Seeing What is the Kind Thing to Do: Perception and Emotion in Morality

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Abstract

I argue that it is possible, in the right circumstances, to see what the kind thing is to do: in the right circumstances, we can, literally, see deontic facts, as well as facts about others' emotional states, and evaluative facts. In arguing for this, I will deploy a notion of non-inferential perceptual belief or judgement according to which the belief or judgement is arrived at non-inferentially in the phenomenological sense (in the sense of involving no conscious reasoning on the subject's part) and yet is inferential in the epistemic sense (in the sense of being justifiable by the subject after the belief or judgement has been arrived at). The ability to arrive at these kinds of beliefs and judgements is part of virtue, and is also part of what it is to grasp thick ethical concepts in an engaged way. When we come to thinner evaluative and deontic facts and thinner ethical concepts, however, the requirements for non-inferential perceptual belief and judgement are less easily met. Seeing what is the kind thing to do is one matter; seeing what is the right thing to do is another.

Introduction

Consider the following situation.[1] Mary is in the restaurant with her friends celebrating her birthday. As the centre of attention she is enjoying being teased. But then the teasing begins to get a bit too much for her, and she starts to get upset. She is about to cry. Jack, who is a kind person, recognises that Mary is getting needlessly upset and is about to cry, and he immediately changes the subject. The awkward moment is passed, and Mary is happy again.

The question that I want to address in this paper is the following. Could Jack literally have seen (perceived) that Mary was needlessly upset and about to cry from this teasing, and that this fact, evaluated in this way, called for him to change the subject – that this is what he ought to do? More generally, can we perceive facts about people's emotional states, and can we perceive evaluative and deontic facts?

In this paper I will put forward an account according to which we can; such facts can be perceived, and thus believed or judged, immediately, non-

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[1] This nice example is adapted from Dan Jacobson 2005.

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inferentially, even though they are not strictly speaking perceptually manifest in the way that colours, shapes and so on are.[2]

John McDowell, for one, seems to think that we can perceive deontic facts as well as facts about other's psychological states and evaluative facts. He says, 'In moral upbringing what one learns is not to behave in conformity with rules of conduct, but to see situations in a special light, as constituting reasons for action'; and elsewhere, 'A kind person has a reliable sensitivity to a certain sort of requirement that situations impose on behaviour. . . . The sensitivity is, we might say, a sort of perceptual capacity'.[3] Although I will be developing my own line as the paper progresses, McDowell's work in this area has greatly influenced my thinking. So too has the work of Alan Millar (2000), Robert Brandom (2002) and Dan Jacobson (2005), each of whom discusses McDowell's arguments, and I will be referring to them in a number of places.

In this paper I will first set out what I mean by non-inferential perceptual belief or judgement. Then I will to say what is necessary for it. This will put me in a position to say what its limits are, and at what point our use of terms such as 'seeing what is the thing to do' becomes merely figurative. Although these limits can indeed in the right circumstances extend far enough to include perception of facts of the kind that I am interested in, they do not extend as far as some virtue ethicists might hope. Skill and virtue will be at the centre of the paper; whilst the differences between them are important in a number of respects, the similarities are important too.

Non-inferential perceptual belief or judgement

I will define a non-inferential perceptual belief (and, *mutatis mutandis*, judgement) as (i) a belief that something has a certain property, from the way it appears, relative to one or more sense modality; and (ii) this belief arises in a way that is phenomenologically immediate; in other words it must not be the product of a conscious process of inference (Millar 2000, 73).[4] Millar writes in terms of non-

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[2] In what follows, I will put to one side what is sometimes called 'simple perception' or awareness of *things*, and focus only on 'epistemic perception' or awareness of *facts*, such as, taking an example from Fred Dretske, the fact that the toast is burning – a fact which one can perceive. See Dretske 1993, and compare Mulligan 1999.

[3] McDowell 1978, 85, and 1979, 51. It is not entirely clear, from these passages or from elsewhere, whether McDowell wishes the idea of a perceptual capacity to be taken literally. For McDowell's discussion of how we can perceive others' psychological states, see especially McDowell 1982. He discusses the epistemology of value in a number of places (carefully considered in Jacobson 2005), but see especially McDowell 1985. David McNaughton (1988) also discusses the sense in which one can see moral values.

[4] Millar has another condition, that 'It can embrace more than facts pertaining only to the way things appear' (2000, 73). I am in effect treating this condition as a consequence of my definition.

inferential perceptual *knowledge*, but I will avoid mention of knowledge, or of truth, because it raises all sorts of issues, for example in the metaphysics of value, with which I do not want to get involved here (see D'Arms and Jacobson 2005).

With this definition in place, two points can be made about this sense of non-inferentiality. First, the non-inferentiality of this kind of belief, being a belief arrived at 'without reasoning on the subject's part' (Millar 2000, 74), is non-inferential at the personal level, and thus a belief's being non-inferential in this sense does not preclude there being sub-personal or non-conscious processing. Secondly, as Brandom has pointed out, if one is challenged about a non-inferential perceptual judgement, one might 'retreat' to an inferential justification (2002, 97), but such a retreat does not impugn the non-inferentiality of the judgement. It follows that a belief can be both non-inferential in the phenomenological sense (no conscious reasoning by the subject) and yet inferential in the epistemic sense (justifiable by the subject). For example, one might non-inferentially judge, from the way it looks, that this is an apple, and when asked why you think it is, you appeal to the way it looks – its shape, colour and so on.[5]

Secondly, with this definition in place we can now say what is needed for non-inferential perceptual belief or judgement. First (still – more or less – following Millar and Brandom), the world must be a certain way; to make the perceptual judgement that something is an F from the way it appears, relative to some sense, then things 'must have an appearance relative to that sense which is (nearly enough) *distinctive* of Fs . . .' (Millar 2000, 87). Secondly, the person must be a certain way: he or she must have a 'disposition reliably to respond differentially' to things that are F from the way they appear; and he or she must have 'the capacity to produce conceptually articulated responses' (Brandom 2002, 96). Apples have (nearly enough) a distinctive look, and most of us are able to judge that they are apples from the way they look.[6]

This account makes room for the possibility that some people, such as those with certain skills or virtues, can, because of their ability, perceive non-inferentially what others, with normal eyesight, hearing and so on cannot. Thus

[5] As Brandom points out (2002, 97–8), there are questions here about the status of chicken-sexers, and whether or not their 'pronouncements' about the sex of chickens amount to so much as expressions of a belief. Thanks to Julien Deonna here for getting me to emphasise the distinction between the two kinds of non-inferentiality. This kind of epistemic justification is, of course, defeasible; this is common ground with those who would insist that one does infer, from the way something looks, to the conclusion that it is an apple.

[6] The capacity to produce conceptually articulated responses is intended to exclude other creatures (and machines) that can reliably respond differentially to Fs, but have no capacity for conceptual articulation of their responses. This is not intended to involve the strong requirement that one must have a *word* for the Fs that one can reliably respond to; one might just have the concept 'that kind of thing'.

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two people can be looking in the same direction, at the same part of a scene, and
yet one – the skilled or virtuous person – sees things that the other fails to see.
And, once we have room for this, we can add the further point that skilled and
virtuous people can be trained, developing an ability that can be learned, and that
can later be forgotten. This expertise will come in degrees; Millar (2000, 79) has
a nice example of how as a student he was trained to distinguish sixty different
kinds of potato from the way they looked – an ability that he has now lost.

This account also puts us in a position straight away to treat certain familiar
uses of 'see' in the context of arriving at non-inferential belief as not literal, or
as figurative. For example, I might be thinking about a mathematical equation and
then immediately, non-inferentially, realise that the equation can be simplified.[7]
Whilst it is perfectly natural for me to say that I *saw* how it could be simplified,
the belief (that the equation can be simplified) is nonetheless not a non-inferential
perceptual belief as I have defined it: the belief in this case meets the second
necessary condition set out above, of being phenomenologically immediate; but
it fails to meet the first, for it is not a belief that is arrived at relative to one or
more sense modality. This would be so even if I were looking at the equation
written down on a piece of paper: for it is not from the way the equation *looks*
that you 'saw' how it could be simplified. Thus even if one's sense modalities are
involved, they are not involved in the right way for this to be an instance of non-
inferential perceptual belief.

The question now is whether the limit of non-inferential perceptual belief or
judgement can be extended so far as to include perception of facts about how
others are feeling, facts about values, and facts about deontic demands on action.
Can Jack *see* that Mary is upset and about to cry, and that this fact, evaluated in
this situation, is a reason for him to change the subject? Or is 'see' really just a
figure of speech as it was in the example of the mathematical equation?

If, as I suggest is the case, the two necessary conditions for non-inferential
perceptual belief or judgement are jointly sufficient, it follows that there is no a
priori principled limit to what can be non-inferentially perceived. In the particular
case under consideration, all that is necessary is that these two conditions are met:
first, that the world be the right way, so that Mary's being upset and about to cry
has an appearance which is (nearly enough) distinctive of someone being in that
emotional state, and that this situation has an appearance which is (nearly enough)
distinctive of situations which call for the specified action (cf. Millar 2000, 88);
and secondly, that the person, Jack, be the right way, having the disposition
reliably to recognize and respond to such facts in a conceptually articulated
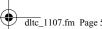manner.

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[7] Thanks to an anonymous referee for this example.

Learning to see

What Jack has is a virtue, namely kindness. I will begin, though, by considering skill, and what is involved in acquiring a skill. By 'skill' I mean here not just a simple skill of a kind that does not involve choice. I mean rather what Dan Jacobson has nicely called a 'form of expertise', such as being a good chess player (Jacobson 2005, 390). I will show how someone who has such a skill can be able to see facts of the sort I have in mind. I will then turn to virtue.

There are many differences between skill and virtue, but we can put these differences to one side for the moment, as it is what is common between skill and virtue that will be relevant to begin with; the important differences will emerge later. So here, in particular, I would like to put to one side the idea that in skill the requirements for action are not the same as in virtue. As Philippa Foot has argued, a virtue, unlike a skill, is not a 'mere capacity', because it 'must actually engage the will'.[8] For example, a chess player can, without impugning her skill, choose not to make the right move, or can intentionally make the wrong one, whereas if a virtuous person chooses not to act as virtue requires, or intentionally acts viciously, then her virtue is impugned.

If this were straightforwardly true about skill, then it might seem that the whole idea of a skilled person being able to perceive deontic facts would be out of the window: there would be no such facts to be perceived. However, I think that it is possible to make too much of this difference between skill and virtue. For there is a notion, in relation to skills of the kind I have in mind, of being what I will call *fully engaged* in the activity in which the skill is brought to bear. Being fully engaged involves not just being fully attentive, but also *caring* in the right way about the outcome and about the other implications of what one does.[9] Consider, for example, the chess player who is in the play-off for the championship, or the footballer in the Cup Final who has the ball at his feet and an open goal in front of him. In such circumstances, no question arises in their minds of intentionally not doing what the skill requires. Of course, when the point is put this way, it does show up a difference between skill and virtue in this regard: in virtue, one is expected to be 'fully engaged' at all times; there is no 'holiday' from virtue as there is from skill. But what I want to get at still remains: there is a notion of being fully engaged in a skill, and at a time when the skilled person is fully engaged there can be for him or her such a thing as a deontic fact.[10] So from now

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[8] See Foot 1978, 7–9. For a detailed discussion of the contrasts between virtue and skill, see Zagzebski 1996, 106–16.

[9] I will turn later to people who care but in the wrong way.

[10] Thinking of the etymology of the word 'deontic', perhaps the notion of *duty* as such is a bit strong when it comes to skill. But still, the idea remains that there can be something that the skilled person *ought* to do, or has reason to do, when that person is fully engaged; and the suggestion that you intentionally chose not to do that thing will impugn your skill.

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on I will assume that the requirements on action are of the same kind for both skill and virtue, at least in the sorts of case I will be interested in.

How might one come to learn a skill – a form of expertise – in a way that would enable one to perceive deontic facts? This kind of learning is a complex matter, involving a wide variety of techniques, but what I want to concentrate on here are just two aspects of teaching and learning a skill, the first backward-looking in time, the second forward-looking. These aspects can merge into each other, but for purposes of exposition it is helpful to keep them apart.

The first aspect of teaching and learning consists of a special kind of counter-factual thinking. The learner goes back over the narrative of a particular situation where the deployment of the skill was called for. This could be done either by the learner alone in his or her mind, or by the learner in joint discussion with the teacher. And then, at the crucial moment in the recollected narrative when the skill was called for, the learner 'stops the clock', and then he considers what he might have done, instead of what he actually did. For example, you are a beginner at chess. You have just lost a game, and your teacher then resets the board as it was at that crucial moment several moves earlier, and then turns to ask you to recon-sider what you then did and what the alternatives were that were open to you. She thus shows you both the point in time at which you went wrong in your deliber-ation and choice, and also what else you could have done to avoid going wrong. A football, rugby or cricket coach might do the same sort of thing, getting the learner to think back and analyse where things went wrong at the crucial moment. This can be done these days with the aid of technology, using a video replay, or it can be done just by thinking through or *envisaging* the narrative sequence of events as they unfold.[11]

This is really just the familiar idea of learning by one's mistakes. But the idea of learning through 'stopping the clock' has another, second, aspect, which does not involve going back over what happened, but involves rather setting up hypo-thetical forward-looking narratives which have to be thought through. The same procedure applies though, in that the learner is asked to consider the various alternative ways in which he might act, starting at the crucial moment, thinking through the various and varying effects of each alternative course of action. Chess puzzles have this feature, as do flight simulators. The advantage of this method of stopping the clock is that you do not have to lose an actual game of chess, or actually crash a plane, in order to learn.

What happens in both such exercises is that the learner is trained to spot first the way things are, and to evaluate what the facts of the situation are at the crucial moment, and secondly to envisage the range of possible alternative actions that

[11] To envisage in this sense is to conceive in the Oxford English Dictionary sense of 'to take into or form in the mind', where this need not involve propositional thought. See also the sense used by Gendler and Hawthorne (2003) in their Introduction.

1 are 'live options', such as possible defensive moves that the chess player ought
2 to make to avoid defeat. Each option represents a narrative sequence of events,
3 and together the options take the shape, metaphorically, of a kind of branching
4 system, branching out from the crucial moment, with each node representing a
5 point at which the narrative could take a different course.

6 Now, as training progresses and the skill develops, the learner improves in a
7 number of ways: each option can be more readily envisaged; each envisaged
8 option can be more quickly evaluated for possible action; and the range of options
9 that are 'live' options for evaluation will be narrowed down. Ultimately, the chess
10 player will reach a level of skill such that only one possible course of action is
11 salient – there is only one live option. At this point she will be able (immediately
12 and non-inferentially) to see that her queen is threatened, and to see precisely
13 what is the right move to make.[12] Thus what is for a beginner at chess an agonising
14 and very fallible process of conscious inference towards deciding what is the right
15 move becomes a faster process involving less and less inferential thought until
16 finally the process becomes for the expert a matter of perception. Her judgements
17 of these evaluative and deontic facts have become phenomenologically immediate,
18 or non-inferential.

19 This talk of 'evaluative facts' might seem to many to be deeply dubious.
20 (Adherents of the so-called fact-value distinction might even insist that it involves
21 some kind of category mistake.) However, there really is nothing suspect in saying
22 that there is a fact that one's queen is threatened (and thus that one is in danger
23 of losing the game). Nor is the idea of perception of such facts mysterious,[13] just
24 so long as we do not forget the crucial point that the notion of non-inferentiality
25 that is in play in non-inferential perceptual belief is to be understood in the
26 phenomenological sense, and that this leaves room for the belief also to be
27 inferential in the epistemic sense, or in other words grounded in reasons which
28 can be appealed to in justification of the belief.[14]

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30 [12] The action, in this case the action of making the right move, obviously cannot itself
31 be perceived. So if one is literally to see what one ought to do, what is to be perceived – the
to-be-doneness – must be a property of the situation (cf. Millar 2000, 73).

32 [13] Compare McDowell's discussion of J. L. Mackie's epistemological argument from
33 queerness in McDowell 1985.

34 [14] It might be suggested at this point that to have a skill is a kind of know-how, and I
seem to be turning it into a kind of propositional knowledge. I agree that having a skill is a kind
35 of know-how, but still it is usually possible for someone with a skill – specifically a form of
36 expertise – to articulate propositionally what they saw and what their reasons for action were.
37 (Consider here how a tennis player can later propositionally articulate the reasons why he played
a particular shot.) Of course it is not being suggested that having this propositional knowledge
38 is sufficient for possession of the skill – and the same point applies mutatis mutandis to virtue.
39 Nor is it necessary: one might sometimes see what the right defensive move is in chess without
being able later to articulate the reasons. However, someone's not being able to articulate his
40 reasons does not imply that there *are* no such reasons. For discussion, see D'Arms and Jacobson
41 2005 and Jacobson 2005.

Learning to see and to feel

In its essentials virtue too can be, and often is, taught and learned like this. But there is a significant and crucial difference. (More differences will emerge shortly.) In respect of virtue the learner is at the same time trained to have appropriate *affective* responses. In other words, the 'disposition reliably to respond differentially' concerns not just the disposition to perceive the evaluative facts and what action is called for. For virtues also involve emotional dispositions – dispositions to have the right emotions over a complex range of situations and actions, both actual and non-actual. For example, Jack's virtue, kindness, involves the disposition to feel compassion or sympathy, and this disposition itself involves the ability to perceive what is salient when Mary is in distress and needs help.[15]

When we have an emotional experience, there is a kind of connection between recognition and response – between the way we take in the world and the way we respond to it, not only emotionally but also with motivation. I have discussed this elsewhere as what I have called the 'recognition-response tie' (Goldie 2000, 28–37). The point can also be made in terms of thick ethical concepts (Williams 1985, 129–30, 140–2). These are evaluative concepts, such as loyalty, infidelity and bullying, which have more empirical content than thinner concepts such as rightness or goodness. Application of these concepts is both world-guided and action-guiding. I will understand this in the following way, in line with a very helpful recent paper by A. W. Moore (2006). The idea is that 'anyone who embraces a thick ethical concept thereby has certain reasons for doing things' (Moore 2006, 136). To 'embrace' a concept is to grasp it 'in the engaged way' (2006, 138). Moore explains it thus:

> Thick ethical concepts can be grasped in two ways, an engaged way and a disengaged way. To grasp a thick ethical concept in the disengaged way is to be able to recognise when the concept would (correctly) be applied, to be able to understand others when they apply it, and so forth. To grasp a thick ethical concept in the engaged way is not only to be able to do these things, but also to feel sufficiently at home with the concept to be prepared to apply it oneself, where being prepared to apply it oneself means being prepared to apply it not just in overt acts of communication but also in how one thinks about the world and in how one conducts one's affairs. What this requires, roughly, is sharing whatever beliefs, concerns, and values give application of the concept its point (2006, 137).

Let me adopt (and adapt) an example of Sabine Döring in her paper in this volume. Someone sees a child in the street treated in a harsh and bullying manner by her parent just because she accidentally dropped her icecream. If the observer embraces the relevant thick ethical concepts (harshness and bullying for example), then she ought to recognise that what has been done to the child was unduly harsh

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[15] The exception to this is practical wisdom; I turn to this later.

1 and bullying, and will also respond, with feeling (indignation, Döring says) and
2 with motivation. Now, there are a number of issues concerning motivational
3 internalism which Döring subtly and carefully engages with in her paper that I do
4 not want to address directly here. But I should make a number of points quickly.
5 First, the motivational response need not be one on which one in fact acts; one
6 can have stronger or better reasons not to act as one is motivated to do through a
7 fully engaged application of the thick ethical concept (so out of prudence one
8 might not intervene with the child's parent). And secondly, the motivation is not
9 *necessarily* connected to a fully engaged application of the concept; there must
10 be scope for such psychological failings as *akrasia*.[16]

11   With this background in place, we can now consider how virtue can be learned.
12 First let us consider learning from one's mistakes through backward-looking
13 counterfactual thinking. Let us assume that you once upset someone needlessly,
14 and you now feel bad about having done what you did. Perhaps in conversation
15 with a friend, or perhaps on your own, you think back over the narrative of what
16 happened, and you now recognise that it really was needlessly mean-spirited, and
17 consequently you feel guilt or shame, and regret what you did. You then envisage
18 the branching alternative possibilities of the other things that you might have done
19 instead, and you have emotional responses appropriate to each envisaged action
20 and its consequences.

21   When we turn to the second aspect of this kind of learning, just like with skill,
22 as learning progresses each option can be more readily envisaged and evaluated,
23 and the range of live options will get smaller. But narratives have a more explicit
24 and prominent role in deliberation than they do in learning a skill. I have in mind
25 fictional narratives – not only novels but also the kinds of narrative that constitute
26 a deeply embedded part of a culture, such as fairly tales, myths, fables, legends
27 and so on. When we engage with these narratives, starting from a very early age,
28 we not only grasp the narrative, but we also often envisage other ways in which
29 events might unfold – other alternative narratives. Moreover, sometimes the nar-
30 rative itself relates the deliberation of one or more of the characters as to what to
31 do in the situation that presents itself to them. Through gaining insight into the
32 mistakes – and the right actions – of fictional characters, and through responding
33 emotionally to what happens in the narrative, we come also to have the appropriate
34 ethical responses, seeing branching possibilities opening up – or closing down –
35 as the narrative moves forward in narrated time.

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38   [16] If my account of the recognition-response tie is to be understood as a version of
39 motivational internalism, then it is an internalism that is normative, not one that is necessitating
(Goldie 2000, 36–7); someone who fully embraces a thick ethical *ought* to 'conduct his affairs'
40 accordingly. What I say is intended to be neutral about the role of desire in motivation; again,
41 see Döring (this volume).

Two points should be made here about backward and forward-looking narrative thinking. First, as the foregoing remarks imply, the emotional response need not always be to what you envisage yourself doing; it might be an emotional response to what a fictional character does, or to what you envisage someone else in real life doing, or to what happens to someone in real life. For example, you might feel terror at imagining what might happen to someone you love who is considering driving home from the party after having had too much to drink. As a result of your emotional response to what you imagine you might advise her not to take the car, or offer to give her a lift.

The second point is that the emotional response could be an *imagined* response rather than, or perhaps in addition to, an actual emotional response; in other words, the emotional response could be part of the content of what you imagine. For example, you might envisage the possibility of looking in someone's private diary while she is out of the room, and then imagine the shame that you would feel if you were seen; and you might also then come actually to feel shame at what you imagine.[17]

This discussion brings out an important feature of the role of negative emotions in moral education. They play a big part not only in the content of counterfactual thinking, but also in its generation. There is strong empirical evidence that negative emotions which arise as a consequence of some action tend much more than positive emotions to generate counterfactual thinking and thereby to generate 'if-only' regrets and feelings of guilt and shame (Roese 1997). Children engage in this kind of thinking from a very early age – starting at between three and four years old (Harris 2000). 'Shame', as Myles Burnyeat (1980) puts is, 'is the semi-virtue of the learner'.

As one's learning progresses, certain options, perhaps whilst briefly considered, are not fully thought through – perhaps without even feeling or imagining feeling a negative emotion, one shrinks from an action 'as an impossibility' to use J. S. Mill's nice expression.[18] And then, ultimately, at least in the more clear-cut situations, alternative courses of action are no longer considered; one just sees the thing to do. If later one is asked why one did not look in her diary, one might say 'Because I would have felt so ashamed if I had done that – it would have been terribly prying. It didn't even occur to me.' Note, however, that this appeal to the feeling of shame is not a justification for the belief that the action would have been prying – in spite of the 'because'. Rather, both feeling and belief are justified by further reasons, such as, perhaps, the fact that the action would have been demeaning to both parties.[19]

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[17] I discuss this in Goldie 2003.
[18] In *Utilitarianism* ch. 3.
[19] For detailed discussion, see Goldie 2004.

Getting it wrong

In non-inferential perceptual belief and judgement, as elsewhere, it is possible to be wrong: things appear other than as they in fact are. Consider first the ability to perceive someone else's emotional state, perhaps from the way they look or sound. One might think one sees that someone is anxious, from the way she looks; but she is not anxious – she just looks that way.[20] Gaining a closer acquaintance with some people can not only enable us to see particularities of expression that others with lesser acquaintance cannot: her rising eyebrows are a sign of embarrassment. Closer acquaintance can also enable us to correct our errors: we first saw (so we thought) her hair-flicking as an expression of arrogance and disdain, and we now realise that it is an expression of contentment.

A parallel explanation can be given of error when we turn to evaluative and deontic facts. Consider a society with a wide range of strict situation-specific rules, where one would expect that the two conditions for non-inferential perception of evaluative and deontic facts will be most readily satisfied. For example, in upper class early Victorian England the appropriate evaluation and response to discovering a young woman alone with a man who is not a close relation, spouse or 'intended' was very clear-cut – shock and outrage; in those days, 'chastity' was a thick ethical concept. However, in a particular situation, one can think one saw what the right response was, because of the way the situation appeared, but one was wrong, because of relevant considerations that did not impinge on the appearance: one failed to recognise that they were brother and sister. Appearances can deceive.

Reflection on this example from Victorian England brings to mind other situation-specific rules that were, we now realise, wrong: for example, the taught response to someone of a black skin colour. People then might have said that they *saw* just how they ought to respond; after all, the judgement or belief was arrived at non-inferentially, without conscious reasoning by the subject. And yet we, now, say that they were wrong to respond as they did, that they only thought they saw what the appropriate response was. But this time the explanation of the mistake is not that appearances deceived, but that they had been brought up in the wrong way, with the wrong rules. This example is very stark, but it is important to appreciate that the same concerns arise in relation to skill and to prudential rules – they too can be wrong. For example, a car driver can be taught the wrong response to a skid, so that his action immediately exacerbates the skid rather than

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[20] Here there is a subtle difference between Millar and McDowell, and I am inclined to side with Millar. McDowell's position (1982) is that someone's feelings, such as anxiety, can in the right conditions be perceptually manifest to one. Millar's position (2000) is that one can non-inferentially judge that someone is anxious from the way they look, but still their anxiety *as such* is not perceptually manifest.

correcting it. What these examples illustrate, I think, is the point that I made near the beginning of this paper: the fact that beliefs and judgements about what one ought to do are non-inferential or phenomenologically immediate does nothing to guarantee their truth, or to guarantee that the beliefs and judgements constitute knowledge or are capable of later being justified by appeal to *good* reasons.[21]

Error also emerges in connection with virtue in another way that I now want to mention and which might otherwise seem to give rise to further problems for my account of perception of evaluative and deontic facts. Skill has no opposite, whereas virtue does. Of course there is lack of skill, just as there is lack of virtue. But there is no equivalent of a vice when it comes to skill.[22] What we can find when we come to vice is that the vicious person, when applying a thick ethical concept, can have the same recognitional capacity as the virtuous person, and yet have responses, including feelings and motivations, which are contrary to those of the virtuous person. So if Keith is a vicious tease, he might well see that Mary is upset and about to cry, but he responds with a feeling of gratification and a motivation to keep up the pressure on poor Mary. He might say that he saw that this was the thing to do. But, again, we can respond by saying that Keith just *thinks* he sees what is the thing to do. For he was wrong, it was not the thing to do; in the terms used by Moore, he does not share 'whatever beliefs, concerns, and values give application of the concept its point'.[23]

Can we see thin evaluative and deontic facts?

Now, finally, I turn to one more feature of skill which differs considerably from virtue, and which has important implications for my account of perception of evaluative and deontic facts. Skills are typically restricted in their scope in the sense that the range of possible actions is constrained. The rules of the game of chess are such that certain actions are automatically out of court: intentionally to knock over the pieces is not as such part of a game, nor is moving the pieces around whilst the other player's attention is distracted. Artisans are restricted in their actions by the functional requirements of the artefact that is the end product of their skill. And even artists are restricted in some respects by their chosen

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[21] Dan Jacobson sees this issue as 'especially problematic for views adopting a perceptual epistemology' (2005, 397). However, I am not persuaded that it raises any more problems than an epistemology based only on reasons. In the latter case too one can be mistaken: one can have a subjective reason which one *takes to be* a good reason, but which, in fact, is not a good reason. For discussion, see Döring (this volume).
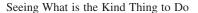
[22] I discuss this in Goldie 2000, 153. See also Zagzebski 1996.

[23] Might Keith be truly said to have seen the mean-spirited thing to do? I myself would have no difficulty with this, for we can safely assume in such a case that Keith did not think he was feeling and acting virtuously. He knew what he was doing, and in this respect he is different from the Victorian – his mistake is of another kind altogether.

1 medium. None of this is to deny the importance of genius and flair to do the
2 unexpected in exercising a skill, and this is something that cannot be taught.[24] But
3 in virtue the range of possible actions is not so constrained, other than in a very
4 general sense that what one ought to do is what virtue in general requires one to
5 do.[25] Seeing what is the *kind* thing to do is not enough for the virtuous person; he
6 must also see what is, all things considered, the *right* thing to do. McDowell
7 emphasises this point: '. . . the particular virtues are not a batch of independent
8 sensitivities. Rather, [there is] a single sensitivity, which is what virtue, in general,
9 is: an ability to recognize requirements that situations impose on one's behaviour.
10 It is a single complex sensitivity . . .' (1979, 53). And he adds elsewhere, '. . .
11 Aristotle's claim that practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), the intellectual excellence
12 operative in behaviour that manifests good character, is a perceptual capacity'
13 (1998, 28). This idea of a perceptual capacity for virtue in general seems to me
14 to ask a lot of thin evaluative and deontic facts; as Millar says, 'It is not generally
15 true that right and wrong actions have distinctive appearances relative to sight or
16 any other sense' (2000, 87). And the same point can be made about thin evaluative
17 facts, such as the goodness or badness of some situation.[26]
18   However, there is a distinction to be made here between two sorts of situation.
19 First there is the sort of situation where the virtuous person only sees the demands
20 of a single virtue *other than* practical wisdom (kindness or courage for example),
21 and, as a matter of fact, there are no other demands. Assume that Jack is in a
22 situation of this sort. He sees that Mary is upset, that teasing her is mean-spirited.
23 He feels compassion, and he sees that the kind thing to do is to change the subject.
24 Let us also assume that there are, in fact, no competing demands from other virtues
25 – a possibility not even contemplated by Jack. I think we can then say that Jack
26 not only saw what was the kind thing to do, but that he also saw what was, as a
27 matter of fact, the *right* thing to do all things considered, just because, as a matter
28 of fact, there *were* no competing demands.
29   Then there is the other sort of situation where there are competing prima facie
30 demands from two different virtues, and the virtuous person recognises this:
31 perhaps he sees what justice seems to demand and he sees what loyalty seems to
32 demand, and these appear to be different and competing demands, involving
33 different and competing thick ethical concepts, and different and competing emo-
34 tional responses. I think in such a hard case it is highly unlikely that McDowell's
35 requirement will be met, which as I understand it is that the virtuous person's
36 'single complex sensitivity' enables him to perceive non-inferentially what is the
37 *right* thing to do. Indeed, McDowell's demands of perception are contrary to the
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phenomenology of such cases. Much more compelling is the sense in which one appreciates the apparently competing demands, and feels the competing emotional pulls. When one finally comes to appreciate what is, all things considered, the right thing to do, the notion of 'see' is purely figurative. There is no recognition-response tie with the concept of rightness of the kind one has with application of thicker ethical concepts.[27] Moreover, the belief or judgement is arrived at inferentially in the sense I am concerned with: one is conscious of the considerations that enter into the all-things-considered judgement prior to arriving at that judgement.[28]

Conclusion

In spite of the many important differences between skill and virtue, I hope in this paper to have brought out the relevant similarities when we are concerned with how we come to learn a skill or a virtue, and can learn thereby to be able to see, in a given situation, evaluative and deontic facts. In morality, as elsewhere, non-inferential perceptual belief or judgement is possible, even if it does not extend to all-things-considered judgements about rightness and wrongness where there are prima facie competing demands.*

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[27] An account of motivational internalism that appealed to emotion would not therefore have universal application, unless it was asserted that the application of all ethical concepts – thin as well as thick – in a fully engaged way was involved in all ethical thought. Matteo Mameli, following his interpretation of Antonio Damsio, seems to assert this when he says: 'In humans, the choice between different actions . . . is always determined by the emotional feelings caused by the thought of possible outcomes of possible actions . . . and not by an unemotional cost-benefit analysis (2004, 171). Thanks to Christine Clavien for discussion, and for pointing out these remarks of Mameli.

[28] These concerns thus arise whether or not McDowell's notion of a perceptual capacity is to be taken literally: judgement in hard cases is inferential. Of course, the conclusion does not *follow* from the considerations via the application of a general rule of conduct – a point that McDowell, in a deeply Aristotelian spirit, has consistently and rightly argued.

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