exist. Thus, states of affairs that satisfy wide cosmological role meet ontic realism’s existence criterion and thus resist eliminativist removal from our account of reality. Wide Cosmological Role, then, manages to track a central demand of realism – that a practice’s posits be shown to exist – and provides a test for determining whether or not it is met, for if something exists, it will satisfy wide cosmological role, by dint, one might reasonably surmise, of its participation in the ‘underlying unity of phenomena’ (1993, p. 76).

Satisfaction of wide cosmological role, however, does not go so far as to establish the status of those states of affairs with respect to the realist’s ontic criterion of independence, which in the face of either constructivist or idealist opposition, requires that objects and states of affairs exist in spite of our practices and, so long as we are not aiming at a realism of the mental, do not consist of mental stuff. An upshot of the separation of the explanatory criterion, which is encapsulated in wide cosmological role, from the independence criterion to which the realist is committed when she takes an ontic stance is that establishing the explanatory credibility of a state of affairs is insufficient to establish its role in reality as conceived by both strands of realism’s ontic stance. As we have seen, a state of affairs can be explanatorily credible yet not independent of practices or of the mental. And in practice, the pull of the deference intuition means that most realists want to establish the independence of the things they claim are real. While satisfaction of the existence criterion remains crucial to realism’s ontic stance – there’s
little point in establishing the practice or mind independence of something the existence of which cannot be established – a full-blown ontic realism (apart from realism about the mental) seems to demand the establishment of independence in order that the right balance between deference and self-assurance be preserved.

§5.4 Order of Determination

Recall that the Order of Determination constraint serves to mark a distinction amongst those practices that satisfy the Cognitive Command constraint. The distinction drawn differentiates between practices (the judgements and statements they generate) the extension of the truth predicate for which is determined independently of subjects’ responses and those practices the extension of the truth predicate for which is determined in a manner that involves those responses. In trying to demarcate the distinction, Wright employs the working assumption that secondary quality thought and talk should come out on the *extension-determining* side of the distinction, that is, it will fail to satisfy the constraint, while thought and talk about shape will come out on the *extension-reflecting* side of the distinction, that is, it will satisfy the constraint because the extension of its truth predicate is determined independently of responses. Wright’s attempts at demarcation are centred on trying to find a point of difference between basic equations for the types of judgement for which, one might reasonably suppose, there is a difference in the direction of determination of the truth predicate’s extension. Although he thinks that modal status is the most likely locus of a significant point of difference, thus far, Wright has been unable to locate a definite crux for the Order of Determination distinction.
Order of Determination, then, is an epistemic distinction that is closely aligned with the crux that is central to realism in its epistemic stance. Its concern with the direction of determination of the truth predicate’s extension corresponds to the question, ‘What makes it the case that a judgement that p is true?’ which is the same question posed by realism in its epistemic stance. In our discussion thereof we saw that realism in its epistemic stance imposes a requirement of epistemic independence on a practice. This requirement comprises two elements: (i) moves in the target practice must be capable of error and (ii) the source of that error must be failure to track the relevant domain of reality rather than failure to meet some internally derived standard - the practice must manifest a certain degree of epistemic deference. Order of Determination is concerned with the second element of epistemic independence, then, and establishes the credibility of a practice with respect to whether or not moves within it amount to attempts to track facts that are thus and so independently of our practices in so far as they manifest in our responses. As I remarked in Chapter VI, although use of the vocabulary of truth is unavoidable given the aims of Wright’s grander theory, its use tends to blur the difference between the question of whether best opinion determines whether something falls within the extension of the concept F with the question of whether best opinion determines whether something is F. Wrightian talk of best opinion determining truth values (1993, p. 83), of X’s colour being ‘a function of our judgement’;154 and the characterisation of extension-determination as ‘projectivist’ (1992, p. 108), risks the misleading impression that in the cases of judgements falling on the extension-determination side of the order of determination distinction, best opinion invents the truth and in the cases of those that turn out to be

154 1992, p. 126. Wright is canvassing a possible objection here, but the phrase in question is part of the envisaged objector’s summary of Wright’s position and, as such, is uncontested.
extension-reflecting, best opinion *discovery* the truth. As we said at the end of Chapter VI, this apparent alignment of the extension-determination/extension-reflecting distinction with an invention/discovery metaphor invites the inappropriate conclusion that order of determination marks an ontic distinction between practices the posits of which exist only by dint of those practices and practices whose posits would exist in the absence of those practices. While it serves Wright’s purposes, then, Order of Determination is less than helpful in articulating what is at stake when realism adopts an epistemic stance. Those cruces are better accounted for by the twin criteria of epistemic independence: the possibility of error and externality of the source of error.

§5.5 Summary

In these sections we have placed Wright’s four constraints within our tripartite realist framework. We have found that although it raises an issue with respect to truth conditions that is (broadly) epistemic – the extent to which their satisfaction is epistemically accessible to us – the evidence transcendence constraint does not encapsulate a distinction that is similar to those that provide foci for realism in its epistemic stance nor for its ontic or semantic stances.

We saw that Cognitive Command is also an epistemic distinction, but one that comes into play earlier than the criteria for epistemic independence that we identified as central to realism’s epistemic stance. For Cognitive Command can be satisfied by discourses the source of error in which turns out to be internal to our practices. Thus practices that satisfy Cognitive Command cannot (yet) be located on one or other side of the border separating realisms from anti-realisms. I argued that this vindicates Pettit’s choice of
epistemic servility as a (epistemic) realist goal over Wright’s strategy of employing Cognitive Command to deal with considerations about the reality-directedness of a practice. Wide Cosmological Role was identified as a distinction the focus of which was ontic. The question of the broad explanatory efficacy of the states of affairs associated with a practice is directly aligned with the existence element of realism’s ontic stance to the extent that wide cosmological role could serve as a test for satisfying the existence criterion. Practices satisfying the distinction can be located within the ontic region of our framework, and qualify as realist in so far as they meet the existence criterion. In order properly to locate them within ontic realist territory as our taxonomy demarcates it, they would also have to meet the (ontic) independence criterion. Finally, we have seen that the Order of Determination distinction is a close relation of the second element of epistemic independence, for both are concerned that the criterion of correctness for the thought and talk of a target practice be determined independently of those practices. Drawing on considerations first raised in Chapter VI concerning the tendency of the vocabulary of truth to mislead in this context, I argued that the cruces central to realism’s epistemic stance are better captured by the criteria of epistemic independence developed here.

§6 So What is Realism Really?

It is natural that this question will arise in the context of the taxonomic exercise undertaken here. However, in addition to showing the manifold nature of realism and distinguishing and clarifying the cruces at stake between realists and their opponents, an objective of the exercise has been to demonstrate that there does not need to be any single doctrine that is the One True Realism. We could elect to use the ‘realist’ label for someone committed to all three – semantic, ontic and epistemic doctrines– with respect to
a domain. But others who are committed to just one or two of them, or who hold different positions with respect to different domains, such as the realist about the mental, who has no use for a commitment to mind-independence, would also be appropriately included in the realist camp.

Despite this ecumenism, consistent with the folk intuitions about realism with which we began, certain realist commitments are more basic than others. The commitment to the existence of a practice’s posits, which is part of the two-fold ontic stance, seems to me to be central to realism. As I remarked in discussion of the wide cosmological role test, there is little point in establishing the ontic and epistemic independence of a set of posits, nor of showing that the moves in the practice are linguistically or conceptually reducible to some other set of posits if we haven’t also shown that they exist. The centrality of the existence criterion reflects our self-assurance that at least some of the things that we take, as a matter of commonsense, to populate the world will indeed turn out to exist and that at least some of the things that commonsense (but not superstition) tells us don’t exist – witches, unicorns, Martians, taniwha and ghosts – will indeed turn out not to be part of the fabric of the world. Once posits’ existence has been established, the intuitive push for a balance between self-assurance and deference demands that their mind and/or practice independence be the next feature to be defended.

Ontic existence and independence provide the underpinning required for epistemic independence. Moves in a practice can only satisfy the second criterion of epistemic independence - that the criterion of correctness for a judgement be external to the practice within which the judgement is made – if there independently exists a relevant domain of
reality that the judgement aims to track. Certainly realism in its epistemic guise can show
that a practice’s normativity ensues from a source that is not internal to the practice, but
in isolation from realism’s ontic markers, we cannot be confident that the source is indeed
out there. A realist adopting an epistemic stance with respect to witches might, for
example, show that it is possible for judgements about witches to be erroneous. Someone
might think for instance that most witches have at least one tabby cat, when in fact it is
commonly known that tabby cats are rare among the witch community, which generally
favours black cats. The epistemic realist defender of thought and talk about witches may
go on to show that the source of this knowledge (that the tabby cat judgement is false) is
not some feature of the practice itself and go on to conclude that it must be external to the
practice. But without the guarantees provided by the satisfaction of the ontic criteria of
existence and independence (mind and/or practice), the claim that the epistemic demand
for externality is satisfied comes to nought.

In my view, the relationship between the ontic and semantic stances is more variegated.
Within the semantic stance some issues between realists and their opponents can be
settled prior to and independently of engagement with the cruces central to the ontic
stance, while others, on the other hand, rely on settling ontic issues in order to underpin
semantic commitments. If the issue in play concerns the proper *intent* of the practice, the
question of whether it should really be understood as trying to be descriptive of some
domain or other, then debate can productively occur independently of any ontic debate.
For debates concerned with the intent of a practice are about whether or not it even falls
within the scope of realist-anti-realist debate. If a practice doesn’t even aim to describe
some aspect or other of the world, if it doesn’t manifest some combination of the self-
assurance that we can do so with the deferential attitude that what is described isn’t entirely of our own making, then it is never going to be a contender for any kind of realist construal. The cognitivist-non-cognitivist debate, then, is an example of a factualist-non-factualist opposition that can appropriately take place prior to and independently of the rest of realist enquiry.

On the other hand, when the semantic realist seeks to demonstrate the truth of her commitment to the factualist nature of a practice or when she wants to show that its moves are not linguistically or conceptually reducible to those of another practice, then her enquiry cannot properly take place independently of ontic enquiry, though there is no reason why it should not be prior to ontic enquiry. Unlike the claim that a practice aims to describe some domain of facts, the claim that it actually does only really gets any traction once the ontic underpinning supplied by satisfaction of the existence criterion is in place. Similarly, as we have already seen, conceptual/linguistic reductivist claims are underlain by ontic reduction. Thought and talk about some entity X is claimed to reduce to thought and talk about some other entity Y because Xs themselves reduce to Ys. The phenomenalist’s semantic reductivist claim, for example, isn’t made in isolation from an ontic claim. The reason she thinks that thought and talk about material objects and their features reduces to thought and talk about percepts is that she believes that material objects themselves reduce to percepts. Of course, as we have seen, there does remain space on this terrain for a separation of the semantic conclusion from the ontic one on pragmatic grounds, for one can always follow Jackson’s line with respect to ethical practice, arguing that while reductivism is true with respect to the practice and its posits,
it makes no practical sense to eliminate the practice from our ways of thinking and talking about the world.

In this chapter we have developed a Pettit-inspired taxonomy of realism that distinguishes three stances within realism and identifies the cruxes that separate realists adopting each of those stances from their anti-realist opponents. We have also explored the extent to which those cruxes are aligned to Wright’s realism-relevant distinctions and how, with the exception of wide cosmological role, the cruxes identified by those distinctions are less helpful in clarifying the lie of the realist land than those made manifest by our taxonomy. Finally, we have considered the relationship between realism’s semantic, ontic and epistemic stances. In the final chapter, we bring our taxonomies of response-dependent concepts and of realism together to show which practices involving the former can admit of the latter in which of its various guises.
Chapter VIII – Realism and Response-Dependence

§1 Introduction

Now that we have delineated realism’s three stances - semantic, ontic and epistemic – and identified the cruces that separate realism from its opponents in the context of each of those stances, we are in a position to employ our realist taxonomy alongside our taxonomy of response-dependent concepts. This will enable us to determine whether a response-dependence account of a practice, according to which responses under suitable conditions determine which things are included in the extensions of concepts used in that practice, undermines any realist claims about the posits of that practice. The answers will depend on whether the things in a concept’s extension really do have the features that the practice takes them to have. In the cases of the response-dependent practices we have identified, relevant posits include the properties known as the secondary qualities, properties such as that of being poisonous, being nauseating, being attractive, being disgusting, being attractive-to-x[-at-t], being disgusting-to-x[-at-t], being (morally) good, being flexible and being fragile.

Taking a prima facie view, one might plausibly think that the prospects of a realist construal of practices involving response-dependent concepts are less than hopeful. After all, these concepts have a vital subjective element that might be thought to indicate that within the practices in which they are used, self-assurance trumps deference and any prospect of realist construal is thereby undermined. For instance, where concepts are taken to be non-cognitivist, as, for example, expressivism would have it with respect to aesthetic concepts such as BEAUTIFUL, one ought to take a non-factualist view of the practices associated with the concepts, arguing that they fail to
track any facts of the matter (other than facts about the responses themselves), thereby undermining the chances of semantic realist construal. Alternatively, the role of responses in determining concepts’ extensions might be understood as entailing practice-dependence such that the features posited by the practices incorporating those concepts could not exist independently of those practices, thereby undermining the chances of an ontic realist construal. With respect to the possibility of an epistemic realist construal, the role of responses in determining concepts’ extensions might be thought to entail invulnerability such that there is no possibility of error in the relevant practices; or vulnerability to error might be thought to be maintained, but the source of that error might be understood to ensue from within the practices themselves, thereby undermining the chances of realist construal.

On the other hand, one might equally plausibly make the first glance supposition that there are strong prospects for realist construal of the practices in which response-dependent concepts are employed; that, while they involve a degree of self-assurance, it is outweighed (in respect of realism) by the deference in play in the relevant thought, talk and behaviour. One might think, for instance, that moves in those practices do succeed in tracking relevant facts of the matter other than facts about responses themselves, so semantic realism would not be ruled out on those grounds. One might well suppose that the features posited by the practices exist, even that, despite the role of responses in determining concepts’ extensions, the posits exist independently of those practices. And one might suppose that the role of responses in determining concepts’ extensions leaves open the possibility of error and that the source of that error is external to the practices. Thus, on first glance, taking response-dependent concepts as a single type, one might reasonably suppose that semantic,
ontic and epistemic realist construals of the relevant practices are equally as plausible as non-realist ones.

Phillip Pettit’s important paper, ‘Realism and Response-Dependence’, deals with the response-dependence-realism relationship, but treats all response-dependent concepts as conforming to a single type, thereby running the risk of obscuring the possibility of varying permutations of the realism-response-dependence relation. By taking into account the variegation of response-dependent concepts identified in my earlier taxonomy, I can draw a more fine-grained picture of the multiple relationships between the different types of response-dependent concepts and realism in its semantic, ontic and epistemic guises. To this end, in what follows I take the practices involving exemplars of each of the six categories of response-dependent concept identified via the taxonomic exercise undertaken in Chapter I and test them against the realist criteria that emerged from the cruces identified as central to realism in each of its three stances.

It is important to keep in mind that the issue in which we are interested is a relatively narrow one concerning the extent to which semantic, ontic and epistemic realist accounts of practices involving each of the various categories of response-dependent concepts are compromised or supported. Our focus here is not on the broader question of whether the properties those concepts determine enjoy a good fit with realism. That is, except where our argument demands that we so engage, we will endeavour to stay clear of debates such as that between objectivists and subjectivists with respect to secondary qualities. Later, in the course of a brief consideration of the impact of our realist taxonomy on Johnston’s, Pettit’s and Wright’s response-dependence accounts
we will encounter and engage with some issues concerning the properties determined by response-dependent concepts. As we will see, the result of the response-dependence-realism engagement that we undertake is the identification of a variety of matches and mismatches between categories of response-dependent concepts and the cruces of which realism’s three stances are comprised.

To refresh our memories, the six categories of response-dependent concept identified in Chapter I are as follows:

1. Secondary quality concepts such as SWEET, YELLOW, ACRID, SMOOTH and SHRILL;
2. Species relative concepts for which the relevant response is physical such as POISONOUS, NAUSEATING, EDIBLE and DIGESTIBLE;
3. Concepts such as ATTRACTIVE, DISGUSTING, EXCITING and DISAPPOINTING for which the relevant response is relative to a culturally or socially delineated sub-population of the human population;
4. Deeply subjective concepts such as ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T], DISGUSTING-FOR-X[-AT-T], EXCITING-FOR-X[-AT-T] and DISAPPOINTING-FOR-X[-AT-T];
5. Moral concepts such as GOOD, for which we distinguished four possible response-dependent accounts each generated by competing meta-ethical positions;
6. Patient concepts such as FLEXIBLE, MALLEABLE, SOLUBLE-IN-WATER, FRAGILE and INFLATABLE that determine properties typically thought to lend themselves to dispositional analysis.
§2 Secondary Quality Concepts

In constructing a response-dependence account of secondary quality concepts we noted the following characteristics. Exemplified by SWEET, they are actor concepts whose extension-determining responses are relative to the totality of rational agents and thus such concepts display a minimal degree of relativity. These responses are perceptual, private and outwardly directed. Further examples of this type of response-dependent concept include YELLOW, ACRID, SMOOTH and SHRILL.

§2.1 Secondary Quality Concepts and The Semantic Stance

As we have seen, when realism adopts a semantic stance, the general point at issue is whether or not a target practice, specifically the linguistic expression of judgements within that practice, manages to describe – to track some of the relevant facts about – that domain. If we follow Pettit in taking the non-reductivist criterion to be part and parcel of establishing a realist construal, 155 a practice must satisfy two constraints to count as realist under the semantic stance: (i) The anti-reductivist demand that the things the practice picks out would fail to get picked out by any other practice if it didn’t exist 156 and (ii) the factualist demand that the moves in the practice really do describe the relevant region of ontology as opposed merely to expressing feelings about or projections of subjective responses to features of that ontology. In satisfying (i), a practice’s contribution to describing the relevant ontic region won’t be such as to be able to be absorbed by some other practice; and by satisfying (ii), it will make a distinctive contribution to describing a relevant realm of facts, thereby avoiding (the

155 As I noted in the previous chapter, a non-reductivist element is not essential to realism in its semantic guise, but with the aim of building a comprehensive account of these relationships, it is worthwhile to test practices against the non-reductivist constraint. Moreover, as we saw, non-factualism involves a reductivist element, so in meeting the factualist constraint, practices implicitly face the non-reductivist constraint.
156 As noted previously, an alternative to a thoroughgoing a priori conceptual reduction is to accept the reduction while also arguing that the practice in question is not redundant because it does enhance our understanding of the relevant domain. Such a position is illustrated by Frank Jackson’s arguments with respect to ethics. Jackson 1998, Op Cit.
varieties of) non-factualism. How well do response-dependent secondary quality concepts meet these criteria?

Practices involving response-dependent secondary quality concepts such as SWEET, ACRID, YELLOW, SHRILL and SMOOTH could be thought to fail the non-reductivist test and hence fail to admit of a realist construal according to the demands of the semantic stance. The extension-determining role attributed to responses under suitable conditions might invite the thought that descriptions about things’ secondary qualities are liable either to wholesale a priori reduction to descriptions of the responses they elicit under suitable conditions, or to more complex descriptions – of relations between features that underlie secondary quality features and the responses those features elicit under suitable conditions. The result of either reduction will be that the practice(s) of describing things’ secondary qualities becomes redundant because it can be absorbed by either of these other practices. We saw that a priori semantic reduction tends to be underlaid by an a priori assumption of a corresponding a posteriori ontic reduction of the practice’s posits and in this case, that assumption would be either that the posits reduce to the responses or to some interrelationship between those responses and the underlying features that cause them to be elicited. According to such a reductivist view, then, an upshot of recognising the response-dependent nature of secondary quality concepts will be that practices in which they are involved fail to meet the constraints of realism in its semantic stance.

This understanding of what it is for a (family of) concepts to be response-dependent and, thereby, non-realist is uncompelling, however. Firstly, it seems to miss the point of the response-dependence claim, which is that responses under suitable conditions
determine the extension of the target concepts, not that they are identified with the properties those concepts determine. Concepts’ extensions are identified via responses under suitable conditions, but are not identified with those responses. Interpreting the response-dependence claim as laying a target practice open to a priori reduction seems to change the subject from extension determination to property identity. This mistaken reading of the response-dependence claim may arise from a misunderstanding of the biconditional. If the biconditional is (mis)understood as offering a definitional analysis of the concept on the left-hand-side in terms of the responses under suitable conditions cited on the right-hand-side, then the reductivist reading might indeed be appropriate, but the response-dependence account as we have developed it employs the biconditional purely to show a priori connections between extension determination and responses under suitable conditions.

The tendency mistakenly to take the biconditional as a property identity claim between (what is taken to be) the property mentioned on its left-hand-side and the account in terms of responses under suitable conditions given on its right-hand-side is at the root of a further possible reductivist reading of response-dependent secondary quality practice, identified by Pettit. As he points out, this possibility is misconceived because it assumes that practices involving concepts of responses – in secondary quality cases taste sensations, olfactory sensations, aural sensations, tactile sensations and colour sensations – could be entirely independent of practices involving secondary quality concepts. In order for the latter to be reducible to the former in the manner envisaged by the reductivist, it would have to be possible for practitioners to master sensation practices without having mastered the corresponding

157 Pettit only discusses secondary quality concepts in this context, but, as we have seen, tends to take them as exemplars of response-dependence generally.
secondary quality practices, yet those very practices are employed when we think and talk about the responses. As we noted in Chapter I, the completely private and inaccessible nature of those responses means that we don’t have separate words to describe the response and to name the concept the extension of which it determines. While that should not be taken to imply that the response and the concept whose extension it determines amount to the same thing, it also demonstrates that the practices are interdependent in respect of thought and talk about secondary quality experience, thereby vitiating the reductivist threat.

In addition, this misinterpretation of the response-dependence claim with respect to secondary quality concepts diminishes the significance of the direction of the relevant response. In the secondary quality case, the response is directed outwards towards the actor, and correspondingly the practice’s posits are taken to be features of the actor to which we are responding, rather than features of the patient’s experience, that is, in the secondary quality case, of the respondent’s experience.

Misinterpretation of the response-dependence claim as an analysis of a secondary quality concept in terms of sensations experienced by respondents under suitable conditions rather than as a claim about the role of those responses in determining the concept’s extension would also lay the foundation for a non-factualist reading of secondary quality practices construed according to a response-dependence account. A non-factualist account of the practice involving thought and talk about the tastes of things would claim that there are no facts of the matter about the tastes of things. A banana is not sweet as a matter of fact, for there is no such realm of facts, rather all that happens is that the banana induces a sweet taste sensation in those who taste it. In
the secondary quality case, the non-factualist account would include the charge of projectivism – that respondents mistakenly project the effect the banana has on them back onto the banana, taking sweetness to be a feature of the banana itself rather than simply a feature of their experience thereof. In confusing the extension-determining role of responses for an identity relation with the properties determined, the non-factualist allows as correlates, in her ontology, for the relevant concepts, only facts about respondents’ sensations, denying that there is a realm of facts about secondary qualities. The reductivist element typical in non-factualism is present in this case, for secondary quality practice could be said to be absorbed by practices involving thought and talk about secondary quality experience. The reductivist claim would, of course, be susceptible to the arguments rehearsed above.

Were a misreading of the biconditional to have ushered in a non-factualist account of secondary quality practice, the option of modifying it in favour of a quasi realist position would also be available. As we have seen, this would add a notion of (quasi) truth to the mix, thereby earning secondary quality practices the right to the assertoric form of their assertions.

Misreading the response-dependence claim with respect to secondary quality concepts, then, can lead to the mistaken view that a response-dependence account of the practices in which they are employed compromises the possibility of a construal of those practices as realist under a semantic guise. We have seen that the impression that may be created by the misreading is false. Once we remind ourselves of the intent of the response-dependence account, we see that it gives us no reason to accept either reductivism or non-factualism with respect to these practices. With regard to the
former, the interdependent nature of thought and talk about secondary qualities and thought and talk about secondary quality experience mutes the possibility of an a priori semantic/conceptual reduction.

§2.2 Secondary Quality Concepts and The Ontic Stance

When it adopts its ontic stance, realism is concerned with the questions of how much of what we ordinarily take to be reality we are actually entitled to presume and of whether what turns out to be real is of our making or not. The focus of the ontic stance is on a practice’s posits rather than on the thought and talk about them that constitutes that practice. Realism’s ontic stance incorporates two cruces: the existence of a practice’s posits and their independence – from mental stuff and from practices. As we saw at the end of the previous chapter, these can reasonably be taken (but need not be so taken) to capture something central to realist enquiry. In defending a practice’s ability to meet the existence criterion, the realist must show that there really is such a thing as the entity or kind of entity posited by the practice she is defending. A useful means of doing so is to show that the posits in question satisfy the Wide Cosmological Role test. A successful defence will refute the eliminativist and the fictionalist. The ontic realist may also include a denial that the posits are a posteriori reducible to some other set of entities. To meet the independence criteria, a practice’s posits must neither owe their existence to that practice nor to mental stuff. A successful denial of practice-dependence refutes the constructivist (including those committed to constitutive dependence on practices), while a successful denial of mind-dependence refutes the idealist.
Traditional subjectivist accounts of secondary qualities, such as the Galilean and Cartesian accounts, according to which their status as features of the world is denied in favour of an account of them as merely part of our manifest image of the world, the result of the projection of our subjective responses onto a world that is otherwise devoid of tastes, sounds, textures, smells and colours, might be thought to have a bearing on the realism-response-dependence relation here in giving rise to the suggestion that the ontic status of the posits of our secondary quality practice is compromised in favour of a non-realist account. We should, however, remain focussed on the narrow question: Does a response-dependence account of the concepts in play in that practice compromise realist accounts thereof? In the case of the ontic stance, then, the question we are asking is: Does construing concepts as response-dependent mean that the posits of the relevant practice, that is the secondary qualities themselves, fail to fulfil the existence and independence criteria? Specifically, does giving a response-dependence account of secondary quality concepts mean that (i) there are no such things as secondary qualities or (ii) that secondary qualities are constituted mentally and/or would not exist if we did not have the practices of thinking and talking about them that we in fact do?

§2.2.1 Existence

With respect to (i) one might think that secondary qualities themselves don’t exist because they are only projections of the responses that the response-dependence account claims are determinative of secondary quality concepts’ extensions. Such an objection would say that we mistake the responses involved in correct applications of the concept for responses to features in the world that are not really there. Some other feature that is there must be the cause of those responses. The objector might then add
a positive aspect to her denial of realism by arguing for either an error theory of secondary qualities, or a fictionalist account thereof, or she may simply remain agnostic with respect to any positive anti-realist story about secondary qualities.

The Wide Cosmological Role test seems to provide a neat way to demonstrate the existence of the secondary qualities: if we can show that secondary qualities are explanatorily efficacious explanations of states of affairs other than the occurrence of the relevant response, then we have shown that the existence criterion is met. And certainly, secondary qualities do pass the test as the following credible explanations demonstrate: She threw the milk away because it was sour; she covered her nose and mouth because of the acrid smoke; his ears were ringing because of the shrill, piercing sound of the fire alarm; he fell over on the steps because they were slippery; she stopped the car because the traffic light was red. In each of these the secondary quality story may not provide a complete explanation, which would include a causal explanation in terms of the things’ underlying features, but it makes a contribution to such an explanation. It would provide a satisfactory response to someone who wanted to know why the milk was thrown away, why her nose and mouth were covered, why his ears were ringing, why he fell down the steps or why she stopped the car. In addition, explanations in terms of secondary quality features such as these function at a level of generality that is not available at the level of explanation at which explanations in terms of underlying features operate. For instance, if we know that an explanation of someone’s throwing the milk away is that it is sour, we can reliably predict that (all other things being equal) that person or some other person would follow that same course of action when encountering sour substances on a subsequent occasion. If sourness is realised in different ways in different substances, or even in
different ways in different tokens of the same type of substance – sour dairy milk has a different chemical makeup from sour soy milk, say – then an explanation at that level will not enable us to make reliable predictions about saliently similar cases in the way that explanations at the level of secondary quality features do.

However, on the account promoted in Chapters I and II (and in contrast to the Johnstonian account), response-dependence does not offer an account of the secondary quality features themselves. It does not claim that the secondary qualities are response-dependent features of the world. So when we say in defence of an ontic realist construal of response-dependently understood secondary quality practices that secondary qualities would pass the Wide Cosmological Role test and thereby satisfy the existence criterion, we are saying that secondary qualities, whatever they turn out to be – to be identified as – exist. A response-dependence account, then, need not compromise the existence of the posits of secondary quality practice because it can remain simply agnostic about what the secondary quality features are, except to the extent that whatever they are identified as needs to be capable of eliciting the response that the account claims is relevant to determining the concepts’ extensions. A response-dependence account of secondary quality practice needs simply to remain not inconsistent with the thought that its posits are implicated in the explanation of the responses that determine secondary quality concepts’ extensions.

With respect to defending an ontic realist construal of response-dependently understood secondary quality practice, then, the modesty of our account has the disadvantage that even when we use the Wide Cosmological Role test, the most we can claim is that some features or other that we think of as the secondary qualities – as
the features of things that elicit certain responses under certain conditions – exist. Which things they are remains an issue on which our modest response-dependence account remains quietist. The non-realist, moreover, has not managed to show they don’t exist.

Can an ontic realist account of response-dependent secondary quality practice overcome the anti-realist challenge of reductivism? The ontic reductivist’s challenge is correlative with the semantic reductivist’s claim. She will make the empirical claim that secondary quality posits admit of wholesale a posteriori reduction to the responses identified by the response-dependence account as relevant to the extension determination of secondary quality concepts. She may allege that secondary qualities are nothing but responses. In which case, the perceptual nature of the responses relevant to secondary quality concepts means that she ends up advocating a local phenomenalism with respect to the secondary qualities. Or she may argue that secondary quality features reduce to the underlying features that are causally responsible for eliciting those responses.

The realist’s defence, then, can mirror that mounted in the face of semantic reductivism: Ontic reductivism may indeed turn out to be so; maybe the secondary qualities will turn out to be features that are reducible to some more basic set of features, such as configurations of primary qualities, or even percepts. But a response-dependence account of secondary quality concepts does not make it so. For it does not claim that secondary qualities themselves should be analysed in terms of responses under suitable conditions, only that the practice of using the concept correctly relies
on those responses to guide users to the things to which they ought to apply the concept and away from the things to which they ought not.

As far as the existence criterion is concerned then, the response-dependence theorist can show that recognising the response-dependent nature of secondary quality concepts does not mean that the existence of the relevant posits is compromised. The modesty of our particular account means that we cannot (and should not be tempted to) say what sorts of features these existent secondary qualities are. On the other hand, without misinterpreting our response-dependence account, the anti-realist opponent cannot show that the posits of response-dependently understood secondary quality practice do not exist, for the posits, whatever they turn out to be, satisfy Wide Cosmological Role and the response-dependence claim does not provide the grounds for an a posteriori reductivist account of the secondary qualities.

§2.2.2 Independence

Someone who opposes an ontic realist construal of the features posited by secondary quality practice on the grounds that they fail to be practice-independent is claiming that if there were no such practice, there would be no secondary quality features. Any claim of practice-dependence on the grounds of response-dependence would be of a localised non-constitutive practice-dependence. We have given an explicatory account of non-constitutive practice-dependence in terms of a notion of supervenience according to which secondary quality features would be practice-dependent just in case any supervenience base for the features must contain elements of the relevant practice, in which case some of the possible variations in some things’ secondary
qualities would be impossible without there being some variation in secondary quality practice(s).

So to oppose a claim of practice-dependence for secondary quality features is to deny that there could be cases in which variations in some such features would depend solely on variations in practice. Negative existentials are notoriously difficult to prove, but a reasonable argumentative strategy is to consider the kinds of cases in which such a dependency might most plausibly be found. Such cases, I suggest, would be ones in which we revise our practices of categorisation with respect to secondary quality features without this being itself a response to changes in other features plausibly considered part of the supervenience base for these secondary quality features. I shall argue that when we consider such cases, we are not inclined to say that there is concomitant variation in secondary quality features themselves. Thus a claim of practice-dependence seems implausible for such features.

Suppose, for example, that our practice with respect to thought and talk about colours changed such that we differentiated many more shades of green than we do now. Suppose that this new practice of differentiation involved the development of new concepts the extensions of which included things that we formerly thought of as GREEN, but now, with our ‘new’ understanding of colours, think of as EMERALD or JADE – not as varieties of green, but as different colours which are close to green, in the same way, say, that orange is close to red, but is not red. Intuitively, in this case, the features of things that we pick out when we use colour concepts have not changed, only our way of categorising them has. Some of the things that we thought of as GREEN no longer count as GREEN. They count as EMERALD, but only because we have
changed the way we distinguish their colours. So we have a change in practices for categorising things’ colours without a corresponding change in those colours themselves. We have a change in what is salient to us – it has become salient to distinguish more colours – but in becoming salient, those colours have not been changed by the change in our practices. Imaginary cases, like this, in which practices change, but things stay the same, then, show that the role of responses in determining the extensions of secondary quality concepts need not threaten the practice-independence of secondary quality posits.

By way of contrast, consider imaginary cases in which the secondary quality features of things vary as a result of variation in the physical properties upon which they might reasonably be thought to supervene and ask whether practices vary accordingly or whether things’ secondary quality features can vary in the absence of a variation in our practices. In this vein, suppose that the biochemical constitution of roses changed so that instead of smelling sweet and fragrant – of roses – they smelled rotten and putrefied. Would our practices differ accordingly? In the case of such a radical change, where one of the secondary quality features of roses has changed sufficiently for our practices to be radically out of kilter with the reality of roses – the characteristic scent of roses is no longer a sweet one – then given that our secondary quality practices are part of our efforts to make sense of the world, it could reasonably be expected that they would evolve so that they continued to describe the secondary quality features of things accurately. Further, in a case such as this, such a variation in practices would track variation at the level of the physical properties on which it is reasonable to suppose secondary quality features supervene. Such cases suggest a dependence relation that runs in the opposite direction from practice-dependence, that
is, secondary quality practices depend upon secondary quality features (and the features, if any, that underlie them.) What we have here, then, is a causal dependence of practices upon secondary quality features (or the features that underlie them), rather than a supervenience of secondary quality features on practices.

These types of cases also clarify the role of responses in determining the secondary qualities of things. A further reason for the difference in roses’ secondary (olfactory) qualities is that a rose smells or would smell different under suitable conditions. This reflects the way in which secondary quality practice posits features constituted by the nexuses of an interrelationship between responses and things’ underlying (primary quality) features. This does not undermine the posits’ practice-independence, however, for the responses themselves would not occur in the absence of the relevant configurations of primary qualities; the responses are reality-dependent.

In Chapter II, however, we considered whether terms within the biconditionals for each category of concepts should be rigidified upon and this issue has a bearing on the practice-independence question. The use of the rigidification device restricts relevant responses to those that occur under conditions that are actually suitable, the effect of which is that responses occasioned under a set of conditions considered suitable in a counterfactual world would not count as extension-determining. The advantage of rigidification in the case of secondary quality practice(s) is that the response-dependence account of those practices remains consistent with the intuition that the features posited by secondary quality practices – secondary qualities – supervene on those things’ physical features. An upshot of the pro-rigidification conclusion that secondary quality concepts’ extensions are determined only by actual world responses
is that in cases where there is no difference in the physical features of things, but a
difference in the responses they cause in respondents, due perhaps to a difference in
the environment in which responses occur, there is no difference in actual practices,
because responses under actually suitable conditions would not differ. So in a case
such as that of the bananas canvassed in Chapter II, we continue appropriately to
think of ripe bananas as SWEET, unripe ones as BITTER, despite the responses bananas
elicit in some counterfactual world. With rigidification in place, then, responses that
differ from actual world responses have no bearing on actual secondary quality
practices and clearly no bearing on the posits of those practices, which means that
their practice-independence remains intact.

Conversely, if we opt out of rigidification, reflection on imaginary cases leads to the
conclusion that the practice in question can differ as a result of a difference in
responses even if there is no corresponding difference in the features of the things that
fall under the extensions of the relevant concepts. Without rigidification, then, a
difference in suitable conditions in which the tastes of things are experienced such
that ripe bananas taste bitter to respondents under those conditions can effect a
difference in practices such that in that counterfactual world ripe bananas do not count
as SWEET, but as BITTER. In the non-rigidification scenario, then, we have a difference
in environment effecting a difference in respondents’ dispositions to respond which in
turn effects a difference in practices. But there is no difference in either the secondary
quality features or the physical features of the things that fall under the extensions of
secondary quality concepts. The difference in practices tracks the difference in
responses, not a difference in the relevant domain of reality. What counts as SWEET or
BITTER, then, is determined by responses, as, indeed, response-dependence accounts
claim, but this has no effect on the features that the things in question have. A
difference in how respondents are disposed to respond does not lead to a difference in
how things are disposed to affect them. The difference in practices, then, floats free of
the features that the things making up the relevant domain of reality have.

While this disconnection between practices and features fails to respect the
supervenience of secondary quality features on physical features, preservation of
which would be a good reason for taking the rigidification option in the secondary
qualities case, it does not vitiate the practice-independence of the posits. Indeed the
disconnection is a corollary of that independence: The practice differs, the concepts’
extensions differ, but the features of things remain the same.

In order to address the relationship between a response-dependence account of
secondary quality practice and the practice-independence of secondary quality posits,
we have considered four types of imaginary cases: (i) the new colour concepts story in
which a difference in practice occurs, because certain features become newly salient
to us, with no resultant difference in the features that the practice posits; (ii) the rose
story in which a difference in things’ physical features results in a difference in their
secondary quality features, and practices differ in order to continue tracking reality;
(iii) the banana story where relevant responses are restricted via the rigidification
device to those occasioned under actually suitable conditions with the result that a
change in responses has no bearing on secondary quality practices let alone on their
posits and (iv) a modification of the banana story in which we opt out of rigidification
allowing practices to differ with differences in response but with no concomitant
differences in the posits of those practices. None of these cases, then, should lead us
to conclude that an understanding of secondary quality practice as response-dependent undermines the practice-independence of secondary quality posits thereby threatening an ontic realist construal of the practice.

What of mind-independence? Does the response-dependence claim with respect to secondary quality practice mean that its posits are constituted of mental stuff, such as percepts, as the phenomenalist would have it, constituents of some universal self-consciousness as Hegel would have it, or ideas in the mind of God as Berkeley, on one interpretation, would have it? There is no real threat here, but there may be the appearance of one as a result of a misunderstanding similar to that which appears to generate a threat to a semantic realist construal of response-dependent secondary quality practice.

If one were to think that a response-dependence account of secondary quality practice means the mind-dependence of the secondary quality features it posits, then presumably the mental entities of which they are supposed to be constituted would be the responses relevant to determining the extensions of the relevant secondary quality concepts. On this idealist view, the world does not include secondary quality features that precipitate responses, only the responses themselves. There is no reason to suppose that the response-dependence account leads to idealism. Although the response-dependence account makes responses central to extension-determination, it gives no reason to conflate responses with the features the practice posits, which is what the idealist claim amounts to. The idealist may have independent reasons for collapsing secondary quality features and, indeed, many other sorts of features, into
the effects they have on us, but response-dependence does not provide any additional
grist to her mill.

§2.3 Secondary Quality Concepts and The Epistemic Stance
When realism adopts an epistemic stance it seeks to preserve a cognitive relationship
with the world in which we are the deferential partners - the success of our cognitive
endeavours is dependent upon their ability to track relevant facts of the matter. Within
the epistemic stance we have identified two cruces that capture the realist’s
requirement of epistemic independence: (i) the possibility of error and, where (i) is
satisfied, (ii) the extent to which error is genuine in the sense that it is determined by
the relevant domain of reality rather than by standards internal to the practices within
which the judgements in question are made.

At first blush, then, a response-dependence understanding of a practice appears
potentially to undermine the prospects of a realist account thereof. The claim that
responses under suitable conditions determine a concept’s extension does indeed
mean that those responses, at least partially, make it the case that something counts as
F (or as an F). We have seen that Wright’s order of determination distinction,
although focussed on the role of responses in the determination of the truth values of a
set of judgements, does capture the sense in which some sets of judgements owe their
truth values, and hence their criterion of correctness, to responses. While a practice
may well satisfy the first criterion of epistemic independence, if epistemic realism is
to prevail, the response-dependence theorist needs to explain how it satisfies the
second criterion, how responses can be determinative of whether or not something
counts as F and yet the criterion of correctness for that practice can derive from some standard that remains external to it.

In the previous sections, we saw that in the case of secondary qualities ontic independence is in place such that there is a domain of reality to which secondary quality practice could strive to attune itself. Moreover, reflection on our practices suggests that error is possible, we do make mistakes about the tastes, smells, colours, sounds and textures of things. Suitability criteria, which limit the responses relevant to a concept’s extension to those that occur when the respondent and the environment of response meet certain conditions, deliver an is/seems gap such that something’s simply seeming to be sweet, say, is not sufficient for it to count as SWEET. Rather, it must taste sweet under suitable conditions (on respondents and environment). While responses under less-than-suitable conditions will not count as extension-determining, when responses do occur under suitable conditions they are taken to be reliable and, therefore, to be extension-determining. This has the effect of restricting the extent of error, because a certain invulnerability attaches to responses made under suitable conditions. If a substance tastes sweet under suitable conditions, then that response can be taken as a reliable indicator that the thing in question counts as SWEET. No further checks or balances are required to secure the correctness of the ensuing judgement that the thing in question is sweet.\footnote{If we were doubtful about the veridicality of a judgement, suppose the thing tasted bitter to most other respondents under the same conditions, then we would first re-consider whether suitability conditions are in fact met. This fact about our practices highlights the way in which judgements that ensue from responses made under suitable conditions are insulated from the direct influence of the external world, but are kept in check via suitability conditions into the construction of which the external world does have input.} The first criterion of epistemic independence is met in a limited sense then, for error is not possible when relevant responses occur under suitable conditions. This limitation might be tempered somewhat were it to turn out that in the majority of cases conditions are not perfectly
suitable – and thus that the possibility of a misleading response and an erroneous judgement remains.\textsuperscript{159}

In the previous chapter we saw that the axis of deference and self-assurance, along which it is helpful to plot both response-dependent and response-independent concepts, articulates a distinction at the heart of the second criterion of epistemic independence. In practices involving maximally deferential concepts the source of the criterion of correctness is maximally external, whereas the more self-assured a concept is, the more internally derived its criterion of correctness.

In considering the degrees of relativity to respondents of types of response-dependent concepts, we noted that secondary quality concepts are minimally relative in the sense that their target population is that of all rational agents, as compared with the much narrower socially or culturally delineated target population for concepts such as ATTRACTIVE. This means that, while not all rational agents will count as suitable respondents, secondary quality concepts as determined by responses under suitable conditions are available to all rational agents. The community of users of secondary quality concepts, then, is relatively broad and a criterion of correctness, if determined from within the practice, would display inter-subjective resilience within that community. But can we do better than that and preserve externality with respect to the criterion of correctness for secondary quality practice?

Reflection on what a mistake amounts to in secondary quality practice and on what causes it to occur shows that we can. A mistake will be the misapplication of taste,\textsuperscript{159} In the case of our actual practice, though, we tend to treat the majority of responses as occurring in conditions that are sufficiently suitable.
smell, colour, texture and sound concepts, judging that the ripe strawberry is salty, say, or blue or spiky. If responses under suitable conditions are reliable, as the response-dependence account claims, then such mistakes will occur only when conditions on respondents and on environment of response are less than suitable - when respondents’ perceptual abilities are compromised by conditions such as bad lighting in the case of colour, less than suitable temperature of the substance tasted in the case of taste, blocked ears in the case of sound, and so on.

By generating an is/seems gap, standards of suitability ensure that a practice operates according to some criterion of correctness. In the secondary qualities case, the desire for a criterion of correctness is driven by the desire that the practice have a deferential relationship with reality, that it strives to attune itself to an ontically independent reality, for, rightly or wrongly, our ordinary practices do take secondary quality features to be features of things themselves (at least in part), rather than (wholly) features of our experiences of them. The ruling in/out process used to determine the conditions under which responses will be reliable applies background knowledge to select for conditions that will give rise to responses most likely to generate veridical judgements. This background knowledge includes for example (at the folk level, at least), knowledge that lighting affects colour perception, temperature affects perception of smell, taste and texture and distance affects sound perception. Such constraints, then, are derived from what we know about the features determined by the concepts and our perception thereof independently of the practice. So they are externally imposed, not merely a product of inter-subjective convergence within

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160 By contrast, there are other response-dependent practices, those incorporating concepts such as attractive, for example, in which individuals stand in a deferential epistemic relationship to the authority of the community, or some group within the community, so that on an individual basis one strives to attune one’s judgements to something other than personal whim or opinion, but the criterion of correctness for those judgements remains internal to the practice.
secondary quality practice itself. We don’t select for those responses because doing so keeps us in step with each other, but because it enables our judgements, where accurate, to track reality. With respect to the criteria for epistemic independence that are central to realism when it adopts an epistemic stance, secondary quality practice, understood as response-dependent, meets the first criterion – the possibility of error – in a limited way, for erroneous judgements are not a possibility when the responses that occasion them take place under suitable conditions. When conditions are less than suitable, however, error is possible and the criteria of correctness for judgements occasioned by responses that occur under such conditions are generated by standards external to the practice itself. Thus in so far as error is possible, with the caveats explained above, its source is external and the second criterion of epistemic independence can be met. A note of scepticism might sound in response to this defence, however. Our usual mode of access to things’ secondary quality features is via perception, so how do we tell when a perceptual experience is less than veridical? In the absence of any checks and balances on the relationship between responses and reality independent of perceptual responses, how do we maintain a distinction between illusion and reality? We can maintain the distinction by appeal to hypothetico-deductive claims that relate responses. Responses work in concert with each other forming patterns – perceptual experience of coloured things will be less than veridical when they are viewed under sodium lighting; perceptual experience of the tastes of things will be less than veridical when respondents have a heavy cold, and so on – so we learn that we can reliably assume the veridicality of responses in the absence of certain conditions and the ruling in/out process that results in suitability criteria evolves accordingly.\footnote{Edward Craig (1982) makes a parallel anti-sceptical case against the charge that because perceptual responses are private, there is no way of telling whether or not they are a)inter-personally constant and b)intra-personally...}
§3 POISONOUS et al

POISONOUS is an actor concept that is situated similarly to secondary quality concepts with respect to its relativity. Its extension-determining response is relative to species or aggregations thereof and they need not be the human species. This response is physical, public and inwardly directed towards the respondent itself. Further examples of this category of response-dependent concept include NAUSEATING, EDIBLE and DIGESTIBLE.

§3.1 POISONOUS et al and the Semantic Stance

Does the response-dependence account of these concepts compromise a semantically realist construal of the practices in which they are employed? Non-factualism (and hence quasi-realism) with respect to these practices is a non-starter. It would be completely implausible to say that sickness, pain, or death in humans in response to cyanide, say, are nothing more than expressions of a feeling or desire towards the purportedly poisonous substance.¹⁶²

What about reductivism? What practice might thought and talk about poisonous things (response-dependently understood) be thought to reduce to? A similar misreading to that obscuring the secondary quality case might come into play here, tempting the reductivist to claim that the practice reduces to that involving thought and talk about responses to poisonous things. Thinking about things as poisonous is in fact redundant. All we need to give a full description of the relevant ontic domain is thought (and talk) about vomiting, pain, dying, and so on. But the multifarious nature constant. He argues that over time we come to learn that judgements that pragmatically assume constancy (under certain conditions) tend to come out correct and that is the best we should expect.¹⁶² That said, an instrumentalist account of the practices would not be completely implausible. Such an account might claim that to say that something is POISONOUS is not to assert anything; it is merely to avail oneself of a useful set of calculating facilities which enable us to work out the possible effects of things and substances. A plausible justification for such an account would be harder to come by.
of the relevant response shows that the reduction wouldn’t achieve absorption of thought and talk about the poisonous. For sickness, pain and death occur in response to other features of actors and of patients. Thinking and talking about a substance as poisonous, then, adds something to our description of the world that is absent if we think and talk only in terms of the responses it tends to elicit under certain conditions. It enables us to generalise about poisonous things rather than having to deal with each one individually as something that has an effect on us such as vomiting, pain or death. Furthermore, the species specificity of concepts in this category means that there are different sets of descriptions about things that are poisonous for different species or aggregations thereof. So while within ordinary practices using such concepts we tend to take the concept to default to humans unless specifically disambiguated otherwise, reduction would lose not only the ability to generalise over things that are poisonous to humans, but also over those things that are poisonous to dogs, horses, bees, birds, and so on. The fact that there are descriptive contributions that would be lost if reduction occurred demonstrates that practices involving concepts of this category do fulfil the anti-reductivist constraint that can, but need not, be included when realism adopts a semantic stance.

§3.2 POISONOUS et al and the Ontic Stance

The ontic stance pertains to the posits of response-dependent practices. In the case under consideration, these are the features of being poisonous, nauseating, et al (for a species or aggregation thereof). If the features posited by a practice meet the constraints of the ontic stance, they can be taken to be part of reality. The criteria that posits must meet are i) existence and ii) independence from the mental and from relevant practices.
§3.2.1 Existence

To satisfy the existence criterion, it must be shown that there is *such a thing* as the feature of being poisonous, or nauseating, for instance. A realist construal of the relevant practice requires that its posits not be mere practical devices with no genuine ontic status nor eliminable in favour of more basic underlying features of things that the practice categorises as poisonous or nauseating, et al.

A response-dependent understanding of the practices incorporating thought and talk about the poisonous, the nauseaing, et al might invite a projectivist account which denies the existence of the features of being poisonous, et al and claims that these apparent features are really the result of the projection of our responses onto their apparent causes. So the world does not include poisonous things, only things that serve as a screen for the projections of responses. Projectivism with respect to being poisonous is completely implausible, however, because of the physical and inwardly directed nature of the responses elicited by poisonous things (under suitable conditions). Firstly, the projection metaphor is inappropriate here because, unlike the moral or the aesthetic case, responses are directed inwards towards the respondent, not outwards towards the thing that is judged to have the feature in question. Secondly, what would be projected (if, indeed, that expression makes any sense here) onto an allegedly otherwise poison-free reality would not be a perception or a desire with respect to a poisonous thing, which would be the correlate of an, arguably, more plausible, projectivist account of goodness or of beauty, but it would be vomiting, pain and death (among others). So the projectivist story goes awry here, for relevant responses are such that we would not be projecting the feature of being poisonous onto the world, but would be projecting our physical responses, which are actually
inwardly directed, so the direction of response is reversed. A tendency to neglect the
distinction between inwardly and outwardly directed responses, then, causes mistakes
about projection. An early manifestation can be seen in Berkeley’s conflation of the
inwardly-directed (burning) pain caused by a hot object (a red hot poker, say) with the
heat of the poker, the response to which is outwardly-directed (See Chapter I, n. 16).
Berkeley takes both to be features of the respondent. Similarly if we conflate an
inwardly-directed pain response with a thing’s being poisonous, then we fail to see
that while the pain is a feature of us, the thing’s being poisonous is a feature of it.

We can use the Wide Cosmological Role test of explanatory efficacy to demonstrate
that a practice’s posits satisfy the existence criterion, if we can show that a thing’s
being poisonous is efficacious in explanations of states of affairs other than the
occurrence of the relevant response, i.e. of events other than respondents being
poisoned. Features such as being poisonous, being edible and being digestible pass
the test as the following credible explanations show: The hemlock killed him because
it was poisonous; She did not eat the meat because its smell was nauseating; He
served his guests the cheese because it was edible (the only edible thing he had in the
house); The invalids were served junket because it is easily digestible. In each of
these the explanation citing the features in question may not be a complete
explanation, which would provide a causal explanation in terms of the features of the
hemlock, the meat, the cheese and the junket that underlie their being poisonous,
nauseating, edible and digestible, respectively, but it makes a useful contribution to
the full explanation and would provide an appropriate response to the enquiries ‘Why
did he die?’; ‘Why didn’t she eat the meat?’; ‘Why did he give us cheese again?’, or
‘Why are they eating that strange outmoded dessert?’ And in circumstances where the
complete explanation is unavailable to us, partial explanations such as these provide partial knowledge and so put us at an epistemic advantage by comparison to the epistemic situation we would be in were no explanation whatsoever available. Moreover, explanations in terms of features such as that of being poisonous function at a level of generality that is unavailable in explanations that invoke underlying features. This is particularly significant in the case of a feature such as that of being poisonous because it is multiply realised. Although all instances of some poisonous substance, cyanide gas, say, will share the same underlying features, the same underlying features will not be present in all types of poisonous substance. Whatever the features are that make cyanide gas poisonous will not be the same features that underlie hemlock’s being poisonous nor certain types of fungi being poisonous, nor that of chocolate’s being poisonous-for-dogs or ragwort’s being poisonous-for-horses.

Indeed, because features such as being poisonous are species-specific, it is helpful to be able effectively to invoke that feature in explanations of events affecting species other than humans. If we are informed that the horse died because it ate something poisonous, we have a satisfactory explanation that might not be available to us if we were told that it died because it ate ragwort or because it ate a substance with certain underlying features. Indeed, to better understand either of these latter explananda, it is likely that the explainer would appeal to the fact of the stuff’s being poisonous to explain why the ragwort or the underlying features are responsible for the creature’s death. The generality afforded by explanatory appeal to poisonous enables us to make predictions about various types of things all of which are poisonous to some species or other. If we know that a substance is poisonous (for humans), we can predict, all other things being equal, the effects it will have on us (and know to avoid it) without

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163 Some call these explanations ‘sketches’. See for example Hempel 1965, pp 415-425.
enjoying any knowledge of the relevant underlying features. Indeed, simply knowing the underlying features without knowing that things with those features tend to be poisonous for us, would contribute little to our ability to avoid their adverse effects. Similarly, if we know that a substance is poisonous-for-birds, say, we can predict that it will have adverse effects on birds, whereas simply knowing that it has the relevant underlying features may likely not enable us to make that prediction.

The ontic reductivist fails to gain traction on the features posited by practices involving concepts in this category. The a posteriori ontic reduction that might spring to mind as a result of a response-dependence account of these practices would be a reduction of their posits – the features of being poisonous, of being nauseating, of being edible, of being digestible - to the responses the response-dependence account identifies as extension-determining. The ontic reductivist’s case faces the same problems as the semantic reductivist’s. With the exception of those relevant to NAUSEATING, the responses relevant to each concept are multifarious, so a reduction of the feature of being poisonous would need to accommodate the multiple realisation of the response. Being poisonous would not be reducible to a single response manifested by every instance of the feature. Moreover, reduction to inwardly directed responses would counter-intuitively change the posits from features of actor to features of the patient (the respondent in this case). It would make the poisonous, the nauseating, the edible and the digestible features of us (or other species) rather than a feature of the material things with which we interact.\textsuperscript{164} Finally, as we have seen with respect to explanatory considerations, if we give up posits such as the feature of being poisonous in favour of either responses or underlying features, our ontology loses a

\textsuperscript{164} Of course, we may be poisonous, nauseating, edible or digestible to certain species (including our own), but that feature occurs because of the interrelationship between our underlying features and their responses to them.
feature that unifies things into a distinct class and avoids conflation of distinct classes of things. The things that are poisonous are not a distinct class if they are just things that tend to cause either vomiting, or pain or death (among others), for they can be absorbed into the classes of things that cause vomiting, cause pain or cause death. However, that absorption will result in a conflation of the nauseating, say, with the poisonous. 165

Finally, to echo points made with respect to a response-dependence account of secondary quality practice, the reductivist may be tempted to think a response-dependence theory invites a reductivist account of the posits in question because she mistakenly takes its biconditionals to offer analyses of the features posited by the concepts mentioned on the left hand sides of the biconditional in terms of the responses mentioned on the right hand sides. As we saw earlier, this is a misunderstanding. The biconditionals aim only to demonstrate and make clear the nature of the relationship between the concepts’ extension and responses under suitable conditions.

§3.2.2 Independence

We have demonstrated that posits such as the feature of being poisonous can satisfy Existence. Do they also meet the realist criterion of Independence (from practices and from the mental) thereby satisfying the intuitive pull of deference?

165 The option remains of analysing the feature of being poisonous as a disjunct of the features of being such as to elicit either nausea and/or pain and/or death and/or... under suitable conditions, and it is not accidental that (at least) the features identified here occur together, and then arguing for an a posteriori reduction of the feature of being poisonous to that disjunct. But see Jackson 1998, pp 105-12 on how much disjunction is too much in respect of disjunctive properties being explanatorily respectable.
If the posits of a practice are dependent upon it, then if the practice did not exist, its posits would not exist either. So in the case under scrutiny, if there were no practices incorporating concepts such as POISONOUS, NAUSEATING, et al, the world would be devoid of features such as that of being poisonous, nauseating, et al. According to our supervenience-led explication of non-constitutive practice independence, these features would be practice-dependent just in case any supervenience base for them must include elements of the relevant practice.

Following the methodology we used in the secondary quality case, we will use imaginary cases to pump our intuitions with respect to the relationship between practices incorporating concepts such as POISONOUS and the features they posit such as that of being poisonous. In the first case we consider, different practices mean that some of the things that count as POISONOUS are not things that we actually count as POISONOUS. Suppose that we started to count everything that makes us sneeze as part of the extension of POISONOUS; sneezing under suitable conditions comes to be treated as a response relevant to extension determination for POISONOUS. The things themselves are not different. They made us sneeze in the past and their underlying features have remained the same. All that is different is our way of applying the category POISONOUS. It can now be determined by a response – sneezing - that was previously excluded from an array of relevant responses. The difference in relevant response generates a difference in our practice, but the difference in practice does not generate a corresponding difference in the features themselves.

\[166\] Of course, some things that already count as POISONOUS also make us sneeze (possibly in reaction to the same features that underlie their being poisonous). What we are asked to imagine here is that all of those things that (already) make us sneeze under suitable conditions, but don’t elicit any other of the responses relevant to POISONOUS, become categorised as POISONOUS.
Alternatively, with a view to demonstrating the same point, imagine that the things that are already counted as poisonous and which under suitable conditions elicit the response of dying come to be treated as saliently different from poisonous things that elicit any of the other responses that are relevant to POISONOUS but stop short of death. The poisonous and the death-inducing are categorised using the concept UR-POISONOUS. Ur-poisonous things are not different in any way from how they were when they were merely categorised along with the poisonous, all that is different is the practice of categorising them, and that does not generate a difference at the ontic level, i.e. in the features themselves.

A second type of imaginary case varies the features underlying that of being poisonous so that the effects of poisonous things and substances differ. Suppose that there is a difference in these underlying features such that poisonous things no longer have adverse effects such as making us vomit, experience pain or die, but rather they simply make our eyes water (and nothing more: no irritation, no redness, no swelling). Would such a difference generate a corresponding difference in our practices? In the case of a relatively radical variation such as this, in which adverse effects are replaced by inconvenient but comparatively benign ones – a difference which may well affect our behaviour so that we no longer went out of our way to avoid poisonous things – we may well revise our practice so that our understanding of poisonous things better tracked the new reality: so that we would no longer have to think of them as things to be avoided at all costs – we wouldn’t worry about ingesting them or keeping them out of the reach of children. But this case does not correlate entirely with the similar secondary qualities one considered earlier because we have not swapped features from a family like that of the secondary qualities. The practice would not be out of
kilter with reality if poisonous things continued to be counted as poisonous. ‘Poisonous’ would come to mean something different from its previous meaning, but within a few generations, it would feel completely natural to think of poisonous things as those things that, under suitable conditions, elicit eye watering (as the theorist would put it). What the case does show, in common with the similar case constructed for the secondary qualities (above) is that the dependence relation between posits such as the feature of being poisonous and the relevant practice runs from the latter to the former. Practices adapt to keep in step with features which are part of the world, and so those features remain independent of the practices within which we think and talk about them.

In Chapter II when we considered rigidification on terms within the biconditionals for each of the categories of concept we identified, we opted not to rigidify on ‘suitable’ in biconditionals for POISONOUS et al because doing so would obscure the indexicality of such concepts. Differences in what counts as poisonous between species (or aggregations thereof) would be erased. Even with respect to counterfactual humans, we wanted to allow that substances not actually poisonous-for-us, treacle, say, could be poisonous-for-them (they have a different physical constitution, say). Opting out of rigidification allows for things with underlying features different from those that underlie the ability of things in the actual world to be poisonous to be poisonous in counterfactual worlds and this is a reasonable option to take, given the extent of the multiple realisation of the feature of being poisonous, an extent much greater than that to which secondary qualities might be multiply realised.
What of mind-independence? Does a response-dependence account of the relevant practice provide any grounds for thinking that posits such as the feature of being poisonous are constituted by mental stuff? There is no reason to think that a response-dependence account of relevant practices gives mind-dependence any traction. As the relevant responses are non-mental – vomiting, pain and death in the case of being poisonous - it would be implausible (at the very least) to think that response-dependence means that posits such as the feature of being poisonous are mental. Of course, a theorist arguing for a more global idealism might make a case for an idealist account of such features, but response-dependence provides no additional momentum for such an account.

§3.3 POISONOUS et al and the Epistemic Stance

Do practices that incorporate concepts such as POISONOUS, NAUSEATING simpliciter, DIGESTIBLE and EDIBLE maintain a relationship with reality characterised by deference, in which judgements represent attempts to track reality? If so, those practices will satisfy the criteria of epistemic independence: i) the possibility of error and, where i) is satisfied, ii) externality of the criterion of correctness.

In the previous sections we saw that the features posited by the practices under consideration do satisfy ontic independence and hence, there is a domain of reality to which the moves in those practices could strive to attune themselves. Reflection shows that it is possible to make mistaken judgements about whether or not something is poisonous, nauseating, edible or digestible. We might mistake a non-poisonous substance for a poisonous one (or vice versa), we might simply be ignorant as to the fact that something is poisonous. The indexicality of such concepts can also
be at the root of error. Thus we might mistakenly think that something that is poisonous-for-humans is also poisonous-for-cockroaches, when it in fact has no adverse effects on them. Where concepts such as these have deeply agent and context-relative counterparts – NAUSEATING and NAUSEATING-FOR-X[AT-T], for instance – there is the potential for mistaken judgements that arise because we take something that is merely nauseating-for-me to be nauseating-for-humans. Someone for whom bananas were nauseating, for example, might mistakenly believe that, all other things being equal, bananas cause feelings of nausea (at least) in other humans.

As in the secondary qualities case, the extent of error is limited due to the way in which judgements derived from responses made under suitable conditions are invulnerable to error. Suitability criteria limit the responses relevant to concepts’ extensions to those occasioned under suitable conditions on respondents and environment of response. So only those judgements derived from responses that occur in less-than-suitable conditions will be vulnerable to error; whereas, if suitability criteria are met and a respondent manifests the response relevant to POISONOUS, she dies having ingested hemlock, say, then her response can be taken as a reliable indicator that hemlock is poisonous and no further checks or balances on the judgement are necessary.

A reliance on responses alone, even responses made under suitable conditions, will result in indeterminacy as to whether or not something is POISONOUS. At least some of the responses relevant to determining the extension of poisonous – vomiting, pain, death (among others) – are also relevant to determining the extension of other concepts. An example is vomiting, which is also the response relevant to determining
the extensions of NAUSEATING and NAUSEATING-FOR-X[AT-T]. So even if vomiting takes place under conditions that are suitable, we cannot be sure on the basis of the response alone that the substance that causes the vomiting is either POISONOUS or NAUSEATING or merely NAUSEATING-FOR-HER. This is illustrated by the béarnaise sauce phenomenon, the term given to a syndrome where someone vomits as a result of having eaten a particular foodstuff and they subsequently find that particular food nauseating, although, in fact, the particular exemplar they ate was affected by a food-poisoning bacterium normally absent. The food becomes nauseating-for-them, but not only at t, but it is not nauseating (simpliciter). In practice, we look to the underlying features of a thing or substance to discover whether they merely make it cause sickness in humans or make it poisonous to humans. This foreshadows conclusions we can draw about the source of the criterion of correctness for judgements made in the course of practices incorporating concepts such as POISONOUS.

Concepts of the category exemplified by POISONOUS are situated in the same region of the axis of relativity as secondary quality concepts. Responses relevant to determining the extensions of concepts such as these are relative to the species (or aggregations thereof) to which the concept happens to be indexed, but not all members of the species will count all of the time as respondents who meet suitable conditions (though in actuality most will most of the time). The users of the concept, on the other hand, will not be the species to which the concept is indexed, unless it is indexed to humans. POISONOUS-FOR-BEES may be indexed to bees rather than humans, but the concept is a categorising device used by humans, not by bees.

167 There may well be cases where even investigation of something’s underlying features leaves it indeterminate whether it poisons a species or merely makes it feel nauseous or actually makes it vomit. This is perhaps most likely with respect to substances that affect species other than humans where the costs of removing the indeterminacy may outweigh the benefits to us (if not to the species in question.)
Employing the template for thinking about these issues constructed in the course of our consideration of practices incorporating secondary quality concepts, we can get a handle on the prospects of externality with respect to the criterion of correctness for these practices such as that within which POISONOUS is employed by looking at what constitutes a mistaken move within them. As we saw above, the sorts of errors we might make here include being wrong or ignorant about whether something is poisonous or not and being wrong about the target population for a concept, for example erroneously taking something that is poisonous for one species to be poisonous for another, or erroneously taking something that is nauseating for just one individual to be nauseating for humans generally. Unlike the secondary qualities case, mistakes cannot involve transposing one member of a family of features with another, for these categories include no such families. Intuitively, these seem to be mistakes that occur because judgements fail to track reality.

As we have seen in the secondary qualities case, the possibility of error in these practices is limited to judgements ensuing from responses made in less than suitable conditions. Drawing on background knowledge about features such as being poisonous and responses to them, we select for conditions of response least likely to give rise to a non-veridical response. As we noted in Chapter II, in the case of concepts such as POISONOUS, the notion of suitable conditions has the sense of generic conditions: Conditions should be the way they were taken to be when a law-like connection between the things included in the concept’s extension and their effects on respondents was established. Conditions ruled out in the case of POISONOUS, then, will rule out any that would perturb the normal poisoning process, such as respondents
who have built up an immunity to or used an antidote to the poisonous thing’s effects, damage or change to the thing itself, and so on. Where these conditions are met, the is/seems distinction collapses. Where they are not met, it remains intact. Suitability constraints, however, are derived from practice-independent knowledge of features such as being poisonous and of our patterns of response to them. So while the possibility of error within these practices may be of a limited nature, responses that are invulnerable can only be taken to be so if they occur under constraints that are imposed by reality, not by mere inter-subjective convergence. Furthermore, the physical responses relevant to concepts in this category are manifested outwardly. Vomiting, pain and death can be witnessed by others and thus (faking aside) checks and balances on whether or not a particular response qualifies as relevant are easier to maintain than in cases where the response is other than physical and outwardly manifested.

Furthermore, as we adumbrated in the discussion of indeterminacy (above), in the case of these practices, we can (and do) appeal to underlying features to show that a response (and any judgement ensuing from it) tracks or fails to track reality. Fortunately, we can access the features that underlie things’ being poisonous and nauseating, et al without some respondent or other actually responding to them, even though that is the guide we use when determining the extension of the concept. Even though features such as being poisonous are multiply realised, it is possible to discover what underlies each instance of the feature and infer from that what effects it would have on respondents under suitable conditions. In the case of EDIBLE and of DIGESTIBLE, it may be that all that is required to know that something falls under their extensions is that certain underlying features are absent. There are two ways, then, in
which the criterion of correctness operating in practices incorporating concepts such as POISONOUS meets the constraint of externality central to epistemic independence. Firstly, responses only count as extension-determining if they meet suitability constraints that are imposed by reality. Secondly, although we usually use responses under suitable conditions to determine the extensions of concepts such as POISONOUS, NAUSEATING, EDIBLE and DIGESTIBLE, we can, thankfully, given the consequences for our well-being were we not so able, check the veridicality of responses and any judgements to which they give rise by investigating the features that underlie their being poisonous, et al. Both of these considerations show that, where true, judgements made in the course of these practices track reality rather than merely keeping in step with inter-subjective agreement.

§4 ATTRACTIVE, et al

ATTRACTIVE is an actor concept whose extension-determining response is relative to a culturally and/or socially delineated population that is narrower than that of the totality of rational agents. It is therefore more relative than SWEET and POISONOUS. This response is a combination of emotions and desires and, sometimes, physical responses; it typically has both private and public aspects, but in most cases only the private aspects are relevant to determining the extension of ATTRACTIVE. The response is inwardly directed. Further examples of this type of response-dependent concept include DISGUSTING, EXCITING and DISAPPOINTING.

§4.1 ATTRACTIVE, et al and the Semantic Stance

Following the process established thus far, in order to show a response-dependence account of practices incorporating concepts of this category does not vitiate a
semantic realist construal thereof, we need to demonstrate that they meet the constraints of factualism, and, if it is taken to be a crux of realism’s semantic stance, anti-reductivism.

Factualism requires that the practice in question is descriptive (as the form of its moves leads one to suppose) – that it manages to add to our account of the relevant ontic domain. Our response-dependence account of these practices might be seen to pose a threat to factualism with respect to them. Its account of the extension-determination of concepts such as ATTRACTIVE, according to which responses under suitable conditions are the sole means of determining which things count as ATTRACTIVE might be (mis)understood as meaning that, notwithstanding the assertoric form of their linguistic expression, moves in the practice are nothing more than the expression of our responses to things to which we are attracted. So we don’t describe features of the things themselves when we use concepts such as ATTRACTIVE, rather we express ourselves. Practices incorporating concepts in this category perhaps seem the most plausibly non-factualist of those considered thus far because of the nature of the responses relevant to those concepts. Those responses include a substantial emotional element that might be thought, by those who favour such analyses, to place these practices alongside moral and aesthetic practices as beyond the realm of the descriptive.\(^{168}\)

That may be so. However, the response-dependence analysis of extension-determination does not lend additional support to non-factualist accounts of these practices. It is neutral in this regard, leaving the practices where they are in terms of a

\(^{168}\) Indeed, ATTRACTIVE occurs in aesthetic contexts, while DISGUSTING appears in both aesthetic and moral contexts.
factualism/non-factualism opposition; it doesn’t make them non-factualist anymore than it makes them factualist.

In Chapter I we noted that we linguistically express moves in these practices in a variety of ways. This linguistic variation may well be a potent source of confusion as to the purpose of the practices in question. We noted, for instance, that we can express the belief that something is attractive by saying ‘I find it attractive’. But this mode of expression is ambiguous between applications of a pair of concepts. It might express the belief that the thing is attractive, but it can equally coherently be used to express the apparent belief that something is ATTRACTIVE-TO-X[-AT-T], where x is the speaker. As we have seen, these are distinct concepts. The group capable of the relevant response in the case of the former need not include everybody who uses the concept, whereas the relevant respondent in the latter case can only be whoever fills the x placeholder. Someone who believes that a thing is attractive need not have experienced the relevant response herself. She may simply be aware that those whose responses are authoritative have the relevant response to that thing. Such a person would not use the locution ‘I find that attractive’, though. That locution is only available when primary access to the feature of being attractive is via the relevant response. By contrast, someone for whom something is ATTRACTIVE-AT-T cannot be wrong about whether or not that thing is attractive to them at that time. As I will show in subsequent sections, while practices incorporating the simpliciter concepts, such as attractive, are plausible candidates for factualism, those incorporating their more agent and context relative cousins are perhaps less so. I suggest, then, that the language we use to express beliefs about attractiveness, et al tends to obscure an important difference between concepts, perhaps serving as a source of confusion as to
the prospects for a factualist account of the practices in which they are incorporated. Response-dependence, on the other hand, should not be understood as having any independent implications for those prospects, rather it explains the possibility of a range of cases with respect to a factualist/non-factualist opposition dependent upon the degree of agent relativity of the concepts in play in those cases.

As for reductivism, does a response-dependence account of a practice such as that incorporating a concept such as ATTRACTIVE mean that it admits of a priori reduction to some other practice? The short answer is ‘no’, but why might one think that response-dependence ushers in reductivism in this case? In drawing attention to the role of responses in determining the extensions of these concepts, the response-dependence account could be (mis)taken to mean that the relevant practices can be absorbed by practices concerned with thought and talk about the responses themselves. Thought and talk about attractive things, for instance, would reduce to that about respondents’ feelings of attraction towards those things. This is the reductive move that is incorporated in to a non-factualist account of the practice.

The multi-faceted nature of the relevant response – varying combinations of emotions, desires and physical states – would, however, make such a reduction difficult to perform, a difficulty evidenced by the fact that the practice to which we might reduce that in which we use ATTRACTIVE, for instance, would most likely retain the language of attraction in order to capture the phenomenological feel of the responses in question. If we think that the appropriate reduction would be to thought and talk about responses plus underlying features (which is less plausible in this case), then multiple
realisation will present a handicap to performing that reduction and, thus, a good reason for retaining the original practice(s).
Moreover, reduction to practices concerning only responses risks collapsing the distinction between pairs of concepts such as ATTRACTIVE and ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T]. For the practice incorporating the latter may well be nothing more than one the purpose of which is to express individual pro- and anti-attitudes towards things (at particular times), whereas that incorporating the former is a practice in which we use a concept the extension of which is (at least) inter-subjectively determined.

A response-dependence account of practices incorporating concepts such as ATTRACTIVE, then, does not militate against sustaining a semantic realist construal of those practices. Response-dependence provides no additional motivation for either non-factualist or reductivist accounts thereof and both such accounts threaten to conflate pairs of distinct, though related, concepts.

§4.2.1 Existence

Does the complete ontic account of reality include such things as the features posited by practices such as that in which ATTRACTIVE is employed? Like the non-factualist, the projectivist can tell a coherent story about these features according to which features such as being attractive, disgusting, exciting or disappointing are not ontically credible. They are merely apparent features, the result of the projection of our responses – finding something attractive, feeling disgusted by something, feeling excited about something, feeling disappointed by something – onto a reality that would otherwise be free of such features. To echo our earlier diagnosis of the pull of non-factualism, the substantial emotional component of these responses may make the relevant practices seem more susceptible to a projectivist account, which would be in opposition to the realist’s claim that the features those practices posit do exist in the
way required by realism when it takes an ontic stance. But because the aim of a response-dependence account is not to give an analysis of those features in terms of responses, but only to give an analysis of the role of responses in determining the extensions of the relevant concepts, it lends no additional plausibility or implausibility to the projectivist’s case. Again, it simply leaves things as they are with respect to projectivism.

The realist, on the other hand, can show that the features posited by the practices under consideration here do pass the Wide Cosmological Role test; they are efficacious in explanations of states of affairs other than the occurrence of the relevant response itself, as the following demonstrate: She bought him a drink because he was attractive; He chose the painting because it was the least unattractive; She walked out of the film because some of the images were disgusting; They liked attending the Professor’s lectures because they were exciting; He was relieved that the examination results were not as disappointing as she had feared. In each case the explanatory efficacy of the feature cited is demonstrated by the way in which, similar to the features posited by the types of practices considered already, citing the feature affords us (i) The ability to explain at a level of generality that would not be available if we could only cite underlying features in the explananda of these events, for features such as being attractive, disgusting, exciting and disappointing will be multiply realised to the extreme. (ii) The ability to make reliable predictions on the basis of something’s having one of these features. Thus we might predict that she will buy a drink for the next attractive person she meets, or that attractive people are more likely to have drinks bought for them by strangers than unattractive ones; or that exciting amusement park rides will be more lucrative than tame ones; or that if the kitchen is
in a disgusting state, people will not want to eat at the restaurant. So although explanations such as these are only partial, we are still better placed epistemically if we are provided with them than if we are not.

§4.2.2 Independence

According to our explicatory account, the features posited by a practice will fail to qualify as (ontically) independent of that practice just in case practices must be included in any supervenience base for those features. If they are practice-dependent, then if there were no such practices, there would be no such features. Once again, we are interested in the possibility of a response-dependence driven non-constitutive practice-dependence. Practice-independence preserves the realist’s deference intuition by maintaining a practice/reality relationship in which the former is ontically dependent upon the latter.

Following the strategy employed with the categories examined thus far, we can sharpen our intuitions about that relationship by consideration of imaginary cases. The first such case prompts us to ask whether features such as that of being attractive would differ if our practices were different. It is important to bear in mind that ATTRACTIVE is indexed to a culturally or socially determined sub-group of the human population. Suppose, for example, that the practice incorporating ATTRACTIVE were different such that we differentiated between more types of attractiveness than we actually do. Suppose that this different practice involved concepts the extensions of which included some of the things we now count as ATTRACTIVE but categorised them as follows: slim, blond, blue-eyed people count as SUPER-ATTRACTIVE; slim, brunette, brown-eyed people count as ULTRA-ATTRACTIVE; and slim, red-headed, green-eyed
people count as UBER-ATTRACTIVE. Anyone else to whom respondents under suitable conditions respond appropriately is simply ATTRACTIVE. In this case the features of the things we pick out in the process of the practice are not different, only our ways of categorising them: they differ to take account of newly salient differences within the category of the attractive. There is no correlative variation in the features of the things thus categorised. We bring no new features into existence by varying our practices. An imaginary case such as this, then suggests that the features posited by practices incorporating response-dependent concepts such as ATTRACTIVE do sustain independence from those practices.

Reflection on a second type of case, however, suggests that the practice/reality relationship is somewhat more complex. Once again, we have a case in which practices are different and we ask if that makes for a corresponding difference in the features they posit. Suppose the extension of ATTRACTIVE were different in that it included some things that are not actually included in the extension of ATTRACTIVE. Suppose that people with poor personal hygiene habits and unkempt appearance were counted as attractive. Some underlying features of things that we previously deemed unattractive – lack of personal hygiene and scruffiness – now count as attractive. If respondents under suitable conditions really are attracted to such things (as opposed to lying about their responses in an effort to avoid offence, say) then we have a genuine variation in the practice without a corresponding difference in the features of the things themselves.

The case may be difficult to accept because it is difficult for us to imagine this response occurring in suitable conditions in response to something with these
underlying features. But its plausibility is strengthened if we remind ourselves of the cultural and/or social relativity of practices of this type. As we noted in Chapter I, in such cases it is unnecessary to imagine counterfactual populations because the actual world provides us with plenty of vivid cases in which practices such as these differ from our own. The bound feet of Chinese women of a certain epoch are not ATTRACTIVE-FOR-US, but they are/were ATTRACTIVE-TO-CHINESE-PEOPLE-OF-A-CERTAIN-EPOCH. We may not actually be able to imagine our actual selves being so attracted, but vary our cultural location and acculturation accordingly and our exhibiting the relevant response becomes more likely. This demonstrates the way in which the responses relevant to determining the extensions of concepts in this category are culturally influenced.

In the case of EXCITING and DISAPPOINTING, interests will play a stronger role in influencing responses, but these are also culturally shaped. Thus, while a New Zealander might be excited by the results of the latest rugby test match against Australia, a British person will simply be disappointed that England’s football match against Germany was barely mentioned in the sports news broadcast. But the influence of culture does not directly extend to the features, such as being attractive, being disgusting, being exciting and being disappointing themselves. Things do not have the features that attract, disgust, excite or disappoint by dint of our cultural location. Cultures are, however, part of a complex web of practice and the cultural-dependence of dispositions to respond in relevant ways means that concepts such as ATTRACTIVE, DISGUSTING, EXCITING AND DISAPPOINTING fail the test for practice-independence, even though aspects of those relevant responses can be physical. Some
version of constructivism will be true with respect to the practices incorporating these concepts.

Does our response-dependence account of practices incorporating concepts such as **ATTRACTIVE** mean that the features posited by those practices are mind-dependent? The only likely candidates for the posits of a response-dependence driven idealist account would be the (relevant) responses themselves. We have seen that responses relevant to concepts such as **ATTRACTIVE** may have a physical element, which would mean stuff with which the posits were identified would not necessarily be entirely mental. Moreover, these responses also have a substantial emotional element and are manifested by multifarious combinations of perceptual, emotional and physical components. So if one were to take response-dependence as a catalyst for an idealist account of these posits, the most one would be able to say is that they are constituted by responses which are *mainly* mental. That said, for reasons already rehearsed in this chapter, our response-dependence account of these practices does not propel one towards an idealist account of the features they posit. The account offers a story about responses as determinative of concepts’ extensions, not about the identity of the features posited by the relevant practices. To (mis)understand it as doing so is to conflate the posits with those extension-determining responses. Previously, we noted a cultural influence on the sorts of things communities are likely to find attractive. Of course, a thoroughgoing idealism that includes posits such as the feature of being attractive may turn out to be the correct ontic picture, but a response-dependence account of the practices that posit such features does not push us towards an idealism with respect to them.
§ 4.3 ATTRACTIVE et al and the Epistemic Stance

Do practices incorporating concepts such as ATTRACTIVE, DISGUSTING, EXCITING and DISAPPOINTING satisfy the criteria of epistemic independence: (i) the possibility of error and, where i) is satisfied, ii) externality of the criterion of correctness?

In the previous sections we saw that, although they satisfy existence, the features posited by these practices could not really satisfy practice-independence. In so far as moves in the practice strive to attune themselves to the relevant facts of the matter, the facts that are relevant are facts about cultural preferences. This does not augur well for the prospects of satisfying the externality criterion, but it need not undermine a practice’s ability to satisfy i). It certainly is possible to be wrong about whether or not a thing is attractive, disgusting, exciting or disappointing, but those errors might not qualify as genuine by the lights of realism’s epistemic stance.

As is the case with all practices incorporating response-dependent concepts, in those incorporating concepts of the category exemplified by ATTRACTIVE, the possibility of error is limited to those instances in which the conditions in which the relevant response is occasioned are less than suitable. When conditions meet the suitability criteria, responses are invulnerable to error and are thus reliable determinants of the extension of the relevant concept. The types of error that are possible, then, include: (a) someone failing to recognise that a thing or person counts as ATTRACTIVE because she is not (yet) properly trained in detecting that feature, so suitability is not met because conditions on respondents are not met; (b) someone failing to recognise that someone is attractive through perceptual error – conditions on the environment of response are not met; it’s too dark to see the thing in question properly, say; (c)
someone failing to recognise a thing or person is attractive because they simply don’t get attractiveness – they tend to apply the category either too liberally or almost never and so fail to meet conditions on respondents. Similarly, failure to recognise that something is exciting or disappointing could occur because the conditions in which he experiences that thing prevent him from doing so. These might be conditions that are a direct result of states he is in or conditions that are a result of the states of the environment of response.

In respect of practices incorporating the categories of response-dependent concepts considered thus far, we have seen that externally derived criteria of correctness are generated by suitability conditions the source of which is the relevant domain of reality, but the picture with respect to the practices now under consideration is more complex, a picture that is reflected by our having located these practices further up the scale of relativity than secondary quality practice and practices incorporating concepts such as POISONOUS. Some of the suitability conditions in play here are simply conditions on reliable perception – for a response to qualify as extension-determining, it needs to occur in the absence of conditions that hinder perception, so the lighting, ambient temperature and temperature of the respondent, background noise, and so on, must be within a certain range. As we have already seen, these criteria are externally imposed – they derive from practice-independent facts about perception and perceptible features. So mistakes about the features posited by these practices that are merely perceptual mistakes – he didn’t think the painting was attractive because he was viewing it in bad light – are a result of not meeting externally imposed criteria. Mistakes of the other two types, however – failure to recognise the relevant feature or simply not getting it – occur because of a failure to meet inter-subjective norms:
conditions are such that the respondent is not sufficiently immersed in a practice, or is completely isolated from it. These criteria of suitability are internally imposed in the sense that they are culturally derived and so internal to an extensive web of socio-cultural practices. The source of the criterion of correctness has an external aspect, then, but overall, these practices fail to meet externality. For even if conditions of response are such that externally derived suitability criteria are met, if the response is not occasioned in a person who has been properly attuned to instances of the relevant feature through a process of culturally-driven training, they will not recognise something as attractive. Practices incorporating response-dependent concepts such as ATTRACTIVE, DISAPPOINTING, EXCITING and DISGUSTING meet the first criterion of epistemic independence, then, but they fail properly to meet the second, thereby undermining any epistemic realist construal of them.

§5 ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X and ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X-AT-T, et al

ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T] exemplifies a point near the extreme of the axis of relativity. Its extension-determining response is relative to a single subject [at a particular time.] Like that of its (simpliciter) counterpart, its response is a combination of emotions and desires, it typically has private and public aspects, but only the former are relevant to extension determination and it is inwardly directed. Further examples of this type of response-dependent concept include DISGUSTING-FOR-X[-AT-T], EXCITING-FOR-X[-AT-T] and DISAPPOINTING-FOR-X[-AT-T].

§ 5.1 ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T], et al and the Semantic Stance

Factualism: The choice here is between saying that factualism is plausible and moving in the practice are descriptive of actors’ features and denying its plausibility, thereby
claiming that those moves are merely *expressive* of responses. The non-factualist expressivist account is more plausible here than in any of the other cases considered thus far, but the idea that the practice’s moves describe how something makes one respond is no less plausible. Moreover, factualism is given support by the Wide Cosmological Role test, which demonstrates that the features posited by these practices do exist and therefore constitute a realm of reality that could be the object of a descriptive practice. Also, we should bear in mind that the responses in question are not just combinations of emotions and desires, but can also have a physical element that would be less easily accommodated in an expressivist story, because they might not be absorbed by a practice the role of which is the expression of attitudes towards things, people and events with which we interact.

**Reductivism:** If we allow the factualist claim that the practice is a set of descriptions of the features that invoke the responses of a particular respondent either over a period of time or at one particular time, then a possible route for the reductivist would be to advocate the a priori reduction of these practices to those which consist of sets of descriptions of responses themselves. Response-Dependence, however, does not precipitate such a move. A second reductivist possibility would be to advocate the a priori reduction of these practices to practices the role of which is the description of the features that underlie features such as `ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[AT-T]`. Such a reduction would prove difficult to carry off given the multiple possibilities of combinations of features that could underlie the things’ attractiveness for a multiplicity of respondents over a multiplicity of times. Again, response-dependence provides no additional reasons for pursuing this reductivist route.
The non-factualist route involves an a priori reduction to a practice the role of which is the expression of responses. Would those simply be *boo/hooray* expressions of anti- and pro- attitudes and desires to possess or avoid the things to which are responding or would they be more finely distinguished? If merely the former, then we lose the possibility of expressing the particular way that respondents feel about a thing at \( t \) or over a period \( t_1...t_n \).

§ 5.2 ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T], et al and the ontic stance

**Existence of posits:** Just as they are suited to non-factualism, the features posited by practices incorporating these concepts are plausible candidates for its ontic counterpart, projectivism. However, the Wide Cosmological Role test can be met, as the following explanations demonstrate: He tore up his lotto ticket because losing yet again was disappointing-for-him-at-\( t \) (ordinarily we might well express this by saying that he felt disappointed at losing yet again). She became embarrassed in his presence because he was attractive-to-her[-at-\( t \)]. Note that for the features posited to be efficacious in these explanations, the explanans must be indexed to the same value or range of the \( t \) variable as the explanandum.

**Practice-independence:** This crux of the ontic stance cannot be satisfied by the features posited by these practices. Something is only ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T] if \( x \) is having the relevant response at \( t \) or has that response at \( t_1...t_n \). If the relevant response did not occur at that time or across that range of times, the feature would not be instantiated, even though the thing in question would be the same. For instance, if \( x \) were not attracted to those features – tall, dark, handsome – in virtue of which he is
actually attracted to a particular individual at the particular time in question, then the object of his affections would not be ATTRACTIVE-TO-X-AT-T.

Mind-independence: Our response-dependence account of these practices does not pressure us towards a mental constitution account of the ontic status of the features they posit. The response-dependence claim is not that a feature is the response; as we have seen in the other cases considered thus far, such a claim would involve conflating the feature posited with the response relevant to determining the extension of the concept of that feature.

§ 5.3 ATTRACTIVE-TO-X[-AT-T], et al and the Epistemic Stance

Possibility of Error: We cannot make first-personal mistakes about whether or not something is attractive to us at a particular time and this should be clear to us already given that there are no suitability conditions under which a response must take place if it is to count as extension-determining. If something seems attractive to us at t, if we find it attractive at t, then it is ATTRACTIVE-TO-US-AT-T. If I am drunk and find the painting attractive, and buy it, say, then it is and was ATTRACTIVE-TO-ME-AT-T, even though it is UNATTRACTIVE-TO-ME-AT-T, when I have sobered up again (and try to get my money back). In cases where an agent lies about something’s being attractive or is blackmailed or bribed into doing so, they know they are not really attracted: The relevant response does not occur, though it may be faked. This means that third personal mistakes are possible with respect to whether or not something is ATTRACTIVE-TO-X-AT-T. Thus the blackmailer may believe that I am attracted to something at t because I am good at faking the response, but she would be mistaken, the response has not occurred; the thing is not really ATTRACTIVE-TO-ME-AT-T. This is
a result of the way in which the relevant, extension-determining, aspect of the response is essentially private, so we have to take the occurrence of that aspect of the response on the basis of the occurrence (or lack thereof) of behaviours that we can expect to accompany or follow from the relevant response under suitable conditions. For example, if the dress is ATTRACTIVE-TO-ME (I have the funds to purchase it, it fits me perfectly, no other items under the gaze of my retail desires are competing with it, I have the perfect occasion on which to wear it, and so on) yet I do not take steps to purchase (or steal) it, one might well question whether I am indeed responding in the relevant way and whether the dress really is ATTRACTIVE-TO-ME.

In the case of agent-relative concepts where relevant responses are not indexed to a particular time – ATTRACTIVE-TO-ME, say – error is possible. Take the case suggested above: the painting is ATTRACTIVE-TO-ME-AT-T, but it turns out that I was drunk. I can’t be mistaken about my response to it at that particular time, although I can be wrong about whether it is ATTRACTIVE-TO-ME. Suppose that I have viewed it previously under suitable conditions, and on those occasions I’ve declared the painting to be ugly, badly executed and, hence, unattractive. When I’m drunk and the painting is ATTRACTIVE-TO-ME-AT-T, I am not mistaken about its being ATTRACTIVE-TO-ME-AT-T, but I am mistaken about its being ATTRACTIVE-TO-ME, for it would not have evoked the relevant response in me if conditions had been suitable.

Third personal mistakes are also possible with respect to whether or not something is ATTRACTIVE-TO-X. Because the relevant, extension-determining, aspect of the response is private, someone might be mistaken about whether or not the painting is attractive-to-me, simply because I lie about my responses to it over time.
Alternatively, they might be mistaken because they take the conditions under which my responses take place to be suitable when they are not. Notice also that the possibility of erroneous judgements about whether or not something is ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X, DISGUSTING-FOR-X, EXCITING-FOR-X, DISAPPOINTING-FOR-X is limited to occasions when suitability conditions are not met. When conditions are suitable, first-personal judgements ensuing from relevant responses are invulnerable to error, but third-personal ones are not because the occurrence of the response has to be taken on trust.\footnote{A Freudian-type objection might be thought to undermine claims of first-personal authority here – we might delude ourselves into thinking we have responded genuinely, when, if we were to explore our sub-conscious, we would discover that our responses were insincere.}

**Source of criterion of correctness:** Obviously, where a practice fails to satisfy the first criterion of epistemic independence, as that incorporating ATTRACTIVE-TO-X-AT-T does, discussion of the second is redundant. In the case of third personal mistakes with respect to the extension of these concepts, the check on judgements could be made by appeal to facts about whether or not a manifestation of the respondent’s disposition to respond really did occur at t or does occur at $t_1,\ldots,n$. These are facts external to the person making the judgement and external to the practice itself. They are, however, more or less inaccessible from the third-personal perspective. In practice we make what have (thus far) turned out to be reliable assumptions about inter-personal and intra-personal consistency based on externally observable behaviours and a principle of charity according to which we take people not to be lying or faking unless we have independent evidence that could reasonably be taken to suggest that they are. These reliability assumptions are part of our practice and so, in practice, the criterion of reliability, if not correctness, is derived internally.
We have seen that error, both first and third personal, is possible with respect to whether or not something is ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X, DISGUSTING-FOR-X, EXCITING-FOR-X, OR DISAPPOINTING-FOR-X. In both cases the criterion of correctness ensues from within the practice and so the externality criterion is not met; the practices fail of epistemic independence. Suitability conditions, used to distinguish reliable responses from misleading ones, reflect considerations of intra-subjectivity. Thus suitable conditions are those under which certain mechanisms of response are invoked. So, for instance, responses made when x is drunk, drugged or under external pressures such as threat of blackmail or bribery or the promise of reward are ruled out. As in the case of ATTRACTIVE, conditions that would hinder veridical perception of the features in question are also discounted as unsuitable. Suitability has a normative element, then, it allows for proper pathways that determine facts about what’s attractive-for-x, and rules out aberrant pathways. Aberrant pathways will lead to responses that disrupt intra-subjectivity. Proper pathways are ones leading to responses that preserve intra-subjectivity. The criterion of correctness, then, ensures that moves in the practice track intra-subjective facts, not facts that are external to the practice.

§6 Moral Concepts

GOOD (in its moral application) exemplifies response-dependent moral concepts. These concepts are actor concepts and they have an essential normative element. With respect to the distinctions and axes that structure our taxonomy, they occupy different positions depending upon the position taken with respect to a pair of meta-ethical distinctions: cognitivism vs non-cognitivism; absolutism vs relativism. Strictly speaking, their proper location will depend upon which theory turns out to be correct.
These possible meta-ethical positions generate four possible response-dependence accounts of moral practices:

i. Cognitivist and absolutist: relevant responses are judgements and are outwardly directed; they are publicly accessible. The target population for moral concepts is at least the entire human population (and perhaps all rational agents). In the latter respect, they are therefore similar to secondary quality concepts.

ii. Cognitivist and relativist: relevant responses are judgements and are outwardly directed; they are publicly accessible. The target population for moral concepts is a culturally determined sub-group of the human population. In the latter respect they are similar to concepts such as ATTRACTIVE.

iii. Non-cognitivist and absolutist: Dependent on the version of non-cognitivism in play, relevant responses are either expressions of feelings or are desires. Error theories notwithstanding, they are outwardly-directed. In this respect they share some similarities with ATTRACTIVE et al and with ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T]. If feelings, they may be publicly inaccessible. If desires, they are publicly accessible on the basis of behaviours that can reasonably be taken to manifest them. The target population for moral concepts is the entire human population (or that of all rational agents). In this respect they are similar to secondary quality concepts.

iv. Non-cognitivist and relativist: relevant responses are feelings or are desires. If the former, they may be publicly inaccessible; if the latter, they

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are publicly accessible on the basis of behaviours that can reasonably be taken to manifest them. They are outwardly directed. The target population for moral concepts is a culturally determined sub-group of the human population. In this latter respect, they are similar to ATTRACTIVE et al.

§6.1 Moral Concepts, Non-Cognitivism and the Semantic Stance

**Factualism:** In Chapter VII the debate between non-cognitivists and cognitivists was identified as the meta-ethical manifestation of the non-factualism-factualism distinction. I also argued that the object of the cognitivist -non-cognitivist opposition was the *intent* of a practice. The former holds that its intent is the formation and expression of judgements, the latter that its intent is the expression of feelings or desires. So where the response-dependence account of moral concepts adopts a non-cognitivist account of the relevant response, where it is taken to be a feeling or desire (or some combination thereof) rather than a judgement, the question of intent is already settled – the aim of the practice is the expression of these feelings or desires. The question of whether or not moves in the practice are properly descriptive of some realm of facts is redundant. For, by the lights of the non-cognitivist response-dependence account, it has already been determined that the practice has no intention of tracking any facts, and so no need to satisfy the factualist crux.

**Reductivism:** As we saw in Chapter VII, non-cognitivist accounts can, and usually do, include a commitment to the a priori reducibility of the target practice to some other practice in which they can be fully absorbed. In this case, the expressivist or emotivist might argue for reduction to a practice the moves of which express pro- and
anti-attitudes without the use of moral language or concepts, while the prescriptivist might argue for reduction to a practice the moves of which express prescriptions rather than ascriptions. But it is the commitment to non-cognitivism that provides the pull towards reduction, not the response-dependence account of the way in which responses such as feelings and/or desires determine the extensions of moral concepts.

§6.2 Moral Concepts, Non-Cognitivism and the Ontic Stance

In a sense, issues concerning the existence and the practice and mind-independence of the features posited by moral practices are otiose once non-cognitivism is in place. For the denial that there are any such posits is a corollary of arguing that the role of the practice is only the expression of non-cognitive responses to actors that possess no moral features as such. Two ontic positions are available as corollaries of the non-cognitivist’s semantic claim. Error theorists claim, again, there are no such posits and that a commitment to their existence points to a systematic error in our moral practice. The error theorist might employ a projectivist diagnosis of our erroneous belief in the existence of such posits according to which these (merely) apparent features are the result of our projecting our responses onto an otherwise morals-free reality. Alternatively, one might take a more pragmatic and benign line, agreeing with the error theorist with respect to the non-existence of the posits, but arguing that talk and thought about them serves an important function. Once again, any pull towards an eliminativist or fictionalist line with respect to the features posited by these practices ensues from the non-cognitivist element of this response-dependence account, not from its response-dependence account of the determination of moral concepts’ extensions.
§6.3 Moral Concepts, Non-Cognitivism and the Epistemic Stance

As this account denies that the moves in moral practice involve the expression or formation of judgements, issues integral to realism’s epistemic stance are really redundant here. Quasi-Realism includes an (quasi) epistemic element that gives an account of the use of truth talk to regulate moral practice according to which commitments to various moral attitudes are assessed according to a core of moral attitudes that are, Blackburn claims, constitutive of moral agency. This offers a route to a criterion of quasi correctness that could be applied to moral attitudes. As it is derived from a core of moral attitudes, that criterion remains internal to the practice of expressing and assessing attitudes and has no vestiges of externality. If the quasi-realist takes a relativist position with respect to the target population for moral concepts, then the criterion of quasi correctness could vary according to which culturally determined population it is indexed to. If he takes an absolutist position, there will be one such criterion that applies to all moral attitudes regardless of community. This quasi-realist amendment to the non-cognitivist account is given no additional support by the response-dependence account of the determination of moral concepts’ extensions.

§6.4 Moral Concepts, Cognitivism and the Semantic Stance

**Factualism:** A response-dependence theorist who gives a cognitivist account of the response relevant to determining the extensions of moral concepts has already nailed her colours to the mast with respect to what she takes to be the intent of moral practices, i.e. she takes them to be descriptive of a relevant domain of reality, and has rejected non-factualism.
**Reductivism:** Given that relevant responses are taken to be judgements rather than emotions or desires, the response-dependence account does not even give the appearance of applying pressure towards a reductivist story, such as we have seen in previous cases, according to which the practice could be absorbed by some other practice the purpose of which is the description of responses. If ontic underpinning can be found for the assumption of the existence of the features posited by moral practice, there might be a case for an a posteriori reductivist story according to which those features are reducible to natural features, but our response-dependence account of extension determination is neutral with respect to this possibility.

§ 6.5 Moral Concepts, Cognitivism and the Ontic Stance

**Existence:** The response-dependence account that takes the response relevant to moral concepts’ extension-determination to be a judgement does not undermine the realist claim that the features posited by moral practice do, indeed, exist. These features, associated with both thick and thin moral concepts, are efficacious in explanations of states of affairs other than those involving the judgements that some person, act or event is, for example, GOOD, COURAGEOUS, LOYAL or HONOURABLE. Thus the following explanations add to our understanding of why and how their explanans take or took place: The students at the convent school did not respect the nuns that taught them because the nuns were too (morally) good; She admires him because he is pious; He was promoted because he was a loyal employee; She won an award because she bravely rescued her neighbour from a fire; He did not return the wallet he found because it would have been the right thing to do and he preferred always to do the wrong thing. Partial explanations such as this bestow epistemic advantage, then: We know more than we would if no such explanation were available.
They also enable us to think and talk about acts and agents at a level of generality unavailable in their absence.\textsuperscript{171}

\textbf{Independence from Practices and from Mind:} According to our explicatory account of non-constitutive practice-dependence, the features posited by a moral practice will be ontically dependent on that practice just in case elements of practices must be included in any supervenience base for those features. As in the previous cases, we examine this issue by setting up imaginary cases that pump our intuitions with respect to whether a difference in practices effects a difference in the relevant features.

Imagine that moral practice were different such that self-interest were paramount and any acts that result in any kind of loss (however small) to the agent are considered (morally) wrong. To be moral, then, is to act self-interestedly at all times. This would have the effect that acts that we consider charitable would be morally wrong: They would not be admired or rewarded. Yet the underlying non-moral features of such an act would remain the same – it would involve giving or doing something to or for some other person(s) or organization in order to improve the situation of someone or something that would be worse off were it not for the act. All these features remain intact, but the act no longer counts as morally RIGHT. This imaginary case demonstrates a similarity in respect of practice-independence between response-dependent concepts such as ATTRACTIVE and moral concepts. Underlying features of acts that were deemed morally RIGHT are now deemed morally WRONG. If respondents

\textsuperscript{171} Notice that the width of cosmological role of these features seems to be a matter of degree reflecting \textit{how thick or thin} the invoked moral feature is. Features that are \textit{thicker} fulfil a wider role than those that are \textit{thinner}. Explanantia invoking GOOD and RIGHT (partially) explain why someone has a pro- or anti- attitude to someone or their actions, so it seems that the thinner the feature the more closely morally bounded the states of affairs it can explain and the thicker the feature the more capable it is of being explanatorily efficacious of explananda that lie closer to the boundaries of the moral.
under suitable conditions really do judge such features to be wrong, we have a variation in the practice without a concomitant variation in the features of the act itself.

The extent to which it is concluded that the relevant responses are similar to those for attractive, et al with respect to being culturally dependent, will depend upon whether or not the meta-ethical position adopted independently of the response-dependence account is absolutist or relativist. If the latter, then it may indeed be concluded that the moral communities to which the concepts incorporated by moral practices are relativised are culturally determined. If the former, then it may still be concluded that responses are dependent on cultural influences, but they would be influences that could be derived from any culture manifested by humans (or rational agents) or from a global human (rational) culture.

If, however, one takes a divine command theory or a platonist cognitivist position, according to which moral values are determined by (some form of) divine will, then the imaginary case will do nothing to pump one’s intuitions in the direction of practice-dependence. For, by the lights of such accounts, practices, where successful, track the divine will. The question of practice-independence is settled when this particular cognitivist position is adopted. Moral concepts thus understood are still response-dependent in so far as either (i) their extensions are determined by the responses of one or several respondents under ideal conditions or (ii) their extensions are determined by responses that, under suitable conditions, track the divine will, but

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172 Here we should take ‘culture’ to have a wide meaning that encompasses spiritual and ideological practices and the commitments they encapsulate.
the response-dependence account of their extension-determination has no bearing on their practice-independence.

The extent to which a position of one of these sorts can include a commitment to response-dependence depends on whether a plausible account can be given according to which moral concepts can coherently incorporate both the idea of some such extra-human objective standard of morality, and the idea of an extension-determining role for human responses. As we noted in Chapter II, it would involve respondents being able to track the divine will or detect the Platonic form of the good under suitable conditions. The difficulties which attach to deciding that issue are related to the difficulties which attach to giving a viable account of moral epistemology in the context of such views (issues that will impact on what counts as ‘suitability’ in conditions), and are not to be dealt with here.

Where this (divine command/Platonist) type of cognitivist position is taken in conjunction with a relativist stance towards the question of the target population, moral concepts are similar to concepts such as POISONOUS in so far as they are indexed to a particular community, but the features posited by the practices in which they are incorporated are practice-independent. Where this type of cognitivism is married with absolutism, moral concepts are similar to secondary quality concepts in so far as the relevant practices are employed by the totality of the human population (or that of all rational agents), but the features they posit are practice independent. This latter point can be taken to provide some vindication for those who have argued
for a morals/secondary qualities analogy, though they tend to advocate cognitivist accounts other than divine command or Platonist theories. ¹⁷³

The features posited by response-dependent moral concepts when the moral response is taken to be cognitive, then, are not independent of practices. When practices are different, those features also differ. Practice-dependence remains in place regardless of whether a relativist or absolutist stance is adopted. In both cases some form of cultural influence affects the ways in which respondents respond under suitable conditions to morally relevant states of affairs. This is probably a reflection of the way in which morality is an ongoing community project, one effect of which is that relevant cultural factors belong to an array that jointly determines the states of affairs of which social reality is comprised.

In common with the other categories of concept considered thus far, a response-dependence account of moral concepts (which incorporates a cognitivist account of the relevant response) does not lend any weight to an account of the features posited by moral practice according to which they are dependent on the mental. That said, however, the illumination of the essential practice-dependence of morality that response-dependence provides might (but of course, need not) be taken as inspiration/motivation for an Hegelian picture, which as we noted in Chapter VII, is located at the intersection of social practice-dependence and mind-dependence.

¹⁷³ One such is John McDowell, see his 1985.
§6.6 Moral Concepts, Cognitivism and the Epistemic Stance

**Possibility of Error:** Once a cognitivist account of the relevant response has been adopted, the a priori possibility of error is already in place. Reflection on the reality of moral practice enables us plausibly to conclude that erroneous moral judgements, both with respect to how we should act ourselves and to the actions of others, are a posteriori a reality. As in the cases considered so far, the extent of this possibility is limited to cases in which conditions of response are less-than-suitable. When conditions are suitable, responses (so moral judgements) are invulnerable to error. Given the prevalence of moral indeterminacy and error relative to that within the other practices considered, it seems empirically likely that conditions frequently fail to be fully suitable.

**Source of Criterion of Correctness:** In common with practices incorporating concepts such as ATTRACTIVE et al, the criterion of correctness in play in moral practice is partially derived from suitability conditions the source of which is external to the relevant practices. There are conditions on veridical perception that will be relevant to reliable moral responses. If conditions are such as to affect visual perception, we may not see that the schoolgirl helped the elderly man across the road. If conditions are such as to affect aural perception, we might mishear the President when he tells a lie, and so on. But this element of externality is not sufficient for moral practice to satisfy the criterion of externality. The main determinant of suitability, and hence of the criterion of correctness, is whether or not conditions enable or hinder respondents in making a correct moral response. Thus moral considerations come into play in determining criteria of correctness. This should not be surprising given that our examination of ontic issues suggests that, unless we adopt
a divine command-type cognitivism, there is no separate practice-independent domain of reality that moral responses could be tracking. Instead, moral responses aim to track inter-subjective agreement, the criteria for which are derived from within moral practice itself. If we take a relativist approach, we will say that it is possible for different moral communities to agree on different sets of morally acceptable responses. If we take an absolutist approach, we will deny that possibility.

If we adopt a divine command or Platonist cognitivist approach, then erroneous moral judgements occur when conditions are less than suitable (or less than ideal) and respondents thus fail to track the facts about the divine will (assuming such tracking is, indeed, ever possible.) If we have also adopted an absolutist position, then these facts will be entirely external to the practice. If we have taken a relativist line, then different moral communities may be committed to different accounts of the divine will. This means that judgements will aim to track the divine will as it is according to the relevant community’s account. That account will, itself, aim at a veridical representation of facts about the divine will that are external to the practice. Thus, in either case, epistemic independence is preserved.

§6.7 Summary

In this consideration of response-dependent moral concepts we have seen that our response-dependence account does not generate pressure towards either a non-cognitivist or a cognitivist meta-ethical stance. Indeed, it comes into the picture after those stances have been adopted and remains neutral between them. Once a non-cognitivist stance has been taken, questions concerning whether or not, thus understood, moral practice and the features it posits, satisfy the various cruces
associated with realism’s semantic, ontic and epistemic stances become redundant. If a non-divine command theory, non-platonistic cognitivist position is adopted, on the other hand, questions about the satisfaction of the cruces remain germane and we see that while not compromised with respect to factualism and reductivism, the features posited by response-dependent moral practice do not meet the ontic constraint of practice-independence and the practice does not meet the epistemic constraint of externality. If a divine command theory or Platonist cognitivist position is adopted, however, the features posited by response-dependent moral practice meet the ontic constraint of practice independence and the practice meets both conditions of epistemic independence.

§7 Flexible, et al

Flexible is a deferential patient concept the extension of which is determined by the responses of appropriate patients to certain causes visited on them. Further examples of this type of response-dependent concept include malleable, soluble-in-water, fragile and inflatable.

§ 7.1 Flexible, et al and the Semantic Stance

Factualism: There is no logical space for a non-factualist account of practices incorporating concepts such as Flexible. The feature posited just is the tendency of the patient to respond under suitable conditions. And none of those responses are of types that provide candidates for a non-factualist account of the practice as one that aims to express responses rather than describe the relevant domain of reality. The responses relevant here are not of the types that could be so expressed. In the absence
of any alternative, then, it is plausible to assume that a factualist account of these practices can be maintained.

**Reductivism:** Recognition of the response-dependent nature of these practices does not precipitate their a priori reduction to some other practice that absorbs their role. Indeed, no opportunity for a reduction of these practices to a practice that merely describes responses presents itself. Such a reduction would involve a confusion of the tendency of objects to so respond (the feature posited) with manifestations of that tendency (the response itself). There is no pressure from the response-dependence account to argue for the a priori reduction of these practices to practices that are descriptive of the features underlying those posited here, but theorists might argue independently for such a reductive move.

§ 7.2 FLEXIBLE et al and the Ontic Stance

**Existence:** It is intuitively implausible to claim that there are no such features as the tendencies of objects under suitable conditions to bend, break, change shape, be filled with and hold gas and dissolve in water. An a posteriori claim of reduction of those tendencies to the responses themselves would constitute a confusion of the tendencies with the manifestations thereof. There might, of course, be a case independent of response-dependence (motivated by considerations of ontic parsimony, for example) for an a posteriori reduction of these posits to the features underlying them. Such a reduction would prove methodologically difficult due to the multiple realisation of these features across a range of objects. The features underlying the flexibility of a rubber hose are not the same as those underlying that of the ballerina’s legs, for example. The ability of the features posited by these practices to satisfy Wide
Cosmological Role demonstrates that they exist in the manner required by the ontic stance. In the following explanations the relevant features are explanatorily efficacious. Despite their being partial explanations, they bestow epistemic advantage by enhancing our understanding of why and how the explanans occurred and they afford a level of generality that can form the basis of predictions and generalisations about objects that have the features posited: Disprin is easier to digest than Panadol because it is soluble-in-water; Grandmother didn’t notice that George had put salt instead of sugar in her tea until she tasted it because salt is soluble-in-water; rubber is a better material for hoses than metal because it is flexible; You shouldn’t give the toddler his juice in that glass because it is fragile.

**Practice and Mind-Independence:** If the features posited by a practice are ontically dependent upon it, then if the practice did not exist, those features would also not exist. According to our explication of non-constitutive practice-independence, the features posited by a practice are practice-dependent just in case any supervenience base for those features must contain elements of that practice. Given that it is reasonable to assume the truth of the naturalistic assumption that features such as that of being flexible supervene on objects’ physical features, it its highly likely that the supervenience bases for those features include objects’ physical features, regardless of whether it turns out to contain elements of the practice.

To demonstrate the practice-independence of features posited by practices incorporating concepts such as MALLEABLE, then, we will consider an imaginary case. Bearing in mind that lead is highly malleable at room temperature, but when plunged into liquid nitrogen, it becomes brittle, suppose we live in a (relatively close) possible
world where the ambient temperature is that of liquid nitrogen (suppose we wear suits to protect us from the extreme cold.) In this counterfactual world, lead will behave in the way that brittle things behave in the actual world. It won’t behave in the way that malleable things do. So if asked, say, to sort the brittle things from the malleable ones, we will include a length of lead piping in the pile of brittle things, not the pile of malleable ones. But the underlying features of the lead piping are no different. Only our practice of applying the category BRITTLE differs, the upshot of which is that the lead piping is now included in the extension of BRITTLE, but excluded from that of MALLEABLE. This case demonstrates, then, how practices could be different, the extensions of BRITTLE and MALLEABLE could be different, but the features of things would remain the same. Their practice-independence is not undermined by the response-dependence account of the practices within which they are posited.  

By contrast with the imaginary case constructed in Chapter II, this story does not take the rigidification route. If we opt to rigidify on terms in the relevant basic equations, thereby tying extension-determination to responses under actually suitable conditions, the counterfactual response will not be extension-determining and only those things that snap under actually suitable conditions will count as BRITTLE. Here, the features of things differ independently of a difference in practice, which suggests that the features float free of the practices that posit them.

An interpretation of our response-dependence account of these practices according to which the features they posit are mentally dependent on them is not a live possibility. 

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174 In one sense, of course, the ‘underlying features’ of the lead piping change with temperature, but typically this is a reversible physical change. Thus the permanent or essential underlying features remain unchanged. Such temporary changes to the conditions in which the lead does or does not bend are legislated for within our practices when we treat those conditions as suitable (or not.)
The patient responses that would need to fill the role of mental stuff of which the features are constituted have no mental aspects. A global idealist account that includes these features does remain a live possibility, but it is not precipitated by our response-dependence account of the extension-determination of concepts such as FLEXIBLE, FRAGILE, INFLATABLE, MALLEABLE, BRITTLE and SOLUBLE-IN-WATER.

§ 7.3 FLEXIBLE et al and the Epistemic Stance

**Possibility of error:** As empirical reflection demonstrates, it is possible to make erroneous judgements about whether or not a thing is FLEXIBLE, MALLEABLE, FRAGILE, and so on. But, as is the nature of response-dependent practices, the extent of that error is limited to judgements ensuing from responses occurring in less-than-suitable conditions.

**Source of error:** In the course of our taxonomy of response-dependent concepts, we noted that concepts such as FLEXIBLE are positioned in the maximally deferential region of our axis of deference and self-assurance. This suggests that the source of the criterion of correctness for judgements about the features will reflect that degree of deference. Consideration of the derivation of the conditions under which a response counts as extension-determining for concepts of this type confirms that the practices satisfy externality. These conditions are derived from independent facts about flexible (et al) things and the effects of their interactions with other objects. Such facts involve the effects (i) of temperature variations on things’ propensity to bend, change shape, break and crack and dissolve in water and (ii) the effects of a change to things’ underlying molecular structure on their propensity to bend, change shape, break, crack
and dissolve in water. Practices incorporating concepts such as FLEXIBLE, then, do satisfy the constraints of epistemic independence.

§8 Realism and Response-Dependence: Some Conclusions

Now that we have considered the relationships between the various categories of response-dependent concepts and the cruces of which realism’s three stances are comprised, we can draw some more general conclusions about those relationships and about the implications for the varieties of response-dependence accounts, developed by Johnston, Pettit and Wright, respectively, which were considered in the middle section of the thesis.

Our taxonomy of realism and its opponent doctrines has enabled us to delineate three stances – semantic, ontic and epistemic – all of which comprise theses that are taken to be what realism amounts to. By identifying the cruces upon which each of those stances depends, we have been able to determine precisely which elements of a bundle of doctrines labelled ‘realist’ are appropriate to each of the types of response-dependent concepts in which we are interested. This has also demonstrated that a realist construal of a response-dependent practice need not be a merely qualified realism. Rather, by investigating whether or not each type of practice meets the semantic requirements of factualism and anti-reductivism, the ontic requirements of existence (by employing a Wide Cosmological Role test) and mind/practice independence and the epistemic requirements of epistemic independence, we have been able to provide a more fine-grained analysis of the conjunction of response-dependence and realism while also enabling us to unpack the content of the term ‘realism’.
This strategy of breaking realism down into its three stances and the cruces that cluster around them has also enabled us to see precisely when and why we are justified in presuming deference or self-assurance with respect to a particular practice. In the case of secondary qualities, we can retain our modest intuition that secondary quality practice responds to, tracks and describes a domain of reality not of our making. For we have seen that it satisfies the cruces associated with realism in its semantic stance: factualism and non-reductivism; in its ontic stance: existence and mind/practice independence and in its epistemic stance: epistemic independence. Similarly, we are justified in preserving our intuitions that practices incorporating concepts such as POISONOUS and those incorporating patient concepts (of what are traditionally taken to be dispositional features of things) such as FLEXIBLE aim to track and describe features that are not of our making. For they too meet the semantic, ontic and epistemic demands of realism(s).

By contrast, with respect to practices incorporating concepts such as ATTRACTIVE, the balance is tipped further towards self-assurance and away from deference. While these practices are properly understood as fulfilling a descriptive role that could not be wholly absorbed by some other practice, and the existence of the features they posit is not in doubt, those features owe their existence to practices and thus do not fully satisfy the constraints of realism’s ontic stance. As we noted in Chapter VII, it is the practice-dependence of the features posited by a practice that provides essential motivation for abandoning the presumption that our relationship with those features is one characterised by deference on our part. While the existence of the features provides some ontic underpinning for the possibility of error with respect to
judgments about those features, their lack of practice-independence means that the judgments’ epistemic independence is undermined. Whether or not something is (really) ATTRACTIVE is determined by inter-subjective agreement, not by facts of the matter independent of our practices.

Practices incorporating agent-relative concepts such as ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[-AT-T] provide even stronger grounds for thinking of our role in constructing their posits and truths about them as one properly characterised in terms of self-assurance. While recognising that the response-dependent nature of these practices neither precipitates relinquishing a semantic realist construal of them, nor undermines the existence of the features they posit, we lack grounds for saying that our relationship with the relevant domain displays any deference. Like the features posited by practices incorporating their less agent-relative counterparts such as ATTRACTIVE, these features lack practice-independence and while first and third personal error is possible with respect to whether or not something (really) is ATTRACTIVE-TO-X, the criterion of correctness that keeps such judgements on track is a product of mere intra-subjective agreement. In making a correct judgement about whether or not something is ATTRACTIVE-TO-ME I am merely keeping in step with myself.

Whether or not we have good grounds for intuitions of deference or self-assurance with respect to moral practices depends upon which of four possible accounts (and strands within those) of moral practice we opt for. Our analysis of realism enabled us to see that the cognitivist/non-cognitivist distinction is primarily a semantic consideration that bears on the intent of a practice. Once we opt for a non-cognitivist account, we deny that moral practice has any fact-stating intent (though we may opt to
retain its *quasi* fact-stating syntactic structures) and hence that it posits any features or makes moves that are subject to any external criterion of correctness (though, again, we may opt for an account of *quasi* correctness). All of these non-realist characteristics are manifested independently of any response-dependence account of the practices. Indeed, our response-dependence account makes no difference to the status of the practices, non-cognitively understood, with respect to any of realism’s three stances. It does, however, enable us to see clearly how non-cognitive responses would be determinative of concepts’ extensions, should non-cognitivism turn out to be a true account of moral practice. Self-assurance is appropriate, then, thanks to the role of emotions and desires as the sole determinants of the extensions of moral concepts. If we add a naturalist element to the non-cognitivist mix, according to which those responses occur as a result of some natural features of agents, acts and events, as Blackburn, say, would have it, then a balance between self-assurance and modesty is more appropriate.

If we have adopted a cognitivist account of moral practice, then we have more to play for in the realism stakes. Having allowed that response-dependent moral practice(s) do have descriptive intent, we can continue to investigate how they fare with respect to the cruces inherent in realism’s semantic, ontic and epistemic stance. We find that we have the strongest grounds for modesty if a divine command or Platonist cognitivist account of moral practice turns out to be true. For on such an account, the features posited by moral practice are practice- and mind-independent and judgements about them are epistemically independent. If a non divine command/non-platonic cognitivist account turns out to be true, we have stronger grounds for self-assurance balanced with a degree of deference. On such an account, the features posited by
moral practice are mind- but not practice-independent and judgements about them track inter-subjectivity rather than facts independent of moral practice. Each individual agent, then, has some grounds for deference in so far as morality remains a community (local if we opt for relativism, global if we opt for absolutism), rather than an individualistic project, and she strives to keep in (moral) step with her peers rather than merely with her self, as she does in the case of judgements involving deeply agent-relative concepts such as ATTRACTIVE-FOR-X[AT-T].

Our strategy of identifying, analysing and comparing the variety of types of response-dependent concept and then investigating the extent to which the practices incorporating them satisfy the cruces of realism’s semantic, ontic and epistemic stances has enabled us to gain a clearer understanding of the extent and nuances of a response-dependence-realism nexus with respect to secondary quality practice, which has traditionally been the focus of and catalyst for the literature on response-dependence and its forebears. It enables us to see that, with respect to ontic and epistemic considerations, particularly the crucial, deference-bestowing ones of practice-independence and epistemic-independence, secondary quality practice has more in common with practices incorporating concepts such as POISONOUS and FLEXIBLE (and with moral practices if they turn out to be divine command-led/platonic and cognitivist) than with those incorporating concepts such as ATTRACTIVE and their deeply agent-relative counterparts. The results of this investigation, then, ought to undermine any assumption that a response-dependent account of a concept is a reason for an anti-realist account of the practices in which it is employed. For whether or not a realist or anti-realist account is appropriate will
depend on the details of the practice itself, not merely on the fact of its response-dependence.

While we argued earlier that existence and practice-independence are the cruxes that matter most for establishing a realist (and modest) understanding of a practice, our investigation has also demonstrated, in vindication of Pettit’s claim to the same effect, that with respect to the possibility of response-dependence-realism nexuses, how practices fall out with respect to epistemic independence is crucial to establishing their status (1991, pp 592-93). The fact that an axis of deference and self-assurance appears as a demarcating device within our initial taxonomy of response-dependent concepts is a reflection of the importance of epistemic considerations. For the externality constraint indicates the extent to which the determination of extensions via responses is a result of their tracking facts that are either internal or external to the practice and thus the extent to which the response-dependent nature of those practices compromises an epistemic realist construal thereof. Of the three models of the judgement-facts tracking relation that emerge – tracking intra-subjectivity, inter-subjectivity or external facts – only the latter is characteristic of a truly deferential practice that, having satisfied ontic independence, also fully satisfies the constraints of epistemic independence.

What implications do the results of our investigation have for the prospects of a happy marriage of realism and response-dependence, where response-dependence is understood according to the accounts developed by Johnston, by Pettit and by Wright?
§8.1 Johnston’s Revisionary Response-Dispositionalism

As we saw in Chapters III and IV, the most recent versions of Johnston’s account are re-focussed on the features posited by response-dependent practices, rather than the determination of the extensions of the response-dependent concepts they incorporate. So the basic equations of the (later) Johnstonian account are derived from property identity claims. The features posited by the practices he considers are response-dispositional features, identified as the dispositions of things to elicit manifestations of respondents’ dispositions to respond under suitable conditions. If Johnston’s account intersects at any point with our account of realism it does so in the region of ontic realism. For that is where issues pertaining to the status of the features posited by practices incorporating response-dependence concepts are played out. Indeed, in order to test the plausibility of his account of secondary quality features as response-dispositional features, Johnston’s sceptical Missing Explanation Argument applies explanatory considerations related to that which we employed to indicate the existence of the features posited by a practice. Secondary quality posits understood according to the Johnstonian account as response-dispositional features of things fail to meet the explanatory demands of the Missing Explanation Argument, which focus on the causal explanatory ability of response-dispositional features of actors in explanations of the patient response-dispositions with which they are interdependent.

Johnston’s account also involves an element of practice-dependence on the part of the features it posits. This emerges because of the interdependence relation claimed by Johnston with respect to things’ secondary quality features – secondary qualities are response-dispositions, that is, dispositions on the part of actors to elicit manifestations of a disposition on the part of patients to respond thus and so under suitable
conditions to manifestations of certain dispositions. So if there were no such dispositions to respond, there would be no dispositions to cause manifestations thereof; i.e. the features posited would not exist. The epistemic scepticism arising from this element of practice-dependence provides the seeds of Johnston’s concern, crystallised in his Argument from the Problem of Acquaintance, that we can never acquire acquaintance with the natures of, what he classifies as, the manifest properties of things, because the contributions of our perceptual sensibilities cannot be separated from the contributions of the things apparently experienced. The medium (perception), then, is alleged to corrupt the purity of the message.

With respect to the epistemic stance as we have identified it, failure properly to establish the existence of the features posited by practices involving concepts that are response-dependent in the Johnstonian sense means that there is no ontic underpinning to any claim of epistemic independence. Clearly, we do make mistakes about things’ secondary qualities, so aside from (what is by now) the obvious explanation that they come about because conditions of perception are less-than-suitable, a Johnstonian account owes us some account of how the criterion of correctness for judgements about things’ secondary quality features would be derived according to his revisionary account - if, that is, he still considers secondary quality practice would be one the principal role of which is the making of judgements.

§8.2 Pettit’s Global Response-Dependence

Pettit’s response-dependence account is similar to that developed here in so far as its purpose is to demonstrate the surprisingly ubiquitous role of responses in the acquisition of various of our concepts. In Chapter V, we saw how this amounts to the
claim that those responses are determinative of concepts’ extensions. For in its most recent incarnations, Pettit’s account is explicitly an account of the role of responses in determining that something is *denominably* T. It differs from ours in respect of its scope, for Pettit’s response-dependence claim is supposed to apply to all of those concepts he considers *basic* - concepts that we acquire in a response-dependent manner.\textsuperscript{175} The group of concepts that are response-dependent by the lights of his account, then, will overlap somewhat with the group of concepts that are response-dependent according to our account, but will not be identical with it. In so far as Pettit’s account pertains to concepts we have identified as response-dependent, they should come out the same with respect to the realist cruces that comprise the semantic, ontic and epistemic stances. Because Pettit’s account concerns denominability rather than the features posited by a practice, then, the response-dependence of the concepts involved in a practice should not necessarily be a barrier to a realist construal of that practice, and which realist cruces it satisfies will vary on a case-by-case basis. Pettit’s account of response-dependence applies to concepts of primary quality features and their being response-dependent in his terms would not compromise a realist account thereof. It should be obvious given the detailed analysis carried out in this chapter, that the fact that something’s being denominably SQUARE, say, is determined by responses under suitable conditions does not undermine either the existence and practice-independence of the feature of being square or the externality of the criterion of correctness for judgements about things’ squareness.

\textsuperscript{175} The ‘global’ tag is something of a misnomer as the scope of Pettit’s account is only that of basic concepts. It also serves as something of a hostage to fortune as some have taken it to imply a generalised secondary quality account. See, for example, Devitt, 1991, p. 253.
§8.3 Wright’s Order of Determination Distinction

Wright’s contribution to the development of response-dependence is part of a larger project that identifies four realism-relevant distinctions which give content to an account of truth that is more-than-minimal. His Order of Determination distinction, a close relation of a response-dependence/independence distinction, demarcates judgements the extension of the truth predicate for which is determined (at least partially) by best opinion from judgements in which best opinion is a reflection of a truth predicate determined independently of best opinion. Order of determination, then, is closely related to the realist crux of epistemic independence and to our axis of deferential and self-assured concepts. Wright’s project and the response-dependence-realism engagement we have effected share an interest in epistemic independence. For the issue of the role of best opinion in the determination of the extension of the truth predicate for a set of judgements comes down to the question of whether or not the criteria of correctness for those judgements are determined by facts about those practices (such as facts about best opinion) or facts that are external to them. Wright sets his distinction up with the working assumption that colour judgements will be paradigmatic of judgements whose truth values are tied to best opinion, shape judgements paradigmatic of those whose truth values float free of best opinion. Our investigation, however, has shown that secondary quality judgements, like primary quality judgements, meet the criterion of externality. The criterion of correctness by which they are constrained is derived from facts about the features posited by practices incorporating colour concepts, not from the practices themselves. Where they differ is in the extent of the target population for the types of concept employed in the sets of judgements. Colour concepts manifest a degree of relativity to a target population and are only available to agents with certain perceptual capacities. By
contrast, shape concepts are (in principle) available to all thinkers regardless of their community, but this difference has no bearing on what determines the truth values of the respective sets of judgements.

As our analyses have shown, all the categories of response-dependent *actor* concepts we have identified will be relative to some target population to some degree, but that does not mean that all of the practices in which they are incorporated cannot admit of realist construal. Once we bring response-dependence concepts into engagement with each of the cruces in play within realism’s three – semantic, ontic and epistemic – stances, we see that in the cases of our practices involving response-dependent secondary quality concepts and response-dependent concepts of the type exemplified by *POISONOUS* the balance is tipped in favour of realism – towards deference and away from self-assurance.
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