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What's Really Disgusting

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In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

_____

Mary Elizabeth Carman

This 13th day of February 2009, at Johannesburg, South Africa.

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Thanks to Dr Lucy Allais for her supervision and insight, even from other parts of the world. Thanks to the Philosophy Department at Wits for looking after me.

And thanks, or course, to those family and friends who deal with me on a regular basis, even when I am not that pleasant.

Abstract

Finding something disgusting involves a particular sensuous experience and an evaluation that the thing is of little or no value. Sensuous properties such as digustingness are constituted by these two aspects, the sensuous and the evaluative. In "The Authority of Affect" (2001a), Mark Johnston argues for a detectivist account where our affective states detect mind-independent properties of sensuous value, like disgustingness. He argues that the other two standard positions, projectivism and dispositionalism, do not account for the authority of affect or are incoherent. In this paper, I argue that he is wrong to rule out dispositionalism for being incoherent and that it does account for the authority of affect. In addition, I argue that it is best able to capture the nature of sensuous properties and that it should be the default account of the relation between sensuous properties and affect.

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1

Introduction

When we are disgusted by something, are we detecting some property of disgustingness existing independently in the world? Is this a property which we can access only through being disgusted and which gives us insight into the value of the thing? These are questions which Mark Johnston investigates in "The Authority of Affect" (2001a). He argues that our affective responses detect mind-independent sensuous properties which indicate value. He rejects accounts which see us as projecting our affect onto the neutral object or which see the object as having a disposition to produce certain experiences in us. Because of the sensuous aspect of the property, it is only accessed through affect.

Johnston's main aim is to discredit the opposing positions. Johnston successfully shows that there are problems with projectivism but I am not convinced that he does rule out a dispositionalist account of the relation between affect and sensuous properties. Until Johnston does rule out dispositionalism, his positive points can apply to both dispositionalist and detectivist accounts. I will argue that a dispositionalist account should be the default account.

Affect is a bodily or psychological feeling; the type of affect in which Johnston is interested is the kind which involves "pre-predicative or pre-judgemental disclosures of sensuous values" (2001a, 182). Affect is the "feeling" side of an emotion, or of an interest, mood or even attitude. By being pre-predicative or pre-judgemental, Johnston is focusing purely on the feeling and not

on a considered judgement. For example, I might find animal decay, after considering things such as the risk of contracting disease, to be of negative value and bad for me. However, in order to come to know the particular sensuous value, I need to experience the way in which the decay is disgusting.

Sensuous properties are a class of properties that are accessible via an appropriate sensuous experience, like being in an affective state. The sensuous properties involve determinate values, of which there is no good and fully appropriate name (Johnston 2001a, 182). Examples of such sensuous properties are the determinate versions of the ethereally beautiful, the disgusting, the horrific, the utterly repulsive or attractive. They are determinate as they involve a particular phenomenology and are specific, fixed and identifiable feelings; they are not general concepts.

An affective state of disgust involves an evaluation, as does finding something ethereally beautiful. When I find decaying animal matter disgusting or am moved by the Elgar cello concerto, I am having an affective response to some property that tells me that, in the first instance, the decay has little value whereas in the second instance, the music has great value. An evaluation is not the only part to a sensuous property. If I find a piece of music beautiful and do not feel anything, that means that the beauty is not a sensuous property. If I am moved by the music, if I have an affective experience, then I find it ethereally beautiful, and the sensuous experience indicates a property of sensuous value. If I did not feel a certain way at the animal decay, I would not identify it as having the property of disgustingness. Even if the animal decay was structurally the same as when I do identify it as disgusting, if I do not feel appropriately I will not identify it as disgusting.

Finding the animal matter disgusting or being moved by the concerto is made up of both an evaluative aspect and the actual sensuous aspect of what it feels like. I will refer to "sensuous property" as the entire property, including both aspects. As the sensuous properties have a crucial sensuous aspect, the way in which I know what are the sensuous property and the value, is by being in some affective state. If I did not have an affective response, I would not know what the sensuous value of the scene is. I might be able to think about the animal decay that it is bad for me, and judge it as having little value based on that. If I find value in these ways, I am

not finding sensuous value. I do not know what value the decay or the concerto actually have for my *experience*. If sensuous properties are mind-independent, like a detectivist claims, then it is plausible for there to be other ways to access the sensuous property other than through a sensuous experience. However, given the sensuous aspect, the only way we can access the sensuous property is through experiencing the sensation involved.

Whether affect actually detects mind-independent sensuous properties is the question which Johnston addresses. In order to assess whether Johnston comes to the correct conclusion, that affect does detect mind-independent sensuous properties, I will begin, in 1.1, by giving some background to the debate. The relation between affect and sensuous properties runs parallel to the relation between perception and secondary qualities, such as colour. I will then introduce the positions for sensuous properties. As the debates around sensuous properties are fairly new, it is necessary to look at the material and arguments for secondary qualities like colour. However, there are differences between affect and sensuous properties, and perception and secondary qualities. These differences might mean that we can accept one account for secondary qualities, but need not accept the same account for sensuous properties. I will give these differences.

In chapter 2, I will give more detail of the dispositionalist account. I will consider the nature of affect and emotion and what they tell us about the world. I will conclude that the dispositionalist account is *prima facie* the most plausible account for the relation between affect and sensuous properties and, as such, should be defended from Johnston's attack. I will argue that dispositionalism should be the default position and, in order to reject it, a conclusive argument must be provided showing that it is not able to meet the demands required of an adequate account. Johnston, however, does not provide such an argument and I will argue against adopting his detectivist account in chapter 3. In chapter 4, I will address Johnston's argument for the authority of affect. Johnston argues that dispositionalism is just a form of projectivism and further that projectivism (and hence dispositionalism) cannot account for the authority and intelligibility of affect. I will respond to this in chapter 5 by arguing that dispositionalism is indeed a distinct account from projectivism and is not subject to the same criticisms.

The more worrying of Johnston's arguments against dispositionalism is that it is incoherent

because it is circular. I will present this argument in chapter 6. Dispositionalist accounts for colour have also been accused of being circular. In chapter 7, I will respond to Johnston's argument by looking at the literature defending dispositionalist accounts of colour and seeing if these defences are effective for a dispositionalist account of affect and sensuous properties. In particular, I will examine the possibility of non-vicious circles and supervenience and argue that a circular account is in fact best, considering the nature of affect and sensuous properties.

I find dispositionalism to be the most intuitively appealing account of the relation between affect and sensuous properties. My question is whether Johnston is correct to rule out dispositionalism as a viable account. I will argue that he is not and that it should remain the default position. I will argue that there are dispositional properties of the kind which include a mind-independent feature, as well as a relation to the perceiver and the condition, and which are inseparable from the experience of them. Sensuous properties are such properties.

1.1 Background

The relation between affect and sensuous properties has its roots in the well-known distinction between primary and secondary qualities, and the debates about how we perceive them.

1.1.1 Primary and secondary qualities

Drawing on John Locke and *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, many philosophers have made the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Locke distinguishes between three types of qualities: primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary qualities are physical properties that are part of the object itself, while secondary qualities are dispositional properties or powers of the object to produce ideas in us under certain conditions. Tertiary qualities are powers in the objects to produce effects on other objects (Averill 2001, 763); tertiary qualities, however, are not important for the discussion of sensuous properties. Locke classifies properties such as weight, shape and motion as primary qualities (Locke 1997, 135. Essay II, chapter

xii, §9) and properties such as colour, taste and sounds as secondary qualities (§10).

For Locke, our ideas of both primary and secondary qualities are caused by properties in the object; the difference is that the ideas of primary qualities resemble the property in the object, whereas the ideas of secondary qualities are caused by powers in the object to produce such ideas in us (Locke 1997, 135. II, xii, §15). The ideas do not resemble the property (or power) in the object. An implication of this classification of secondary qualities is that the property is relational. The property in the object is one of a power to produce certain ideas in someone — there is a relation between the power and the person. Primary qualities, in contrast, are non-relational properties as the property of shape is in the object itself and is not a power requiring a perceiver.

Following this distinction, there has been much argument about whether there really are secondary qualities and whether qualities, such as colour, are best understood as being secondary.[1] One view, such as that of Colin McGinn, is the dispositionalist view. McGinn (1983) argues that secondary qualities, of which colour is his primary example, are powers in the object to produce certain experiences in normal observers under certain conditions. Secondary qualities are relational as there needs to be a relation between the object and the person perceiving the object.

A second view is the projectivist one. On this view, we describe the world in terms of sensations that are produced in us. We describe the world as if it "contained features answering to these sentiments" and sensations (Blackburn 1993, 152). For example, in the case of colour, neutral features of the world produce a phenomenal experience as of seeing something coloured. We then describe the object as coloured even though the object itself does not have a colour property. A result of such a position is that even though we talk as if objects have a certain colour or property, they do not really have that colour or property. Our ordinary judgements and use of language are in fact erroneous. We assume that an object is coloured and we talk about it as if it is coloured, but it is in fact not. Projectivism about colour, and even about value, is

[1] There have been a number of different interpretations of Locke's distinction between the qualities (for example, Langton 2001, Bennett 1971). I am not committing to an interpretation of Locke as I am only intending to introduce the idea that there is a distinction.

committed to being an error theory: our everyday use of language and judgements of the world are in error.

A third view, such as that put forward by P. M. S. Hacker, is that various qualities that are usually thought of as secondary qualities, such as colour and taste, are not much different to primary qualities. Unlike the projectivist or dispositionalist view, Hacker argues that the experience of something looking or tasting x, is not a criterion for being x but is in fact evidence for its being so (Hacker 1987, 118). He argues that there is a difference between describing objects of sensible experience, which is what we do with primary qualities, and describing sensible experiences, which is supposed to be a feature of secondary qualities. When we say that something is red, we are in fact doing the first and describing the object of the experience. If the experience is veridical, the object is really the way in which it is described. This is an objectivist or realist view as the way the world appears is the way the world objectively and really is, independent of subjective experiences.

Mark Johnston's position is what he calls "detectivism" and is similar to Hacker's position. Like Hacker's objectivism, Johnston's detectivism requires that experience is evidence for something being a certain way; affect "detects" the sensuous properties.

As can be seen, the objectivist view classifies sensible qualities like colour as mind-independent and properties of the objects. The projectivist places the quality purely in the mind of the perceiver. The dispositionalist is somewhere in the middle; the object has a dispositional property which, in the appropriate conditions and with appropriate perceivers, manifests in a colour experience.

1.1.2 Accounts of sensuous properties

The debate about which account adequately captures the secondary qualities has largely focused on colour properties. Johnston extends the debate to the relation between affect and the sensuous value of sensuous properties.

Johnston (2001a) argues for a detectivist account of sensuous properties. Much like perception detects external objects, he thinks that affect detects mind-independent properties of sensuous value. One can understand detectivism by reference to primary qualities. The detectivist maintains that what we perceive or detect exists independently of the subject who perceives. It is through perceiving and experiencing an affective state that a property is revealed to us. While the experience might be essential for our knowledge of the property, the property exists mind-independently. Like Hacker's objectivism, the experience presents the way in which the world independently is. In the case of an experience of feeling disgust, the experience presents the property of disgustingness which is objectively in the world.

In contrast to this detectivist account, there is the projectivist account, which proposes that we project our affect onto a neutral world and that there is no independent sensuous value (Johnston 2001a, note 3, 183). Like for the projectivist for secondary qualities, certain features in the world cause an affective response in us; we then describe the world in terms of that response. For a detectivist, affect "senses" sensuous properties in a similar way to which sight "senses" primary qualities. For a projectivist, the sensuous property is of our experience. If we find the animal decay disgusting, our internal experience of the neutral animal decay is of feeling disgust.

Projectivism about sensuous value, like projectivism about colour, looks like it is committed to an error theory with regard to our everyday language. Pre-theoretically, we do seem to think that the animal decay itself is what is disgusting, like we think that an object is itself coloured. Compare this to a case where we have a sensation that is caused by an object, but where we do not attribute the property of the sensation to the object, such as a knife causing a sensation of pain because of its sharp edge. In such a case, we do not think that "The knife is painful" means that the pain is the knife's. The pain is my own. In contrast, the pre-theoretical judgements of "The animal decay is disgusting" or "The Elgar cello concerto is ethereally beautiful" do seem to be saying something about the object. Even if identifying the knife's pain and my exclamation of "That's painful!" is a case of reporting or perceiving states of my body rather than of having a sensation, our pre-theoretical experience is still substantially different. "That's

painful!" locates the pain in me or reports on my bodily state, and I could follow up with "Stop doing that to me!"; whereas "That's disgusting!" is more likely to be followed with "Take it [the object] away!". If our pre-theoretical experiences of sensuous properties and our reports of those experiences are attributing a property to an object, then we are in fact in error.

A third position, which I find *prima facie* the most plausible, is the dispositionalist account. The dispositionalist account which I will be defending is that an object has a dispositional property to present an affective experience of a sensuous property to us, given a certain situation. Disgustingness is a disposition to present experiences of disgust to us, given a certain situation. This is dispositionalist as it places emphasis on the subjective aspect by referring to the specific situation and a person's experience of it, but it still requires some mind-independent feature in the situation to be disposed to present the relevant affective experiences to us. The property in the object is relational to the perceiver and conditions. I will develop this account in chapter 2, in particular 2.3.

In the example of finding animal waste and decay disgusting (Johnston 2001a, 184), a detectivist would say that the animal decay has the property of disgustingness which we directly experience. A projectivist would say that we project our experience of disgust onto the decay. A dispositionalist would say that the decay has a way of presenting experiences of disgust to us, and that both the properties in the decay which cause our experience and the experience and role of the perceiver should make up the account of what disgustingness is.

1.2 Affect and other debates

Establishing what the nature of the relation between affect and sensuous properties is could provide insight into other debates. Sensuous properties, for example, have similarities to both secondary qualities and moral values.

Sensuous properties are similar to secondary qualities in the way in which we come to know them. Qualities that are usually classified as primary, such as shape, are accessible via different

senses; we can look at and touch a shape to determine what it is. Something like colour, which is usually classified as secondary, we can only access through one sense which is sight. Similarly, the only way in which we can access the sensuous property is through having an affective experience. I cannot access the sensuous property simply through reason because then I am missing the important sensuous aspect of the property. Without feeling anything, I will not know what the phenomenological aspect of the property is and will not identify it. To find something utterly disgusting or appealing involves a sensuous, affective experience. It might help here to think of affect as a kind of sixth sense.

There are also notable differences between secondary qualities and sensuous properties. Something like disgustingness is different to something like colour because it is not accessed with particular senses; we do not "see", "touch", "taste", etc, the sensuous property. We see colour but we do not see disgustingness. Through hearing, I might find the Elgar cello concerto ethereally beautiful, but the affective experience is not limited to my hearing. Indeed, the affect seems to be through my whole body. Likewise, when I find a smell disgusting, I identify it as disgusting not simply through how it smells, but through my whole affective experience which could involve impulsive gagging. I might touch the thing which smells disgusting and find that the texture also repulses me, but the repulsion is an experience not limited to my touch. This does not make sensuous properties similar to primary qualities because the sensuous aspect of affect is still the only way in which we can identify the sensuous property. Seeing a colour or feeling a texture are experiences of particular sense organs; finding something disgusting or ethereally beautiful, while sensed through the organs, is a different kind of experience that is not limited to a particular sense organ.

We have an overall experience of disgustingness. More so than secondary qualities where we can at the very least identify which sense experiences what, affect is indistinguishable from the experience. This focus on the experience in the case of sensuous properties, if contrasted to cases of secondary qualities, could have implications for theories of secondary qualities. The contrast could show how the experience of colour is not as important as some claim. The conclusions drawn for sensuous properties could be used to relook at the colour and secondary qualities

debates.

While sensuous properties have some similarities to secondary qualities, sensuous properties and value also have similarities to ethical value. As mentioned above, we do not "see" or "touch" the sensuous property, but we do find value through experiencing disgust or ethereal beauty. Neither do we "see" or "touch" ethical value. The way in which we experience what is good is more akin to the relation between affect and sensuous properties than secondary qualities and perception. The conclusions drawn for sensuous properties could be applied to ethical value.

One other area where the nature of affect and sensuous properties could have implications is in debates around what knowledge, if any, emotions give us about the world. If an affective state is a response to some mind-independent feature of the world, then an emotion, which on some accounts is constituted by affect, would give us some knowledge of the world.

2

Affect and the dispositionalist account

In this chapter, I will focus on why a dispositionalist account of sensuous properties is a plausible and attractive account by considering the nature of affect and what it tells us about the world and ourselves. I will defend the dispositionalist formulation that an object has a disposition to present an affective experience of a sensuous property to us, given a certain situation.

2.1 The nature of affect

There are two key points which need to be kept in mind when considering whether affect does or does not detect mind-independent sensuous properties. The first is that often, even though two people are experiencing the same scene and all their perceptual organs are functioning normally, they can have very different affective responses. The second is that we are able to know what affective states and emotions others are in and we often have the same responses to similar things. I will argue that dispositionalism captures both points in the most straightforward manner and as such, it should be the default position.

2.1.1 Different affective responses

The first point is that different people can have different affective responses to the same scene. This could *prima facie* suggest that there is no mind-independent sensuous property as both people should then be having the same affective response, that someone is in error, or that there are different sensuous properties present that are being detected by different people.

The projectivist claims that the sensuous property is made up of purely subjective sensations. When we describe the animal decay as disgusting, we are describing our internal subjective experience caused by the animal decay. The different affective responses which different people have to the same scene are thus easily accommodated by the projectivist account. If we project the sensuous property which we experience onto a neutral world, and if we have different personal histories and focuses, then we can easily have different affective responses to the same scenes. We value different features and we have different influences; our subjective sensations differ. What causes the affective response is some mind-dependent feature and, as people are different, the mind-dependent feature need not be the same for all people.

The detectivist claims that the sensuous property is mind-independent. If there are mind-independent sensuous properties, then having different affective responses to the same scene might be a case of error.

If I say that the object is round and you say that it is square, one of us is in error and this can be tested by seeing what shape hole the object passes through. However, having different affective responses does not seem like a similar case of error. The properties revealed by affect are of a specific nature, which includes a sensuous aspect and an evaluative aspect. The sensuous aspect is dependent on the phenomenological experience and it is difficult to say why one person's experience is wrong and the other's is not. A vital part of the identification of the property is through the experience and what it feels like. If I find something disgusting, I know that I find it disgusting because of what I am feeling. I can rationalise about it and conclude that it has negative value, but I do not find it disgusting unless I have a particular experience. Each person has access only to his or her own experiences and so cannot compare

experiences in an objective manner to determine which is accurate. This is in contrast to the object, where we can dispute its shape but we do have ways in which we can settle the dispute, such as seeing what shapes it matches or ensuring that we are looking at the object from the same perspective. We can use other senses to examine the shape, but we can only use affect to examine the sensuous property. There is not a way in which we can objectively compare experiences which would solve the disagreement and establish who is in error. When we find different things disgusting or ethereally beautiful, we cannot verify that one person is in error and not the other because of the experiential sensuous aspect of the sensuous property. This is where the difference between sensuous properties and primary qualities becomes important. As an explanation of disagreement, a case of error is not verifiable or useful.

For the detectivist, disagreement is better explained as a case where different people are focusing on different sensuous properties. Johnston suggests that the environment might be multi-qualified and multi-structured, such that we are attuned to different things. As Johnston writes, vultures might find animal decay valuable and appealing because they are on to something which we are not able to discern (Johnston 2001, 185).

If a vulture finds the animal decay utterly attractive while I find it disgusting, it is quite plausible that we are focusing on different properties. If I find the Elgar cello concerto ethereally beautiful, but someone else, who cannot stand English Romantic music, finds it utterly repulsive, it is plausible that we are focusing on different properties. If detectivism is right, then we are both detecting mind-independent properties and the cello concerto is both desirable and repulsive at the same time.

On the surface, this appears contradictory. The detectivist needs to give an explanation of how this is possible and, in order to do so, must refer to the different types of perceivers. In order to identify what property an object has, the explanation of the property introduces a relation to the perceiver and the perceiver's interests and history. For instance, I find the Elgar cello concerto ethereally beautiful because I have training in classical music and first listened to the concerto after I read that Elgar composed it after his wife died, the last piece he ever wrote (whether that is true or not does not affect the romance of the idea for me). Someone who

finds it utterly repulsive might not have any background appreciation of classical music, might find the instrumental arrangements and length incredibly tedious, and might find the overall harmonies and themes repulsively schmaltzy. We are attuned to different features of the music as a result of our backgrounds. In order to make sense of what the sensuous properties are, that is, in order to say that the music is desirable or repulsive, we are referring to a relation that the property has with the perceiver.

Sensuous properties are in part constituted by a sensuous aspect; the value by itself is not sensuous if there is not some way it feels. In order to know the properties, the person must know the sensuous aspect. In order to know the sensuous aspect, the person must affectively experience it. Thus in order to know the sensuous property, the person must experience it. Knowing a sensuous property is relational as part of what it is to know the property is to be in relation to it. A property such as having a certain shape can be known through different ways. The one is to experience it through the senses; even then, establishing the shape is not limited to one sense in particular. Another is to reason from properties already known, such as the shape having four sides which meet at right angles, or the fact that it does not roll down a hill easily. There are no such alternatives for sensuous properties.

So far, this is not a problem for the detectivist. Sensuous properties might indeed be relational in the way in which we come to know them; the challenge for the detectivist is to show that the sensuous properties are not relational in a more fundamental essential way.

The detectivist requires that the property that is detected is mind-independent; that is, we can make sense of it existing independently of being perceived, in the object itself. The detectivist claim is not a claim about how we come to know the property, it is a claim about what the property actually is. As the cases of the vulture's finding animal decay delightful and my finding it disgusting, and my finding the Elgar cello concerto ethereally beautiful and someone else finding it repulsive, it is clear that different people and animals have different affective experiences. If the affective experience is how one comes to know the sensuous property, then the different people and animals know different properties of the animal decay and the music. The same thing can thus have conflicting properties. If that is the case, then the object either

has the property of being utterly attractive and utterly repulsive at the same time, or being utterly attractive or utterly repulsive are relational and depend on something with which to be in relation, or, in particular, are in relation with something mind-dependent.

Rae Langton (2001) suggests a reading of Locke's primary and secondary quality distinction as a distinction between intrinsic and relational properties. Intrinsic properties do not rely on anything for their being a particular way whereas relational properties are powers in the object to affect other things in certain ways (150). Secondary properties are relational properties of a certain kind, a kind which relates to perceivers.

The intrinsic property is one that is not affected by other things; in this case, it is mind-independent. If the detectivist is right, then the object can be both utterly attractive and utterly repulsive intrinsically. Being utterly attractive or repulsive reveals a value, good for attractive and bad for repulsive. The object is both intrinsically good and bad. Knowledge of the property is mediated by a perceiver, but the property itself is mind-independent. This creates a contradiction in the intrinsic nature of the property. Having the intrinsic nature of the object be two contradictory things at the same time is incoherent as we are left with no idea of what the object intrinsically is. The intrinsic nature of the object is supposedly what the thing *essentially* is, but we have no idea what that might be if it is possible for it to be both good and bad at the same time. We have gained no understanding.

There is a way in which the property can be mind-independent so that an object is not both intrinsically one thing and its opposite, and that is if the property is in relation to other mind-independent things. This is how Langton classifies tertiary qualities: they are powers in the object to affect other objects, like the sun has the power to melt wax (Langton 2001, 152). While tertiary qualities also have powers to produce ideas in perceivers – I have an idea of the sun melting the wax – the sun can melt the wax whether or not there is a perceiver present. A sensuous property could be similar: the ethereal beauty or utter repulsiveness is in relation to mind-independent features such as the external conditions. I detect the disgustingness of the animal carcass because, in relation to the functioning of human-type sense organs, it is disgusting; the vulture finds it utterly attractive because, in relation to vulture-type sense organs, it is

utterly attractive. Because of mind-independent relations, we are attuned to different features of the object, so the object itself is not two contradictory things. The detectivist claim is that sensuous properties are mind-independent, not that they are not relational.

John Campbell argues for a "simple" view of colour where colour is mind-independent. The simple view, quite simply, is that a colour of redness is a ground for a disposition but not a disposition itself; that is, in perceiving colours, we are perceiving something that is mind-independently in the object (Campbell 1997, 178). By being a ground for a disposition, the redness itself is what causes the disposition to appear red to certain perceivers in certain conditions. When we have a colour experience, what we experience is the result of two factors: the object's having the colour and the meeting of a set of conditions which allow the object and the property to be perceived. These conditions include light and the nature of the perceiver. The perceiver must be suitably oriented and must be able to perceive the colour (181-2). For example, in order to perceive a shape, the shape must be there and we must be able to perceive it. In order to perceive it, there must be sufficient light, our eyes must be in working order and we must be looking at it. Given these conditions, we are reluctant to say that the shape is mind-dependent; even the relation to the perceiver does not require an internal experience and refers to the functioning of body parts and positioning of the body to focus attention. Applied to colour, the colour property must be there and we must be able to perceive it. Again, there must be sufficient light, working eyes and correct attention. If the dependency and relation is such then, like the shape, the colour is mind-independent even if it is relational to the conditions of perception. The redness is a mind-independent property that grounds the dispositional property of appearing red, in conditions conducive to red-perception and with a perceiver open to red-perception.

Campbell's account of colour, however, does not apply successfully to sensuous properties. Consider a situation where two people are sitting in an auditorium with excellent acoustics listening to a top cellist and orchestra play Elgar's cello concerto. Neither the cellist nor anyone in the orchestra makes any mistakes; everything is perfectly in tune; the performance is flawless. Both people have exceptional hearing; neither is tone deaf; both are attending to the

music. If the property were in relation to other mind-independent features, then both people would surely perceive the same property. The conditions and the apparatus for perception are conducive to perceiving the ethereal beauty in both cases. Yet it is completely plausible that one person will find the concerto ethereally beautiful and the other will find it utterly repulsive. Being in relation only to external mind-independent features does not make sense of cases of disagreement. Why, if all the external features are shared (except for the perceptual organs, but these are incredibly similar) is there still disagreement about what property is present?

The property that is present for each perceiver is not merely in relation to the conditions and other mind-independent aspects, it is also in relation to the experiences of the perceiver. If I am the person who finds the music ethereally beautiful, my background experiences play a role in my finding the music so. I have training in classical music which focuses my attention and I find the story behind the concerto romantic. My companion's background might be completely different; she has no training and does not discern features that I can; she does not know the romantic story of Elgar. The detectivist can accommodate the personal background and subjective experiences of the person in how we come to know the sensuous property, but cannot relate the actual mind-independent property to the perceiver in explaining what the property actually is without undermining the claim that the property is essentially mind-independent.

The detectivist claim is that sensuous properties are mind-independent; they exist independently of a mind perceiving them. Cases of disagreement, however, show that different properties can be present at the same time in the same object. As a way of explaining how this is possible, both the detectivist and the dispositionalist can refer to the relation that the object has with the perceiver and the conditions. The detectivist, unlike the dispositionalist, is making the further claim that the property itself is mind-independent, not just the way in which we come to know it. This leads to a mystifying case where the object can have two contradictory properties at the same time. The detectivist cannot solve this problem by appealing to relations to other mind-independent properties, as that re-introduces the issue of how there can be disagreement about properties, which is what was being explained in the beginning. The dispositionalist, however, by requiring that a relation to the mind perceiving the property be included in the

essential nature of the property, can explain cases of disagreement. We understand the property in virtue of the perceiver's experience and what features the perceiver discerns because of that experience.

If we need to introduce a reference to the perceiver's focus, interest and experience in order to identify and explain a sensuous property, then an account which captures the reliance on the perceiver is better able to explain why the reliance is there in the first place. The dispositionalist account explains why the background and conditions are so influential: if two parts of the overall situation differ, then the sensuous property experienced need not be the same. Dispositionalism has an advantage over detectivism as it immediately explains why a person's history is relevant and can explain what is happening in cases of disagreement.

As should be clear from the above discussion, a dispositionalist account can accommodate the first point well. If an object has a dispositional property to present experiences of disgustingness or ethereal beauty or some other sensuous property to a perceiver, given a certain situation, then there are three parts to the overall property: the disposition of the object, the perceiver and the conditions. If any of these vary, the property which is being presented might not be instantiated or some other property will be instantiated.

In normal conditions and with standard human perceivers, animal decay is disgusting. In normal conditions and with standard human perceivers, the Elgar cello concerto is ethereally beautiful. This latter case, obviously, requires further stipulation of what "standard" and "normal" are. As much as I like the concerto, I will not conclude that you are not "standard" simply because you do not like it. But, in conversation, we often say "Are you mad?" or, "How can you possibly not like it?" when someone expresses a different taste. While what people say loosely in conversation is not a deciding matter, it does highlight the fact that, if someone can give us a bit of background for their taste, we do understand why she reacts the way she does. By giving some background, the person is describing the conditions and herself. These different features affect how the item is experienced. The dispositionalist account explains why the background and conditions are so influential: if two parts of the overall experience differ, then the sensuous property experienced need not be the same.

A problem with dispositionalism arises when determining what a "standard" perceiver is and what "normal" conditions are. Defining a "standard" perceiver as someone who feels disgust when presented with animal decay, and then defining disgust as that which standard perceivers in normal conditions experience, introduces a circularity into the dispositionalist account which is hard to avoid. Johnston (2001a) argues against the dispositionalist account by appealing to the undesirability of a circle; however, as I will argue in chapter 7, the circularity in fact counts in favour of the account.

Both a projectivist and a dispositionalist account can easily accommodate the first point. They both refer to the background of the person as a way to explain why the reactions are different. A detectivist account, while beginning with just a mind-independent property, has to introduce reference to the person as well in order to explain cases of disagreement where perceivers are attuned to different things. This is all right if the detectivist is explaining how we can have knowledge of sensuous properties. Because the detectivist is making the further claim about the actual nature of the sensuous property, however, introducing relations to perceivers in order to explain disagreement undermines the claim that the property is essentially mind-independent. If a relation to a perceiver is important, an account which builds in the relation can capture more fully the nature of the sensuous property.

If different affective responses were the only point about affect that needed to be explained, then both projectivism and dispositionalism are well-suited to be the default, most straightforward accounts.

2.1.2 The same affective responses

The second point is that we are able to know what emotions or affective states other people are experiencing and often we have the same responses to similar scenes. Standard human perceivers find many of the same things disgusting, such as animal decay. This, in turn, *prima facie* suggests that there might be something mind-independent which we experience and which helps us recognise other people's reactions. A detectivist account accommodates this.

If there is something mind-independent, we are all able to detect it. As we are all humans, we have a similar biological make-up. With these two features – a mind-independent property and our biological make-up – we can detect and react to the same thing in similar ways. If we know how we react to something, we can recognise similar reactions in other people.

A projectivist might attempt to explain this point by referring to our common experience and development as human beings. We all find animal decay disgusting because we are all humans, face the same dangers for our survival, and getting too close to animal decay might make us sick.

Survival factors as a projectivist explanation of the same affective response, as Johnston notes, have no more content than a similar detectivist explanation (Johnston 2001a, 185). The detectivist could put forward the explanation that we have a better chance at survival because we happen to be repelled by things which are disgusting, and these include things which are bad for us. If our common human experience and survival needs can explain why we have similar affective responses to the same things on both a projectivist and a detectivist account, then they do not favour either account. The projectivist account has the further discomfort of requiring us to commit to the position that our everyday use of language and judgements is in error.

Experience is naturally and pre-theoretically understood by most people as presenting certain properties as belonging to the object — there is something about the animal decay which *is* disgusting. If the projectivist is correct and we are actually describing our internal experiences, then there is systematic error. As projectivism requires us to admit that our natural way of viewing the world is in error, it is not ideal as a default position. If another account can accommodate our ordinary beliefs about the world without running into other problems, then it has a better starting point to projectivism.

Simon Blackburn's form of projectivism, quasi-realism, aims to reject the error theory of projectivism. What he aims to do is allow an anti-realist like the projectivist to use realist language (Joyce 2007). According to Blackburn, it is possible to be a projectivist without admitting that we are in systematic error in our everyday judgements and statements about the world.

In discussing ethics, Blackburn argues that ethics is about knowing how to behave rather than knowing that something is objectively the case (Blackburn 2000, 49). When we express evaluations, we are not describing objective features of something. We are rather describing a state of mind and expressing how we think one should behave (49-50). In order to make sense of an ethical statement, therefore, one must look at all of human action and interaction and not just look for truth conditions or objective features that would make the statement true. As a result, when we hold a value, such as "Murder is bad", or "Needlessly drowning babies is bad", we have a relatively stable attitude towards those things. The stable attitude is fixed so as to align values and motivations (67-8). We are motivated to keep children alive to carry on humanity and because we invest a lot (of interest, love) in them, we value children and the legacy they embody, and our attitude of finding needless baby drowning bad aligns the motivation and the value. By expressing an attitude such as "Needlessly drowning babies is bad", we are expressing a relatively stable attitude that we would express for all things which we value in similar ways and in which we are similarly motivated. We are entitled to use the language of objectivity because we develop these relatively stable attitudes and, as we are social animals and have certain shared needs, we communicate that there are things which we all should be valuing (308). The things which we value converge, and so we share many of the same values which the realist language captures. "Murder is bad" is true, not because of a realist metaphysics, but because "Murder is bad" expresses an attitude that we should all behave in a similar fashion in order to achieve our common aims of living together.

Blackburn's quasi-realism deals largely with ethics. As sensuous properties include an evaluative aspect about something being good or bad, quasi-realism could be adopted to explain away the error theory discomfort of projectivism. A quasi-realist, however, would have to show how sensuous properties are relevantly similar to ethical values to suppose that an expression regarding the sensuous value of something is an expression of an attitude about how we should all behave. When I say "The Elgar cello concerto is ethereally beautiful" I am not expressing an attitude that everyone ought to be similarly moved, I am merely expressing my enjoyment and suggesting that others might want to try listening to it as they might have a similar experience.

There is not the same sense of obligation and "oughtness" as when I say "Murder is bad". An expression of ethereal beauty or disgustingness does not seem to be a similar case of knowing how to behave, which is the basis of Blackburn's argument.

In any case, a quasi-realist picture does not make projectivism any better suited as a default account. Blackburn devotes much of his book *Essays in Quasi-Realism* (1993) to explaining why the quasi-realist is entitled to make use of realist language, in particular conditionals and indexicals. If we can get away with an account which does not require that we go into detail to explain why we are entitled to use realist language, then that account is simpler. By virtue of being simpler, it is preferable and should be the default account.

The dispositionalist account, as in the first point, takes the best of both projectivism and detectivism. We have similar experiences because of our common make-up as humans and the conditions and world in which we tend to live. The point about human biology and survival supports all three accounts. Unlike projectivism, however, dispositionalism does not require that we be in error in our everyday judgements and use of language.

As can be seen, the detectivist account this time can easily explain the point, whereas the projectivist account gets quite complicated. Again, the dispositionalist account can explain the point in a straightforward manner. If similar affective responses were the only point about affect that needed to be explained, then both detectivism and dispositionalism are well-suited to be the default, most straightforward accounts.

2.1.3 Accommodating both points

Barry Smith (2002) writes with regard to emotions that they tell us something about both the world and ourselves. Affect, as a constituent of an emotion and as a signaller of value, also does. It tells us something about the objects in the world – that they are desirable or repulsive – and it tells us something about ourselves — that I find this object desirable and that one repulsive, but you find the opposite.

Dispositionalism explains both points with little manipulation: while there is a mind-independent property, the sensuous property is relational to being perceived and the conditions of perception.

Although these points do not immediately rule out the other accounts, a dispositionalist approach is the simplest way to accommodate them. Detectivism and projectivism both have their advantages in explaining different features of affect, but they also both get complex in order to explain other features. Dispositionalism, in a way, takes the good features from the other accounts to form one account that can simply explain both points. As the dispositionalist account provides the easiest way of understanding affect and sensuous properties, it should be the default account, to be rejected only if a conclusive argument is provided against it. In what follows, I will consider Johnston's positive claims for detectivism and apply them to dispositionalism before finally presenting a more comprehensive account of dispositionalism which I will defend.

2.2 Johnston's argument for detectivism

Johnston makes a number of claims about affect and tries to show that, after ruling out dispositionalism and projectivism, detectivism can accommodate the claims.[2] I will focus on the first four claims which are about the nature of sensuous properties and the value associated with them (sensuous value). The last four claims are to do with motivation and action, and are not immediately relevant to the discussion in this section although I will return to them in chapter 3. I will show that these claims do not support only a detectivist account. If that is the case, and if Johnston's arguments against the other positions fail, then he has not argued positively for his detectivist position. Without an argument that shows that detectivism is the only way to go, dispositionalism will remain the default account.

For Johnston, affect discloses value and by doing so has the authority that it does. I will discuss the authority of affect in detail in chapter 4; for now, the authority of affect is the authority and intelligibility that affect has for us and our actions based on it. I will assume for now that

[2] All references to Johnston in this section are from Johnston 2001a, 205-14.

affect does have authority.

Johnston's first claim is that affect has authority by being a refinement of sensing, if sensing is seen as an openness to the environment. Things are presented to our senses and our senses pick them up. When we see with our eyes, we are open to the visuals of our surroundings. Affect works in a similar fashion with the value involved in sensuous properties. When we have an affective experience, we are open to the sensuous properties of our surroundings. If this is the case, there is sensuous value which presents itself to us.

It need not be mind-independent sensuous value, however. What presents itself to us could be a dispositional property to present certain experiences to us which also disclose value. For example, I find the animal decay disgusting. The decay is disposed to present disgustingness to me. By my being in a relation with the animal decay, I experience disgust. Projectivism can also explain the "openness" of affect because certain mind-independent neutral features in objects, to which we are open and which we perceive, cause certain experiences in us. The value, however, is of our internal experience even if it is caused by external features to which we are open.

The next claim is that sensing has the authority that it has because it discloses "truthmakers for judgement". A truthmaker is something which, by its existence, guarantees the truth of a judgement. If I judge, "There is a table to my left", a table being to my left guarantees the truth of the judgement. In the same way, if I judge, "Animal decay is disgusting and not valuable", the decay being independently disgusting and not valuable guarantees the truth of the judgement.

Again, this does not provide conclusive reasons for accepting a detectivist account. The judgement "Animal decay is disgusting and not valuable" could also be guaranteed by the existence of a dispositional property to present disgustingness to me. "There is a table to my left" is true only in virtue of the table being in a relational position to me — there is no sense in "being left" if there is nothing of which it is to the left. Another example is the property "is nourishing", which is relative to the subject. The animal carcass is nourishing to vultures –

but most definitely not to me. There is an implicit relation. In order to work out the truth of the statement about a sensuous property, one has to know what the experience is. "Animal decay is disgusting and not valuable" contains the implicit relation "to me" as opposed to "to a vulture", which is vital to the dispositionalist account. One has to know what the relation is in order to identify the property. Experience is necessary to work out the truth of these claims so Johnston's second claim does not rule out a dispositionalist account. A projectivist could also appeal to experience to establish the truth, such as by saying that the animal decay is disgusting by virtue of my not valuing the experience.

The third claim is that some of the truthmakers for judgements are "exemplifications of the sensuous goods, so the world is anything but evaluatively neutral" (Johnston 2001a, 205). In order for the truthmakers to be truthmakers, they must exist. If we "sense" something to be valuable, we are sensing something that exists; sensuous goods are exemplified.

This is a more problematic claim for a dispositionalist account. If sensuous goods are exemplified, much like the concept of a chair is exemplified in a chair, then we detect them. They do not put us into a dispositional relation. However, there might be ways in which something can be a truthmaker other than through being exemplified. The dispositionalist is not making the claim that there is *no* mind-independent property. The dispositionalist is only making the claim that the mind-independent property is of a special kind. The mind-independent property requires being in relation to a perceiver in order to present experiences of the sensuous property. We are still "sensing" the property, and our judgements are made true by that property. If I judge that "There is table to my left" and there is no table to my left, then the judgement is false. Likewise, if I judge that "Animal decay is disgusting and not valuable" and am not in fact referring to some property of animal decay, then my judgement is false. The truthmakers could put us into a dispositional relation to the object and need not be exemplifications of sensuous goods.

An error theory of projectivism runs into problems here. In order to establish whether the judgement that animal decay is disgusting is true, the projectivist must refer to the experience. However, "The animal decay is disgusting" attributes a property to the animal decay which

it does not actually have. The projectivist might be able to establish that "My experience of animal decay is that of finding it disgusting" by referring to truthmakers in one's own experience, but non-philosophers who accept the everyday language and judgements that "The animal decay is disgusting" cannot establish the truth. This is an undesirable situation, as surely even non-philosophers can know if the judgement is true. I will argue more comprehensively against projectivism by using Johnston's authority of affect argument in chapter 4.

Johnston's fourth claim is that we can get knowledge from judgements of sensuous value because the judgements are formed from their truthmakers. If dispositional properties are also truthmakers, then we can get knowledge from our judgements of sensuous value. "Animal decay is disgusting and not valuable" gives me knowledge both of the property which animal decay has, and of my experience of animal decay.

A dispositional property is still able to give us knowledge. Just because it is relational with a perceiver does not mean we do not gain knowledge of the world. In fact, we gain an important sort of knowledge which is to do with how we experience the world. If I know that animal decay is not valuable because I detect disgustingness, I do not know anything inherently special about my *experience* or what it necessarily says for me. Johnston's positive points in favour of detectivism are not exclusively accommodated by detectivism. He needs to provide better reasons to reject dispositionalism as the default position.

2.3 Dispositionalist account to defend

A dispositionalist account states quite broadly that objects have a disposition to produce certain affective states in us. This can be interpreted differently, so it is necessary to refine it. The important points for the dispositionalist account are:

- The sensuous property includes something which is mind-independent.
- A dispositional property is relational: the sensuous property is dependent on our relation to it and its relation to the conditions.

- We cannot separate the property from the experience: as well as including something mind-independent, the property includes something mind-dependent.

There is a reliance on something which is mind-independent because the external object has the property (albeit dispositional); it is not the case that we describe the world as having a sensuous property which is purely of our subjective sensations. The originating property is a part of the objective world. There needs to be something that is intrinsic to the object so that it can cause experiences in us and account for the authority of affect (to be discussed in chapter 4). However, the nature of the property is such that it requires certain conditions to obtain, such as there being an appropriate perceiver in particular conditions, in order for it to manifest.

David Wiggins (1987) develops an account which he calls a "sensible subjectivism". His "sensible subjectivism" with regard to value is similar to a dispositionalist account. As a starting point for his account, he takes David Hume's passing remark that objects have certain qualities that by their nature produce certain feelings in us (194). He asks us to suppose that objects which regularly produce the same effect in us (for example, harm us) come to be grouped together; their grouping together is because they harm us. If this is the case, then there is no way of saying what our reaction to a property will be without referring to the property itself (195). Consider the things which we find disgusting. I find animal decay disgusting; I find certain pieces of music disgusting. I group these things together as "disgusting" even though they are quite different from one another. What they have in common is the response they inspire in me. When I identify something as disgusting, it is through its being grouped with other things that I find disgusting and I understand the identification as true in virtue of my experience. Disgusting is the property which all disgusting things share.

While this might initially seem similar to a projectivist position because the groupings are based on my subjective experiences, Wiggins rejects projectivism (what he calls emotivism). He argues that, for an emotivist, a disagreement in valuation is simply a disagreement in the attitude expressed (Wiggins 1987, 186). If saying something is disgusting describes our subjective sensations, and if we disagree over what is disgusting and what is not, we are simply

disagreeing in our descriptions of our subjective sensations. The disagreement lies in what we are expressing. In a case like "disgusting" or an ethical value like "good", however, we have an intuition that the attitude being expressed must be grounded in something which the sentence expressing the attitude is about. For example, we have the intuition that saying "x is good" is saying something about x itself. If we disagree on the goodness of x, we are disagreeing on x not on our different attitudes. Likewise, if I say "x is disgusting", I am expressing a valuation of x itself and if you disagree with me, we are disagreeing about the nature of x, not about our attitudes. The projectivist/emotivist account does not adequately explain why we have this feeling. The logic of the claim of "x is disgusting" commits us to attributing some property to the object, and if we are mistaken in that then our ordinary language is in error. Having our everyday attitudes and language guilty of systematic error is something which needs support, and undermines projectivism's candidacy for being the default account.

If I express that "The Elgar cello concerto is ethereally beautiful" and someone disagrees with me, it is less obvious than in the case of finding animal decay disgusting that we are disagreeing about the nature of the music than merely having different attitudes. However, if I do not have an affective response to the music and simply think off-hand that it is beautiful, I will not be as committed to defending my judgement that it is beautiful, and could (almost) happily concede that it is only beautiful because I find it so. Actually having an affective experience, being moved by the music, is something stronger. If I say that "The Elgar cello concerto is ethereally beautiful", I am describing the cello concerto. If someone disagrees with me, I will try to explain why it is ethereally beautiful, why I am so moved and why they should be too: listen to the chords, the rhythm, the timpani roll. I will direct attention to the features of the music itself. I will also refer to my background in classical music, the fact that there is a clarinet part which I only pick out because I am attuned to the sound of the clarinet, and I will refer to the romantic notion of its being the last piece of music Elgar ever wrote. Even by describing my background, I am picking out features of the actual music. My opponent might argue against the schmaltzy nature of English Romantic music, and I will disagree. Both of us will be referring to features of the music itself and while our attitudes might be informed by those features, we are still

disagreeing about the nature of the music and not merely disagreeing in our attitudes.

In order to ground the subjective aspect, there needs to be a property in the object about which an attitude is expressed; when there is disagreement, the disagreement will be about the property (or broadly about the object). When the combinations of properties and their reactions increases and diversifies, then it becomes difficult to say what reaction a thing will inspire in me without alluding to the property itself (Wiggins 1987, 195). The animal decay will inspire disgust in me because it shares a property with other things which are disgusting.

The advantage of Wiggins' account over a straightforward subjectivism/projectivism is that disagreement will be about something other than the attitude expressed, and the relativism of such accounts is avoided. An attitude becomes relatively fixed and is paired with a property (Wiggins 1987, 198) so what we find disgusting or attractive is not completely random and fluid. There remains the possibility for variation, however, as different people might form different property-response pairs and, over time and in different conditions, an individual might form different property-response pairs.

Taking Wiggins as a starting point, we can now look into a dispositionalist account for sensuous properties. I rejected projectivism as a default account because it committed us to error. The kind of dispositionalist account that I want to argue for must not also commit us to error. When we find something disgusting, we do seem to be experiencing something that is actually in the object. In order to accommodate our common sense views, it must be possible to be perceptually aware of dispositional properties like we are perceptually aware of primary qualities. The dispositionalist account needs to be able to accommodate this, otherwise dispositionalism is in no better starting position than projectivism.

John McDowell (1985, 111-12) gives an account of dispositional properties which explains just how we can be perceptually aware of them. A secondary quality ascription is that something's being red is its disposition to present a certain sort of perceptual appearance, that is, of appearing red. The appearance is characterised by referring to the property itself: the appearance of redness. On a dispositionalist account, therefore, an ascription of a property of redness is

understood to be true in virtue of how it appears. This is different to saying that it *is* true in virtue of some mind-independent property. Understanding "is red" in terms of features of the surface of the object, however, would not be an ascription of redness. Redness involves the appearance, as Colin McGinn (1983, 13-14) argues. Suppose that we discovered that the physical properties of red objects varied from object to object. These variations were compensated in our own vision, so that they all appeared red. We would not say that each object had a different colour, which we would be committed to doing if ascribing a colour property depended on the physical properties. We would rather ascribe redness to all of the objects, and conclude that redness is not reducible to any single set of physical properties.

As applied to sensuous properties, it is the case that an ascription of disgustingness is understood to be true in virtue of how it appears to us. Sensuous properties have that important sensuous aspect. Being disgusting could be true in virtue of some mind-independent property, but that is not an ascription of the sensuous property. I find very different things disgusting – animal decay, music – and it is difficult to see how they might all have the same physical properties. The variability of things that we find disgusting, and our ascription of disgustingness to them, shows that we do ascribe the property of disgustingness based on our experiences.

What it is to have a dispositional property such as redness or disgustingness can only be understood in terms of the relevant experience. As being understood as true in virtue of experience is different to being true in virtue of some mind-independent property, there is room for there being some property in the object. Something's being disposed to appear red or disgusting, and something's being disposed to appear red or disgusting to a particular perceiver at a particular time, are independent of each other. Something's being experienced such as to look red to the perceiver at a particular time is compatible with the perceiver being presented with a property that is independently there, that of being disposed to appear red (McDowell 1985, 112). A colour can thus be the object of perceptual experience; it is just an object of a special kind. Something's being experienced such as to appear disgusting to the perceiver at a particular time, likewise, is compatible with the perceiver being presented with a property of being disposed to appear disgusting.

The dispositionalist account can be understood as the object's presenting an affective experience to us in certain conditions. In the case of sensuous properties, the animal decay's disposition to produce feelings of disgust will not be realised if the wrong perceiver is around, such as a vulture. Likewise, the subjective make up of the person will also affect the conditions. If I am stuck on a desert island and am close to starving to death, animal decay might not be quite as disgusting as I usually find it. In order to rule out vultures and desert island situations, there needs to be a limit imposed. I will use the fairly broad limit of "normal conditions and standard perceivers", where "normal" and "standard" mean just what they say. Determining just what exactly is normal and standard is itself a big issue, so for now, I will settle with what would be accepted by non-philosophers. Normal conditions rule out drug-induced, life-or-death situations and standard perceivers, limited to humans, rule out people with severe perceptual, emotional or psychological issues. In certain situations, like listening to music, more information about the perceiver and the situation might be needed. For example, if we have different reactions to the Elgar cello concerto, given information such as a history of disliking English Romantic music or the fact that I am listening to the music at moderate volume whereas you are directly next to some speakers blasting forth at top volume and distorting the sound, the experience is understandably different. The dispositional property of ethereal beauty is presented in one case, but not in the other. It is difficult to give a clear-cut idea of what standard perceivers of sensuous properties such as disgust and ethereal beauty are because of the experiential aspect of the property. "Standard" at the very least rules out severely obtuse perceivers of one kind or another. While I might be happy to accept that we can reasonably have different responses to the Elgar cello concerto, I am not so happy to concede that another (standard) person can find animal decay utterly attractive. There are certain things that most people share a similar reaction to, and which the dispositionalist account needs to accommodate. By limiting the perceivers to "standard", the account is addressing the similarity of many of our responses. By no means, however, is it at all conclusive who those perceivers are, or what the normal conditions are, otherwise there would be no room to allow different responses.

3

Against detectivism

In the case of affect and sensuous properties, the experience is an important feature which must play its role in the account. We describe something like disgustingness by referring to the experience. That is what the original definition of a sensuous property was: a sensuous property is a property which is only accessed via our affective experience. Without affect, we would not know what the sensuous property is. Unlike primary qualities where we can identify the same quality through different senses, we can only identify sensuous properties through affect.

Changes in the object, in us, and in the conditions all affect the experience. If animal decay is miraculously turned into a piece of steak, then I will no longer feel disgust. If I were to turn into a vulture, I would also no longer find it disgusting. And if I were starving on a desert island, I would no longer have an affective response and be repulsed, even though I might still judge the decay of not much value. In all of these cases, the experience changes because of changes in the object, the perceiver, or the conditions. A satisfactory account of disgustingness and its description must be able to acknowledge these changes and explain cases of disagreement where different people have different affective experiences of the same thing. In order to do so, it must acknowledge the relations between the object, the perceiver and the conditions.

The type of perceiver is necessary for which property is revealed, and a reference to the perceiver is necessary to explain and understand the property. Unlike primary properties, we only

have one way of knowing sensuous properties and that is through affect. Affect is a sensuous experience specific to a person. Without the sensuous experience, we do not know the sensuous property. This provides reason to believe that sensuous properties are essentially sensible. If they are essentially sensible, then someone with senses is necessary and is intricately linked to the property. I am working with an account of dispositional properties where they have the features of having something mind-independent, of being relational with a perceiver, and of being inseparable from the experience. I am arguing that there are properties which have these features, and sensuous properties are examples of such properties.

A detectivist account only gives an intrinsic role to the object; a projectivist account only gives an intrinsic role to the perceiver; a dispositionalist account gives a role to all three features of the experience. Because of this, the dispositionalist account is the most straightforward option and should be the default account. Unless good arguments are given against the dispositionalist account and we are given reasons to assume that it is not the best option, it remains the default position.

A detectivist might object and say that detectivism does accommodate changes in the conditions and perceivers. This is what Johnston (2001a) does by arguing that different people are attuned to different aspects of a scene and so detect or discern different sensuous properties and different values. Experience's revealing of the property to us is compatible with detectivism as the property is still something that is mind-independent. Incorporating the person's history and the conditions into an explanation and using the relation between the object and the person to identify the property are fine in explaining how we come to know the property, but the detectivist claim goes deeper. The detectivist claim is that the essential nature of the property is that it is mind-independent. As was argued in 2.1, the detectivist cannot explain cases of disagreement without introducing a relation. The relation has to be with the perceiver in order to avoid the undesirable conclusion that something is both intrinsically something and its opposite. If the detectivist does not commit to this conclusion, then she has not explained what is going on in a case of disagreement.

3.1 Do we apprehend dispositions?

A line of attack for the detectivist is to argue that we do not perceive or apprehend dispositions as we in fact perceive or apprehend the grounds for dispositions, which are mind-independent properties. Jackson and Pargetter (1997) argue that "Redness for S in C at t is the property which causes (or would cause) objects to look red to S in C at t" where S is the subject, C the conditions and t the time (72). They maintain that this is different to saying that an object has a dispositional property to appear red to S in C at t. The property is not a disposition itself, but it confers a disposition on whatever possesses it. Consider the dispositionalist claim that redness is a disposition to look red; if that is the case, then something's looking red is not our apprehension of the thing's redness as it is rather an apprehension of a disposition to look red. This goes against our intuitions and everyday judgements that we apprehend a thing's redness (69-70). Jackson and Pargetter conclude that redness is thus not a disposition to look red. Redness rather confers a disposition to look red on the object. Redness is made up of physical properties which confer on the object a disposition to appear red to normal perceivers. What we actually perceive as redness are physical properties.

Jackson and Pargetter argue that this account can accommodate different views and experiences. With regard to colour, if a white wall appears blue, then the actual physical properties have changed. A white wall appears blue if a blue light is shone on it and it is blue because the physical properties of the wall that is being perceived have been changed by the properties of the blue light. In cases where the physical properties have not changed but the experience has changed, such as the colour of a mountain from different distances, then it is the conditions which have changed (Jackson and Pargetter 1997, 73). The perceiver has changed positions; nothing in the mind of the perceiver has changed.

Applied to sensuous properties, Jackson and Pargetter's schema would be "Disgustingness for S in C at t is the property which causes (or would cause) objects to appear disgusting to S in C at t". Disgustingness is a set of physical mind-independent properties which, under certain conditions, cause objects to appear as disgusting. If there are differences, it is either because the

property itself is different or because the conditions have changed. Something mind-independent has changed, which experience reveals to us.

A way to understand how redness could confer a disposition to appear red on the object but not be the disposition itself, to understand how redness grounds the disposition, is to look at the argument that Jonathan Bennett (1971, 102-5) gives to show that secondary quality perception can be explained in terms of primary qualities. He interprets the secondary quality thesis as saying that "If x stood in relation R to a normal human, the human would have a sensory idea of such and such a kind" (94). This thesis is dispositional and so can be reconstructed as a counterfactual conditional, following regulative principles used in science. If the dispositional thesis is put as "If x were F, it would be H" where F is "in relation R to a normal human" and H is the property experienced (or the idea in the mind of the perceiver), then it can be analysed into the form of "There is some non-dispositional ϕ such that: x is ϕ, and it is a causal law that if anything is both ϕ and F then it is H".

For example, "Salt is disposed to be soluble in water" can be put as, "If salt were put in water, it would dissolve". This is the same as saying that the salt has molecular structure ϕ, and it is a causal law that if anything is both ϕ and in water, it will dissolve. For colour, "If x were [in relation R to a normal human], it would be [red]" would be the same as saying, "There is some non-dispositional ϕ such that: x is ϕ, and it is a causal law that if anything is both ϕ and [in relation R to a normal human] then it is [red]". If that is so, then the colour is based on non-dispositional property ϕ, which could be substituted with the physical make-up of the surface. What we are perceiving is in fact a non-dispositional property. We are not perceiving a disposition. We are thus perceiving a mind-independent property, in certain conditions.

Jackson and Pargetter rejected the dispositionalist account because they argued that one apprehends an object as being red, not as having a disposition to appear red. Bennett's argument supplements how this could be so.

In response to Jackson and Pargetter, we need to see if the claim that we do not apprehend the object as being disposed to appear a certain way is defensible with regard to sensuous

properties. Do we apprehend the object as being disposed to appear disgusting, or do we apprehend disgustingness itself? This is their starting point and their main problem with dispositionalism.

I have argued that we do think of disgustingness as being a feature of the object (in 1.1.2 and 2.1.2). However, as McDowell (1985) has shown, there is no contradiction in thinking that a dispositional property can exist independently even when there is no perceiver around. What we experience can be a property of the object. Do we experience this property as being dispositional or relational in the sense that I claim?

If I apprehend the animal decay covered in maggots as disgusting, I am aware that the maggots do not find it disgusting. A vital part of the sensuous property is the sensuous aspect and without the sensuous experience, there is not a sensuous property rather than simply a judgement of value. Disgustingness is partly an experience. One's experience is one's own, and the ease with which I can look at the maggots enjoying the animal decay and accept that they are utterly attracted to it while I am repulsed suggests that my apprehension of disgustingness involves an apprehension or acknowledgement of the experience of and relation with the one who is perceiving.

In order to flesh out how one can apprehend an experience or a relation, I will return to Wiggins (1987), to whom I referred in introducing dispositionalism in 2.3.[3] Suppose we grouped together all things for which we have a similar experience. We then label these as "disgusting" and ascribe the property of disgustingness to those things. The property of disgustingness is what the things which we experience as disgusting all share. We identify something new as disgusting because of the similarity of the experience which we have to the other experiences of things which we have labelled disgusting. In this way, it is possible for the animal decay or a piece of music to be disgusting — we undergo the same sort of experience. When I am utterly repulsed by something, I experience it as disgusting but also as its being disposed to present experiences of a certain kind, which are of the same kind as other experiences I have. My apprehension of disgustingness is also my apprehension of the manifestation of a disposition to appear a

[3]Thanks also to Lucy Allais for suggesting this approach.

certain way. The vital experiential aspect, again, makes sensuous properties different to colour properties. Apprehension of sensuous properties, more so than colours, is an apprehension of both an object and an experience, and the dispositional relation between the two.

In response to Bennett (1971), I will draw on McDowell (1985) again. A dispositionalist can accept the counterfactual conditional analysis of "There is some non-dispositional ϕ such that: x is ϕ, and it is a causal law that if anything is both ϕ and F then it is H". The ascription of a sensuous property is *understood* as true in virtue of the object's disposition to present a certain sort of perceptual experience. Even if it is the case that the ascription is true in virtue of some mind-independent physical properties, limiting the description only to those properties will not be ascribing the sensuous property. The sensuous property involves a sensuous aspect which is known through the experience. The role of experience, as McGinn argues, is vital. How, then, is Bennett's argument to be understood by the dispositionalist? The key question is: what is it about the primary qualities that mean that when condition F is present, the combination leads to H? This is the question which the dispositionalist thesis is addressing.

The counterfactual conditional does not explain sensuous properties only in terms of mind-independent features of the object, so while the mind-dependent property can be partly described in terms of mind-independent properties, it is is not reducible to those properties. The important part of the counterfactual condition is the condition F. To ignore or downplay the role of condition F is like saying that the molecular structure of salt is such that it will dissolve — (oh yes, do not forget to put it in water). It is vital to being dissolved that the salt be in water. Here, there is a relation between two mind-independent properties, the water and the salt. Sensuous properties, as has been shown, require a relation with a perceiver and the perceiver's experience. Sound waves plus a working apparatus for hearing does not lead to the ethereal beauty. Sound waves, the apparatus (my ears) plus *a relation to me and my subjective interests and experiences* leads to ethereal beauty. For the dispositionalist, condition F cannot be just anything, it has to be a claim about a relation to a perceiver. When we apprehend sensuous properties, we are apprehending both ϕ *and* the relation that makes up condition F. As McDowell argued, it is not contradictory to suppose that there is a dispositional property

which exists independently of the perceiver. The dispositional property can be put into terms of mind-independent features and relations, but not only into terms of mind-independent features and the relations must involve a perceiver. The compound covers the disposition.

3.2 Other reasons for going with detectivism

The detectivist account does not explain the role of experience in a way that is more satisfactory than a dispositionalist explanation. There might be other reasons to favour a detectivist account, however. In 2.2, I argued that the first four of Johnston's claims about affect do not single out detectivism over dispositionalism. The last four, however, might. I will argue that they do not.

The last four of Johnston's claims are to do with motivation, action and evaluative judgements; they are based on what Johnston claims in the first four.[4] As dispositionalism can also accommodate Johnston's first four claims, it can easily accommodate the last four.

The fifth claim is that, as affect is motivating, it can shape both actions and attention. Johnston uses the example of a jaded chess master to illustrate. One can become affectively involved in chess games and moves, and chess masters often describe moves as "beautiful" or in other emotive ways. Consider a chess master who has lost that affective interest in what he does: he slowly loses the ability to notice the things that at one time fascinated him. He loses the motivation to play a good game. This is evident in his actions (not playing the optimal move) and his attentions (he is no longer interested so he no longer notices the optimal move). If we find something ethereally beautiful or utterly appealing, we tend to give it more attention than things which do not capture our interest in such a strong way. By doing so we notice things we would not otherwise notice. A dispositionalist account, however, can also explain the motivational force of affect. Because a sensuous property is relational, a change in the conditions or in the perceiver will affect the property. In the case of the jaded chess master, the perceiver has changed. The chess master no longer has the interest in or the disposition to be excited by chess; he no longer finds good moves ethereally beautiful. Because of that, he lacks

[4] All references to Johnston in the following discussion come from Johnston 2001a, 205-14.

the motivation to act and to attend.

The sixth claim is that the immediate judgement of the value of something, which is part of an affective response, makes sense of the action and there is no need for evaluative beliefs — this was what Johnston argues for with the authority of affect which I will return to in detail in chapter 4. Projectivism, as will be shown, cannot explain the authority that affect has. Having an affective response to something gives authority to our actions; for example, my feelings of disgust make my retreat from the animal decay intelligible and my affect has an authority over me, leading to certain actions.

A projectivist might explain the authority of affect by appealing to evaluative beliefs which give value to my desire to do something, such as by arguing that my desire to listen to the Elgar cello concerto is based on my valuing the sensations it causes in me. But, as Johnston argues, the affective disclosures of sensuous properties which explain the evaluative beliefs directly rationalise the desire. My enjoyment of the sensations directly rationalises my desire to listen to the music; I do not need to judge that I value the music. This claim, too, is not a problem for dispositionalism. The dispositionalist still requires there to be a property of a particular kind in the object itself which, together with the perceiver and the conditions, results in the full sensuous property.

The seventh and eight claims are linked and are explanations of the role that evaluative reason plays in an affective life. We have many authoritative affective responses to things, and sometime our affective response goes against what we come to believe after rationalising. For example, I have an affective dislike of bananas but will eat them because they satiate my hunger and are good for me. Despite knowing that they are good for me, the actual action of eating them repulses me and seems on some levels ridiculous and unintelligible. With these different reactions and beliefs, our affective lives and lives in general could be quite chaotic. Evaluative reason helps order the insights that affect brings, even in the case of the bananas. Without evaluative reason, I would not eat the bananas which are good for me. With evaluative reason, I am able to act in the way I choose. As the discussion of the previous six claims has shown, dispositionalism also provides an explanation of Johnston's claims and so can also explain why

we have so many different affective responses and why evaluative reason is useful in bringing harmony to an affective life.

In order to accept a detectivist account, one needs to have good reason to think that the property is only constituted by objective intrinsic features of the object and the role of experience is only to disclose the property. Although experience and reference to the perceiver can be used to understand why and which property is presently being disclosed, the detectivist claims that the property is mind-independent and that any role which experience and the perceiver might play is not essential to the property. This further claim is problematic in working out what the intrinsic nature of the property is, and does not explain what is going on in cases of disagreement. A dispositionalist account also makes use of the experience and in fact gives the experience an intrinsic role which in turn explains why experience is necessary for an understanding of the property and makes sense of cases of disagreement. If we can only come to know an essentially sensible property through experiencing it in one particular way – through affect – and if we pick out what property is present by relating it to the perceiver, then an account which gives experience (including the perceiver and conditions) a similarly important role can capture the relations effectively.

4

The authority of affect

Johnston (2001a) has two main arguments against projectivist and dispositionalist accounts of the relation between sensuous properties and affect. The first argument he raises is the problem of the "authority of affect" for projectivism, together with the claim that dispositionalism is really just a trumped up version of projectivism. The second argument is that, even if dispositionalism is a distinct account, it is structurally incoherent.

In this chapter, I will present Johnston's argument for the authority of affect and why he thinks that dispositionalism and projectivism are ultimately the same. I will respond to his complaints in chapter 5 before focusing on the main problem for dispositionalism, that of incoherence, in chapter 6.

4.1 The authority and intelligibility of affect

Johnston's argument for the authority of affect is that only if the "affect can be the *disclosure* of the appeal of other things" can it have the authority and the intelligibility that it does have (Johnston 2001a, 189). When I am doing something and I ask "Why am I doing this?" the answer will refer to the worth or the specific sensuous quality of what is being done. When I stop and restart the Elgar concerto and ask why I am doing so, my answer is that I enjoy

listening to it because I find it valuable. Affect might be a source of action, but the desire to act is only intelligible if the affect discloses value. This is in contrast to a mere urge to do something where the value of what is being done is not a part of the affective experience. Johnston defines an urge as involving "no experience of the worth or appeal of what it is an urge to do" (190).

Just like a perceptual experience of objects justifies perceptual beliefs, or at least makes the perceptual beliefs intelligible, so affective experiences of sensuous properties justify or make intelligible affective desires. Our sight picks up on mind-independent objects; our affect picks up on mind-independent properties of value (Johnston 2001a, 189).

4.1.1 Desires and mere urges

Johnston's argument against projectivism is that projectivism cannot explain why an affective desire is intelligible and authoritative in the way that it is. Projectivism cannot distinguish between an intelligible desire and a mere urge and, based on this, he argues that projectivism is wrong. The argument can be put as:

1. There is a difference between a desire and an urge.
2. If projectivism is right, then both are only features of our affective experiences.
3. If both are only features of our affective experiences, then there is no difference between the two.
4. Therefore, it is not the case that they are both only features of our affective experience [from 1 and 3].
5. Therefore, projectivism is wrong [from 2 and 4].

To show that there is a difference between a desire and an urge, Johnston (2001a, 190) uses the example of wanting to turn a doorknob counterclockwise. In this example, a person has a strong urge to turn a doorknob counterclockwise, but has no interest in opening doors or turning things or feeling something — the only urge is to turn the doorknob counterclockwise.

While this urge might be effective in getting the person to turn doorknobs, if he asks himself "Why do I want to do this?" he does not have an answer. Without knowing why he wants to turn doorknobs counterclockwise, his action is unintelligible to himself. The mere urge to turn the doorknob counterclockwise is different to a desire intricately linked with the value of something. If I desire to turn a doorknob counterclockwise, it might be because I value some aspect of opening doors or the feel of doorknobs when they turn counterclockwise under my hand. Sensuous properties are properties which have a sensuous value, so by using this example, Johnston is arguing two things. The first is that if affect is going to be intelligible, the value cannot be removed. The second is that there is a difference between a mere urge which is not associated with value, and an affective desire. This is the first premise in the argument as I have constructed it above.

In support of the second premise, one just needs to consider what an urge and a desire are for a projectivist. A projectivist argues that a sensuous property, which includes the evaluative aspect of the property, is a feature of the experience. There is no intrinsic feature of the property in the external object. An urge, which does not involve an evaluative aspect, is more obviously a feature of the experience as there does not seem to be any immediate link to the object, such as finding it valuable. A detectivist need not have a problem with accepting that an urge is merely a feature of the subjective experience, because an urge does not have an evaluative aspect which we detect. Rather, it is simply a subjective reaction. Projectivism requires that both be features of only our experience.

In support of the third premise, Johnston (2001a, 190-4) argues against three projectivist accounts of what the difference might be. These are that an intelligible desire is one which I judge to be worthwhile, that there is no pain or pleasure in an urge, or that I do not identify with an urge whereas I do with a desire. I will assess these projectivist responses in 4.1.2 and show how they are unsatisfactory. Assuming that the third premise is true, the two conclusions follow from *modus tollens*.

Projectivism cannot explain the difference between an urge and a desire as the projectivist account of value is purely subjective. On a projectivist account, what we find appealing is simply

what we are disposed to affectively desire (Johnston 2001a, 189). Because projectivism cannot explain the difference, it cannot in turn explain why an affective desire has the intelligibility and authority that it has.

According to the detectivist, we detect the sensuous value and our desire is based on what we detect. The difference between a mere urge and a desire is that the latter is based on detecting mind-independent sensuous properties, which have an evaluative aspect, while the former is not. When Indiana Jones jumps away from the rolling boulder, his belief that there is a boulder rolling towards him and his desire to jump away is intelligible in virtue of there actually being a boulder rolling towards him which he perceives. When he acts the way he does, he is following a desire which has authority over informing his actions because his perception is detecting a mind-independent object and he believes that the boulder is not a figment of his imagination. If he knew that he was imagining a boulder, his desire to act so as to avoid it would not be authoritative or if he did act to avoid it (automatically), he might be angry with himself for doing so — another course of action would have been more intelligible given that he knew that there was no boulder. The external object makes the desire intelligible, and it gives authority to us to act on that desire. Actual objects which we perceive provide the authority to our beliefs and desires so that we can interact in an objective world. Indiana Jones happens to find snakes horrendous — he has an affective response to snakes. Similarly for objects, if the snakes are mind-independently horrendous, then his desire to get away is intelligible and authoritative over his actions.

Because projectivism cannot explain why affect can have the authority and intelligibility that it does have, Johnston rejects it as a plausible account.

4.1.2 No projectivism

There are a number of ways in which a projectivist could respond, but none of them is successful. A projectivist will accept the first two premises – there is a difference between an urge and a desire and both are features of the perceiver's affective experience – but she will not accept

the third premise, that if they are both features of our affective experience, then there is no difference between the two. The projectivist has three ways of responding, all of which Johnston addresses.

The first is that the reason why the action resulting from a desire is intelligible to me is that I judge it worthwhile to do. Perhaps I judge it worthwhile because I value the sensations that I experience. When I restart the Elgar cello concerto, I judge it worthwhile because I value the way it makes me feel. The action resulting from an urge, such as that of turning doorknobs counterclockwise, however, is not intelligible because I do not judge it worthwhile.

Johnston rejects this explanation as there are cases where I might choose to do something even though I do not judge it worthwhile or do not value the sensations. He uses the example where he wants to gain weight and knows that in order to do so, he needs to eat a protein bar. He affectively dislikes the flavour and so chooses not to eat the bar. In this case, he acts against his judgement and follows his affect. Here, he is following an affective urge – much like turning doorknobs counterclockwise – *and* is not judging doing so to be worthwhile. In such cases, the action is still intelligible. He knows and understands, and we know and understand, why he did not eat the bar. Intelligibility seems to be independent of evaluative judgements, and projectivism is unable to explain this (Johnston 2001a, 190).

A projectivist might respond and say that there are two judgements going on here. The one is that the protein bar is worthwhile in order to gain weight; the other is that the protein bar is not worthwhile as far as flavour goes. This just takes the problem one step back, however: why is the judgement that the protein bar is not worthwhile more efficacious for action than the judgement that it is? A response which Johnston considers on behalf of the projectivist is that, all things considered, he *should* have eaten the protein bar because, all things considered, it would achieve his overarching aims. Turning a doorknob is not good in any way, all things considered, and that is why it is unintelligible. The judgement not to eat the protein bar is more efficacious because, given the situation, the bodily affect is powerful and Johnston has a weakness of will to follow what he knows is, all things considered, good.

Suppose, however, that he does eat the protein bar despite affectively not wanting to. He has judged it, all things considered, to be good. But is the action intelligible? I will use an example with which I am more familiar, as I am not a protein bar eater. I sometimes eat bananas because, for some reason or other, they are the only readily available snacking food I can find. My hunger is such that I need to eat something. However, bananas often make me gag — I often have a physical revulsion to bananas and find them disgusting. I still carry on eating them because I know that I am hungry and I judge the banana to be a good thing to get rid of that hunger, not to mention having various other benefits. My judgement is in favour of eating the banana. Nevertheless, while I am struggling through the banana, I always think how ridiculous the situation is. (I have found myself in tears while I am eating a banana, but have made myself carry on.) I have a reason for eating the banana and I know it is a good reason, but actually eating the banana is unintelligible to me on at least one level. The point which this highlights is that affect and a judgement of the worth of an action can be completely different. It is possible for me not to value the sensation and judge something else to be worthwhile, but the affect is still authoritative on at least some levels. I still struggle to eat the banana, even though I have judged it worthwhile. The projectivist account does not make sense of this because, if a desire is more than a mere urge because I value it, then my evaluations should cohere with my desire.

The second projectivist response is that there is no pain or pleasure in satisfying an urge, whereas there is in satisfying or denying a desire. This is not a satisfactory explanation as it is quite plausible that one might have an urge and feel pain if it is not satisfied, or pleasure if it is. If one has a compulsive urge to wash one's hands, and finds pleasure (perhaps in the form of relief) in doing so, the action can still be unintelligible (Johnston 2001a, 191).

This leads onto the third projectivist response, that I do not identify with the urge (Johnston 2001a, 192). In cases where I do not identify with the urge, say I do not identify with turning doorknobs counterclockwise or compulsively washing my hands, my desire to act, by virtue of not desiring to desire the action, is unintelligible. Blackburn argues that not all desires bring pleasure when gratified because I do not identify with the desire; identifying with the desire is an important part of the desire (Blackburn 2000, 139-140). In order to show the importance

of identifying with a desire, he uses the example of someone desiring revenge. We can give her a pill that removes all memories of wrongs done, or we can tell her falsely that her enemy has been destroyed. Both ways, she gets peace of mind but, because she identifies with the desire for revenge, her desire has not actually been fulfilled. If she were to find out the truth about her peace of mind, she would not be happy.

This response of identifying with desires is ultimately unsatisfactory. Consider my urge to restart the Elgar cello concerto so that I can continuously listen to certain phrases. I identify with the urge to restart the music – I desire to desire the music – but, the question of *why* I desire it still remains. If the music is independently valuable, I can explain my desire to desire. My affective state has a power over me even if I do not identify with it; the projectivist, by appealing to identifying with desires and valuing certain subjective sensations, cannot explain why the affective state has the power that it does. The unwilling addict does not identify with his desire for drugs, but can still find drugs utterly attractive. His affective state still has power over him even though he does not identify with it. The projectivist cannot explain why it has that power.

There is a distinction between a mere urge and a desire involving the value of something. If they are both features of an affective experience, the difference cannot be explained on a projectivist account. For a projectivist, the sensuous property is merely a subjective sensation in me. If I have an affective urge to turn doorknobs counterclockwise, its unintelligibility could be explained by my not valuing the subjective sensation. I do not like having urges like that. However, as has been shown, valuing and identifying with the sensation is not enough to explain why I have that sensation in the first place or why it is so powerful over me. An account which can explain the sensation in the first place is better able to explain the authority of affect. Projectivism lacks explanatory power. Affect does make our actions intelligible and authoritative and an account of affect needs to be able to explain why.

4.2 Much the same

Johnston (1998, 2001a) further argues that dispositionalism ultimately collapses into projectivism. A projectivist argues that we project our affects and our subjective accounts of value onto a neutral world. A dispositionalist simply adds the claim that the objects have dispositions to produce the relevant affective states in us. The dispositionalist could still be locating the sensuous property in the subjective response produced in the perceiver. A formulation of dispositionalism of having the disposition to produce certain sensations in a perceiver looks like it might locate the relevant property in the perceiver; my formulation, however, is of a disposition to present certain experiences, to appear a certain way, to perceivers.

Johnston's more detailed argument in "Are Manifest Qualities Response-Dependent" (1998) makes use of the Missing Explanation argument. The Missing Explanation argument is that a perfectly good empirical explanation goes missing if dispositionalism is right. That is, one of the consequences of a dispositionalist account is that an empirical explanation such as "The stone is red because standard perceivers perceive it as being red" is no longer needed in order to explain why the stone is red. We can know *a priori* that the stone is red. If it goes missing, then the dispositional claim is purely *a priori*. If it is *a priori*, then we do not need to perceive the object in order to know if it is red. In other words, there is no independent property which we perceive, which is the projectivist claim.

The argument, in its core, is as follows: sensing/perceiving is a form of receptivity to how thing stand in the world; sensing/perceiving is a form of receptivity to objective properties. If something is an objective property, then it can be sensed or perceived. We cannot sense or perceive dispositions (from the Missing Explanation argument). Therefore, dispositions are not objective properties. If that is the case, a dispositionalist account is reduced to a projectivist account because, if dispositions are not objective properties, then they are properties of our subjective experience. If that is the case, like for projectivism, we describe the world in terms of our subjective experience and the authority of affect applies to dispositionalism as well.

4.3 The Missing Explanation argument

Johnston argues more comprehensively against dispositionalism as a distinct account by using the Missing Explanation argument. The Missing Explanation argument, as applied to disgust and sensuous value, would be:[5]

1. The animal decay is disgusting. [This is an empirical (contingent) fact.]

2. When an object has a particular sensuous property, then standard subjects under standard conditions are disposed to experience it as having that sensuous property. [This is a general contingent truth about standard subjects. It is contingently true that standard humans in standard conditions experience disgust and find negative sensuous value in animal decay.]

3. Standard subjects under standard conditions are disposed to experience animal decay as disgusting. [From 1 and 2.]

4. It is *a priori* and necessary that x is disgusting if and only if x is disposed to appear disgusting to all actual and possible appropriate subjects under standard conditions. [This is the dispositionalist formulation.]

5. It is *a priori* and necessary that the actual appropriate subjects are standard subjects.

6. Thus, it is *a priori* and necessary that if x is disposed to appear disgusting to all actual and possible appropriate subjects, then x is disposed to appear disgusting to standard subjects under standard conditions. [From 4 and 5.]

7. Therefore, it is *a priori* and necessary that x is disposed to appear disgusting to standard subjects under standard conditions.

If it is *a priori* and necessary that x is disposed to appear disgusting to standard subjects under standard conditions, then there is no need for the empirical explanation in 3, or of the

[5] Johnston (1998) targets the argument at dispositionalist accounts of colour, such as "x is deep red if and only if x is disposed to appear deep red to all actual and possible appropriate subjects under standard conditions" (18).

empirical contingent facts in 1 and 2. The empirical explanation goes missing. We do not sense or perceive a disposition as we can know a disposition *a priori*.

If the dispositionalist claim is in fact *a priori* and necessary, then there is no need for empirical experience to establish what property an object has. There is no need to experience or come into contact with the object; we can know independently what the sensuous property is. If we can know independently what the sensuous property is, without experience, then there is no need to postulate a property (dispositional or not) that is in the object. The sensuous property is what we project onto the object. Dispositionalism, because of the Missing Explanation argument, is really no different to projectivism.

If this is the case, the authority of affect is also a problem for dispositionalism as it remains that there is no value to what we find valuable prior to our projecting, and we cannot effectively distinguish between a desire and a mere urge.

5

Dispositionalism and projectivism

This chapter will establish that the dispositionalist account that I am defending is distinct from projectivism and that the authority of affect does not apply to it. Johnston (1998) argues for the similarity of the two accounts by using the Missing Explanation argument; I will begin by assessing it.

5.1 The Missing Explanation argument revisited

Johnston originally targeted the Missing Explanation argument at a dispositionalist account of colour. As sensuous properties and colour are quite different, the Missing Explanation argument might not work so well against a dispositionalist account of sensuous properties. An important difference is that, because colour is sensed through the eyes and sensuous properties are not linked to one specific sense organ, it is difficult to explain what the standard perceiver for sensuous properties is (whereas for colour, it can be explained as perceivers with vision in working order). The argument is:

1. The animal decay is disgusting.

2. When an object has a particular sensuous property, then standard subjects under standard

conditions are disposed to experience it as having that sensuous property.

3. Standard subjects under standard conditions are disposed to experience animal decay as disgusting.

4. It is *a priori* and necessary that x is disgusting if and only if x is disposed to appear disgusting to all actual and possible appropriate subjects under standard conditions.

5. It is *a priori* and necessary that the actual appropriate subjects are standard subjects.

6. Thus, it is *a priori* and necessary that if x is disposed to appear disgusting to all actual and possible appropriate subjects, then x is disposed to appear disgusting to standard subjects under standard conditions.

7. Therefore, it is *a priori* and necessary that x is disposed to appear disgusting to standard subjects under standard conditions.

The first premise, that the animal decay is disgusting, is not formulated correctly for a dispositionalist account of sensuous properties. "The pen is red" is more-or-less readily accepted by most people. "The animal decay is disgusting" is not. "The Elgar cello concerto is ethereally beautiful" is not. In the cases of sensuous properties, an important part of the property is the experiential aspect. Because of the role of experience, there is room for variation in "The animal decay is disgusting" or "The Elgar cello concerto is ethereally beautiful". Not everyone will accept that "The Elgar cello concerto is ethereally beautiful" because of different experiences. Even for a detectivist of Johnston's kind, the experience is important for the revealing of the property. "The animal decay is disgusting" needs qualification, as I could find it disgusting but the vulture that is attuned to different things would not.

In order to accommodate the implicit relation to the perceiver's experience and represent it in the premise, what is needed is a qualification: "The animal decay is disgusting *to me*"; "The Elgar cello concerto is ethereally beautiful *to me*". This is compatible with a detectivist account, as the detectivist (like Johnston) allows there to be different values which are discerned by different people.

If the first premise requires a qualification such as "The animal decay is disgusting *to me*", then the fourth premise also hits problems. In cases of colour where there is much agreement about the colour of something, then one can say that "The pen is red". However, given the importance of experience for sensuous properties and the fact that many people have different reactions to the same thing, the dispositionalist with regard to sensuous properties cannot make claims about "all actual and appropriate subjects". The appropriate subjects for colour are those with working vision and who are not colour blind; there is no equivalent faculty for sensuous properties which we can identify to be in working order. The dispositionalist does make claims about "appropriate subjects" so as to rule out vultures. But not all actual subjects will find the same sensuous value in the same things. Perhaps all actual (standard) humans do find animal decay disgusting, but not all actual (standard) humans find the Elgar cello concerto ethereally beautiful. The ones who do not find it ethereally beautiful can still be appropriate subjects with good hearing and an appreciation of music. The fifth premise thus does not follow: not all standard subjects are actual appropriate subjects. The new definition of standard subjects in the fifth premise can no longer be substituted into the dispositionalist formulation, and it is no longer an *a priori* truth that x is disposed to appear disgusting to standard subjects under standard conditions. The original empirical observation, that the animal decay is disgusting (*to me*), does not go missing.

If the empirical explanation does not go missing, we can still perceive or apprehend dispositions. As was argued in 3.1, we do apprehend dispositions. If we can and do apprehend dispositions, then there is some objective feature in the object. Dispositionalism is not reduced to projectivism. The important difference between sensuous properties and something like colour is that sensuous properties, through being made up of an experiential aspect, are more strongly relational to the perceiver. Because of this, dispositionalism with regard to sensuous properties does not make claims about all actual and possible appropriate subjects.

5.2 The authority of affect is not a problem

Detectivism does not provide the only answer to the authority of affect. As dispositionalism is distinct to projectivism, it can also make sense of the authority of affect. While the object might not actually have the mind-independent property of disgustingness, it has the property of being disposed to present experiences of that sensuous property to us. If one finds oneself repulsed by something, there is an answer to the question of why do I not desire this? Or, for something utterly attractive, why do I desire this? The answer is that the object does have a property, one that presents the affect to us. But rather than simply saying that the thing has the sensuous property itself, dispositionalism also links in a subjective aspect which allows different people to experience different affects with the same object. In short, the desire is intelligible because there is a property to detect, but part of that property involves the experience of the perceiver.

Dispositionalism can thus explain the difference between a mere urge and an affective desire. An affective desire involves a relation to a feature of the object which a mere urge seemingly lacks. Like a detectivist argues that affect is intelligible because we are detecting mind-independent properties of value, the dispositionalist can argue that we are in relation to mind-independent properties that are disposed to present experiences of sensuous properties to us.

A projectivist like Blackburn appeals to identifying with the desire in order to explain the authority and intelligibility. I have shown that this raises a set of new questions about why one identifies in the first place and what role affect ultimately plays. A dispositionalist account leaves room for identifying with desires, something which we do, as the case of addicts who desire drugs but do not desire the desire shows. However, because there is a property in the object and we are not simply valuing our subjective sensations, we can explain why we might want to identify with the desire in the first place. We are experiencing an objective feature which, together with our subjective background and the conditions, results in a full sensuous property.

6

The charge of incoherence

The problem of the authority of affect does not apply to dispositionalism. There are, however, other potential problems with the account.

Johnston (2001a, 195-7) argues that dispositionalism as a distinct account is structurally incoherent. The formulation of dispositionalism that I am defending is that an object has a disposition to present an affective experience of a sensuous property to us given a certain situation. There are different ways to understand "presents". The one way is what Johnston formulates as identifying the property of being (for example) ethereally beautiful with the property of being disposed to present *instances* of that property. The scene actually has the property of being ethereally beautiful. In order to accommodate the authority of affect, there has to be some form of the sensuous good in the object; the easiest way to explain why we find things valuable is if we are being presented with instances of the valuable property.

Johnston argues that if we identify the property of being disgusting with the scene's presenting an actual instance of that property, then we are incoherently identifying a property through a relation (a disposition) to another relation (the presentation of the actual property) which has the original property as a constituent. The original property is thus contained within itself, making the analysis incoherent. For example, if having the property red is to be disposed to present instances of that property, then "red" which is being explained is used to explain itself.

Johnston argues that this form of dispositionalism "is committed to something akin to a property turning out to be a proper part of itself" (Johnston 2001b, 226). He concludes this because a disposition (to be ethereally beautiful) is a relational property between an object with the property (of ethereal beauty) and the perceiver. A presentation is also relational as there is a relation between the property presented and the receiver of the presentation. Ontologically, relational properties are understood after the relation and the relata are understood. So, if being ethereally beautiful is being disposed to present instances of ethereal beauty, then the dispositional property is "ontologically posterior to the relational property of presenting to S [the subject] the property of being ethereally beautiful" (227). The relational property of presenting to S the property of being ethereally beautiful is, in the same way, posterior to the property of being ethereally beautiful. That means that the ontological order of the properties is

(1) property of ethereal beauty,

(2) relational property,

(3) property of ethereal beauty.

An implication of the first formulation is that the whole contains itself as a part. Yet "a whole cannot contain itself as a proper part" (227).

Johnston's argument is similar to the one that Paul Boghossian and David Velleman (1997) make against dispositionalism about colour. Boghossian and Velleman examine different interpretations of the dispositionalist claim that "x is red if and only if x appears red under standard conditions" (83). What they argue is that, if the claim is interpreted as "red is a disposition to give visual experiences of being red", then red is the content of a visual experience, but the content of that visual experience is that which the definition is trying to explain. The particular problem which makes the circle vicious is that, on this interpretation, the visual experience cannot tell us what colour an object has (88). If we ask what the content of the experience is, we get a second occurrence of "red". In order to explain what "red" is, we are back to referring

to the content of the experience. In this way, there is a vicious regress. That means that when we see something, our sight is not giving us information about the colour. That is wrong: sight does give us information about the colour. The content of the colour experience is called on in order to explain the colour, but in order to make sense of the content of the colour experience, one needs to make sense of the content of the colour experience. The content of the colour experience contains itself as a proper part. This is exactly what Johnston argues. Instead of red, consider the dispositionalist account that disgustingness is a disposition to present affective experiences of disgusting. Disgusting is the content of the affective experience, but the content of the affective experience is exactly what the dispositionalist is trying to explain.

Simply failing to explain what red or disgustingness is does not make a circle vicious; it could still provide a deeper understanding of the property involved. By having the property as a proper part of itself, however, the circle is dire and provides no explanation or understanding because of the regress.

Another formulation of dispositionalism with regard to "presenting" is that the property is a disposition to put us into relation to the mode of presentation of the property (Johnston 2001a, 196). The mode of presentation determines the property but is not itself the property. For example, red is a disposition to put us into relation to the mode of presentation of red. The mode of presentation might be something like light waves of certain lengths, but the mode of presentation is not red itself. After all, we identify the property by the phenomenology of the experience, not by the physical properties which might vary. Through the mode of presentation, we experience red. The mode of presentation of disgustingness might be a particular colour and smell of the animal decay, and the mode of presentation of ethereal beauty might be a combination of sound frequencies in a piece of music, but the actual property is not the same as the mode of presentation. Again, Johnston argues that the property is contained in itself.

This second formulation identifies the property of being ethereally beautiful with putting us into some relation to the mode of presentation of the property. For the Elgar cello concerto, the property of being ethereally beautiful puts us into a relation with a set of sound frequencies that present ethereal beauty to us. Being ethereally beautiful, however, can be presented in

different ways for different things. Johnston (2001a, 196) fleshes out this second formulation as:

> The property of being ethereally beautiful = the disposition to put us into a relation to mode of presentation M, under appropriate conditions.
>
> Mode of presentation M presents or determines the property of being ethereally beautiful.

Johnston's argument against this version appeals to an idea of hierarchies of properties (Johnston 2001a, 196-7). The property of ethereal beauty, P, is identified with the mode of presentation M, which determines P. P is contained in M; but M is contained in P.

On the first level of the hierarchy are properties that are not in any way built up of or related to modes of presentation. These might be properties like having atomic structure *x*. There are also modes of presentation of these properties, such as being in such a way as to appear as solid or liquid. On the second level of the hierarchy are properties that are built from first level properties and modes of presentation, and of modes of presentation of these second level properties. For example, there might be the property of being block-shaped which is built from a certain atomic structure and from appearing solid. This in turn is presented to us. On the *n*th level, there are properties built from the level below and modes of presentations of these complexes. The property of redness is built from certain physical features, and is presented in a way that puts us into a relation to those physical features. The property of ethereal beauty of the music is built from certain sound frequencies, and is presented in a way that puts us into relation to the sound frequencies.

Johnston's argument is a *reductio ad absurdum*:

1. Assume that M lies at level L in the hierarchy.
2. M presents P, which also lies at L. [This is how the hierarchy is constructed.]
3. The property P is built from M. [The dispositionalist formulation.]

4. Therefore, P lies at L+1. [This is how the hierarchy is constructed.]

5. Therefore, M also lies at L+1.

6. Therefore, there is a contradiction. Neither P nor M can be consistently located in the hierarchy.

Assume that the mode of presentation of ethereal beauty, of sound frequency combination y, lies at L. If sound frequency combination y presents ethereal beauty, then the property of ethereal beauty also lies at L. By definition, the property of being ethereally beautiful is identical with the disposition to put us into relation with the sound frequency combination y; that is, the property of being ethereally beautiful is partly built from the sound frequency combination y. Because a property is made up of lower level properties and modes of presentations of those properties, the property of being ethereally beautiful must lie at a higher level, L+1, than the sound frequency combination y. But then the mode of presentation of ethereally beautiful also lies at L+1. There is not a consistent way in which the property and the mode of presentation can be located in the hierarchy.

As my account of dispositionalism involves presenting and as both formulations are different understandings of "present" I will address both. Because both formulations represent dispositionalism as making identity claims and reducing the property to component parts, I will address them in a similar way. In order to deal with both attacks, I will argue that there need not be an identity relation in the way we understand the dispositionalist account of sensuous properties.

7

Coherence

Johnston's incoherence arguments are not new to the debates. Dispositionalist accounts have been accused of circularity before, such as by Boghossian and Velleman (1997), and attempts have been made in defence, such as arguing for non-vicious circles or for supervenience.

Colin McGinn (1983), Ralph Wedgwood (2001) and J. A. Burgess (2008) have all appealed to the idea of a non-vicious circle as a way of salvaging dispositionalism. Despite Johnston and Boghossian and Velleman's claims, the circle involved in dispositionalism is not dire and might in fact be virtuous and capture aspects of a thing such as a sensuous property which a noncircular definition cannot capture. For example, the circle captures the interdependency and connection of different concepts, such as the conditions, the perceiver and the object or scene involved. A non-circular definition would not automatically capture such connections as the constituent parts would be reducible to distinct parts; in order to emphasise the connection, a non-circular definition would have to explicitly and additionally state that the parts are interconnected.

McGinn (1996) also proposes a supervenient dispositionalist account that does not reduce the property to a disposition. Rather, the property "red" or "disgustingness" supervenes on some property in the object, but is not reducible to that property. With colour, the claim would be that, when there is a certain set of properties in the object (such as a reflective surface, an arrangement of atoms), then a certain colour is also present. Where a colour is present, a certain

set of properties is present. The two sets of properties cannot differ without the other set of properties also differing (Bennett and McLaughlin 2005). For example, some philosophers argue that mental states supervene on physical states. Where there is a set of physical properties, such as c-fibres firing, there are also mental properties, such as pain. If the physical properties differ, then the mental properties differ. The c-fibres, however, are not identical to the pain. A supervenience account does not identify two sets of properties with each other. A dispositionalist supervenience account, like McGinn's, would have the colour property supervene on a dispositional property in the object. The problem of incoherence only arises if one identifies the disposition with the actual property, and this can be avoided by cashing out the dispositionalist account in terms of supervenience.

In this chapter, I will examine the nature of the circularity and the nature of the dispositionalist claim. I will show that the dispositionalist claim is not one of identity and so the circle is not vicious. I will do so by presenting the different approaches of McGinn and Burgess to non-vicious circles and seeing what they have in common. I will also consider McGinn's later reasons for rejecting a strong version of dispositionalism and rather developing a weaker supervenience account. I will argue that his reasons do not apply to dispositionalism about sensuous properties. Supervenience unnecessarily weakens the dispositionalist claims, and as a circular account is not problematic, there is no need to resort to it.

David Wiggins, when defending the merits of the subjective elements of his sensible subjectivism, says that the use of a circular definition is that it elucidates the concept involved (for example, of good or of disgustingness) by "displaying it in its actual involvement with the sentiments" (Wiggins 1987, 189). I will follow his lead and argue further that, as far as sensuous properties are concerned, the best account will be one which does not remove the property from the sentiments or sensations and experience involved.

7.1 The possibility of non-vicious circles

In "Sensing Values?" (2001), a direct response to Johnston, Wedgwood points out that Johnston does not explain why the dispositionalist account of sensuous value is contained in itself in the "relevant way" — or even what the "relevant way" actually is which makes it viciously circular and incoherent. He comments that if the dispositionalist account aimed to give an analysis of the "essential structure" of the property, then it would be contained within itself in some relevant way. This need not be the dispositionalist claim (218). While Wedgwood is not making a detailed argument, his comments provide a useful way to begin assessing what it is that a dispositionalist account is trying to achieve: the dispositionalist account does not aim to provide an *analysis* of the essential structure of the property. To show that this approach is relevant to sensuous properties, I will refer to McGinn's (1983) arguments that circularity is to be expected. To show how such a definition works, I will refer to Burgess's (2008) development of what makes a circular definition informative. Both of Johnston's formulations of dispositionalism making sense of "presenting" can be saved in this way.

I will begin by seeing what insights into dispositionalism can be provided by assessing Johnston's argument against the second, mode of presentation, formulation.

7.1.1 Back to Johnston's argument

Johnston's argument against the second formulation of dispositionalism is:

1. Assume that M lies at level L in the hierarchy.
2. M presents P, which also lies at L.
3. The property P is built from M.
4. Therefore, P lies at L+1.
5. Therefore, M also lies at L+1.

6. Therefore, there is a contradiction. Neither P nor M can be consistently located in the hierarchy.

Johnston claims that the property P is the same as the disposition to put us into a relation to M, under appropriate conditions. He further defines M as presenting or determining the property of being P. The property P contains the mode of presentation, but the mode of presentation contains the property. There is a vicious circle.

Johnston is interpreting the formulation of dispositionalism in the wrong way. The property of being ethereally beautiful is the disposition to put us into a relation to the mode of presentation M (sound frequency combination y), under appropriate conditions, *such that* M presents the property of being ethereally beautiful. Part of the property of ethereal beauty is made up of the perceiver's experience and the conditions. For example, the property of ethereal beauty consists not only in the way it is presented, the sound frequencies, but also in the perceiver and the conditions, so that the perceiver both hears and enjoys the sound. The sound frequencies are not in themselves beautiful. It is not only the mode of presentation which presents or determines the property of being ethereally beautiful, as the relation with the perceiver plays an important role. Bennett (1971) provided an argument which rephrased the dispositionalist claim in terms of a combination of mind-independent properties ϕ and condition F. I argued that the important part for the dispositionalist is condition F and that it be relational to a perceiver's experience. This is the same point that I am making here: the condition F that contains the relation is what makes the overall property dispositional.

The problem with Johnston's argument lies with his interpretation of the mode of presentation as presenting or determining the property of being ethereally beautiful. It is not only the mode of presentation which determines the property; the perceiver and conditions also play a role. The property is not *built* from the mode of presentation but is in relation with the mode of presentation and the perceiver: the ethereal beauty of the Elgar cello concerto is a result of the relation of the sound frequency combination and my experience of it, in the appropriate conditions. Johnston tries to understand the mode of presentation away from the relation with

the perceiver, as determining the property of being ethereally beautiful. The third premise is therefore problematic: the dispositionalist is not claiming that the property is actually built from or determined by the mode of presentation. The property is presented by the mode of presentation and being in relation to the mode of presentation is important for knowing the property. The dispositionalist account, therefore, should not be understood as an analysis with a "=" of identity. Being disposed to put us in relation to the mode of presentation, under appropriate conditions, is not an analysis of the property of being ethereally beautiful, where an analysis is a set of necessary and sufficient conditions which make up the whole. It is more an explication of various features involved and a way of understanding what the property is and how it works.

There still remains a circle. The property of being ethereally beautiful is the disposition to put us into a relation to the mode of presentation M, which in relation to a perceiver, presents an experience of the property of ethereal beauty, under appropriate conditions. This circle, however, is not incoherent. Although the property of ethereal beauty refers to itself, the circle still captures what ethereal beauty is and is informative. This will now be argued.

7.1.2 McGinn and circles

McGinn (1983, 6-8) gives arguments and explications of the dispositionalist account to show that the circle is not vicious. He argues that, first, saying that x is Q (as in the circle is red) if x looks Q to standard perceivers is not a trivial claim as not all that is Q looks Q. "X is a circle" does not mean that it looks like a circle, but x will look red if x is red. Being red consists in looking red. If this is so, then there is a way in which appearing red is coherently a part of being red.

Consider the example of a spherical ball and circular hole through which the ball passes. Given a certain angle, the hole looks oblong and not circular. However, we know that the hole is in fact circular — the spherical ball and not an egg-shaped ball will pass through it. In this case, if we say that the hole looks oblong, we are not saying that it *is* oblong. Something which

is a circle will not always look like a circle. When a dispositionalist claims that something is red because it looks red to standard perceivers, the dispositionalist is not simply expounding a platitude. Red, according to the dispositionalist, is something quite different to shape in that if it looks a certain way under standard conditions to standard perceivers, it will be that way. A red wall is only red if it looks red (to standard perceivers). Unlike with shape, we have no independent way of establishing what its colour objectively is; we do not have the equivalent of a "red" object which will only "match" with a red wall. I can ask other people what colour they see in order to verify whether I am seeing the correct colour. I will ask people whom I know can see, and whom I know can see colours. If that is how to verify, then the red wall is only red if it appears red to standard perceivers in standard conditions. If an account is trying to explain what it *is* to be red, then it needs to reflect that. Colour differs from qualities like shape because it can only be verified through one sense. By involving a circle of terms, the account accurately reflects what it is to be red. What it is to be red involves what it appears as.

Secondly, McGinn argues that such circularity is to be expected. A definition of something like colour will involve a reference to the experience. The experience in turn has an intentional content which is made up of the world's having certain properties, including colours. The experience is about something and presents the world as having certain qualities. Experiences are distinguished by their content. The qualities are determined by the experience, and the experience is determined by the content. Thus, the analysis of the property is inherently intentional, it has something which it is about, and circularity captures this (McGinn 1983, 7).

In the case of sensuous properties, the experience is perhaps more vital than it is for colour. A sensuous aspect makes up part of the property. If being disgusting consists in appearing disgusting then an account needs to capture that. The intentional content of an experience of disgust involves disgust itself. The analysis will have to be intentional in order to capture the experience, and the content of the experience is the sensuous property.

7.1.3 Burgess and circles

McGinn has provided reason to think that a circular account is to be expected and that the dispositionalist account is circular. The circle involved, however, could still be a vicious one. Perhaps a circular account has advantages such as capturing the inherent intentionality of something like colour or sensuous properties, but perhaps these advantages do not outweigh the viciousness brought about by regress. J. A. Burgess argues that the circle involved in a dispositionalist account is not vicious.

Burgess, in "When is circularity in definitions benign?" (2008), builds on Lloyd Humberstone's account of benign and vicious circles. He gives a comprehensive explanation of how a circle need not be vicious and why, for something like secondary qualities, a circle is actually virtuous.

A good definition needs to be both accurate and informative; the informative aspect is what a circular definition seems to miss (Burgess 2008, 215). However, there are different ways to be informative: a definition could be pedagogically illuminating – it could impart new information to someone who has no basis of such information – or it could be philosophically illuminating — it could present information of a concept in such a way that understanding of an already known and understood concept is enlightened (217). If we want pedagogical illumination, then we must avoid circularity because, if one does not grasp one of the terms used, then one is not going to learn anything. But a philosophically illuminating definition, even if circular, can increase understanding of a concept. A circle could even provide new knowledge by bringing out connections we had not previously realised.

Burgess compares two kinds of examples (Burgess 2008, 221-2):

(1) x is a cow $=_{df}$ Prince Charles knows that x is a cow. And,

(2) x is a cow $=_{df}$ Prince Charles believes that x is a cow.

That which is being defined in a definition is the *definiendum* and the actual definition is the *definiens*. In a circular definition, in order to understand the *definiens*, you must already

understand the *definiendum* (Burgess 2008, 219). In (1), in order to establish the truth of the *definiendum*, you must establish the truth of the *definiens* but in order to do so, you must establish that "x is a cow" is true (for knowledge), but that is the *definiens*. Such a definition does not provide any insight, aside from Prince Charles knowing something. Consider such a definition for disgustingness where we cannot establish whether the *definiens* holds without already knowing the *definiendum*:

disgustingness = repulsiveness

repulsiveness = repugnancy

repugnancy = disgustingness

Burgess argues that if the *definiens* is inferentially grounded in part in something other than that which is being defined, then circularity is admissible. We do not have to know that the *definiendum* is true in order to ascertain the truth of the *definiens*. In (2), we do not have to know that x is a cow in order to establish whether Prince Charles believes it to be so as belief does not require truth. We can ascertain whether the definition holds through other methods, such as by asking Prince Charles what he believes. We can infer the truth of the definition from something other than that which is being defined — the definition is inferentially grounded in something out of the definition circle. If something is not inferentially grounded, then it is inferentially circular and the *definiens* involves an unavoidable recursive loop (Burgess 2008, 225). A viciously circular definition will be one that is circular in such a way, but a definition which is at least partially inferentially grounded still meets the requirement of informativeness.

The dispositionalist account of colour, "x is red if and only if x appears red under normal conditions," is a circular definition: "red", which is being defined, appears in both the *definiens* and the *definiendum*. Burgess expands this to make sense of what constitutes "normal conditions". "Normal conditions" are conditions where the appearance of red is not compromised either by the perceiver (who is perhaps wearing tinted glasses) or the situation (perhaps there is a blue light). His expanded definition is "x is red if and only if x is disposed to look red to most

red-competent observers o under red-suitable conditions c" (Burgess 2008, 225). In order to verify the definitions, one has to establish whether the *definiens* is true. In order to do so, however, one has to establish what the *definiendum* is. The question now is whether there is any inferential grounding in the definition.

Burgess argues that there is inferential grounding in the dispositionalist definition. Making sense of the definitions "x is red if and only if x appears red under normal conditions", and "normal conditions for being red are conditions which are red-suitable" does not require that one find out the truth about the definitions. The definitions, which include normal conditions and judgements about what is red-suitable, are empirical and so are defeasible (Burgess 2008, 227-8). In order for a definition to be verified, therefore, one does not need to establish the truth. Rather, you need to establish if the definition can justifiably be asserted, given a certain situation. This can be done with a circular definition (227-30). In order to establish the assertability of a definition like the dispositionalist one, we use good inductive evidence. We cannot show that all red-disposed objects are red all the time, but we do have evidence of our and other's experience to suggest that they are.

These circular definitions aim to make use of and capture a reliable connection between concepts that are not reducible to any other concepts (such as red, red-suitable conditions, and red-competent observers). The circle is informative as the inherent connection between the concepts is emphasised, and it is accurate because it captures reliability. Because of the interdependence of such conditions, a circular definition is the best way to capture them and, as such, the definition is virtuously circular (Burgess 2008, 230-1).

Burgess was looking at a dispositionalist account of colour. Consider the dispositionalist account of sensuous properties, like disgustingness:

> disgustingness is a disposition to present affective experiences of disgustingness to standard perceivers under normal conditions.

Here again, in order to ascertain whether the *definiendum* holds, we have to refer to "disgust-

ingness" which is the *definiens*. The type of perceiver and conditions for sensuous properties are an empirical matter; a standard perceiver in the case of the disgust at animal decay is easily a standard human in basic human conditions but a standard perceiver in the case of the ethereal beauty of music requires more specifications as to the perceiver's history and the conditions. The Elgar cello concerto is ethereally beautiful *to me*, but not necessarily to someone else, and I establish what the kind of perceivers and conditions are that are relevant to my concerns at a particular time through empirical observations and statements. The *definiens*, therefore, through relying on empirical means, is defeasible. However, I am still justified in asserting it, provided that I give the relevant conditions: disgusting *is* that which standard humans experience when presented with decaying animal matter. Ethereal beauty *is* that which I experience when listening to the Elgar cello concerto. I can establish the truth of the definition through means other than making use of the *definiens*, like referring to the group of things which are experienced as disgusting or ethereally beautiful. In this way, the dispositionalist account of sensuous properties is inferentially grounded outside of the circle.

For a case of sensuous properties where the experience is absolutely vital to the property, an account which emphasises the connections between the object, the perceivers and the situation has an advantage over the others. By incorporating the connections into the account, a dispositionalist account of sensuous properties captures fully what sensuous properties are. A non-circular account cannot capture that interdependence with such ease. If the connections are vital, then an account which too has such strong connections reflects the importance.

7.2 The point of dispositionalism

The similarity with the different approaches is to question what the dispositionalist account is trying to achieve. For all three, the dispositionalist account is not providing an analysis of the structure of the property; rather, it is providing what McGinn calls a conceptual equivalence. As Burgess has shown, a definition needs to be informative and can be so while being circular. Further, given the phenomenological nature of things such as colour experience or, in this case,

affect, an explication of a term such as "disgustingness" will require reference to what it is like to experience it. A circular account captures the connections between the perceivers, the object and the conditions.

As mentioned above, Burgess has provided reasons for thinking that a circular account or definition is virtuously circular because it is best able to capture the interdependence of the object, perceiver and situation. Sensuous properties are only accessed via the affective response, and so cannot be separated from the experience. The experience involves the perceiver and the thing perceived, as well as the conditions under which it is perceived. In order to fit all three aspects into a definition, they will have to refer to each other. A circular account captures the relational nature of sensuous properties.

If the relation between the property and the disposition is not one of identification so much as of conceptual equivalence, then dispositionalism need not be structurally incoherent.

A dispositional property is a relational property. McGinn in "Another Look at Color" (1996) thinks that a relational property leads into new problems with regards to colour, as we do not experience colour as a disposition but as the colour itself. This is the problem that was discussed in chapter 3. McGinn proposes a supervenience account to get around this problem, which he considers dire. I will examine his reasons for choosing a supervenience account, and show that in the case of sensuous properties, there is no reason to go that route.

7.3 Supervenience

In "Another Look at Color" (1996), McGinn discusses the possibility of a supervenience dispositionalist account as another way to get round the problems facing dispositionalism.[6] He argues that problems with the dispositionalist account only arise because we are identifying the property with and reducing it to the disposition. We can reformulate the dispositionalist account as "necessarily, if two objects have the same dispositions to produce experiences of color,

[6] All references to McGinn in this section are taken from "Another Look at Color" (1996).

then they have the same color; and if two objects differ in color, then they must also differ in their dispositions" (544). The property of the colour and the disposition are interdependent, but they are not the same and the one cannot be reduced to the other. What makes an object red is that it appears red. The redness supervenes on an intrinsic property in the object but is not the intrinsic property itself.

In addition to the problem of circularity, McGinn brings attention to three other problems all with the same underlying issue that colour properties do not look like dispositions (538-43). If they are indeed dispositions and do not appear to us as such, then a dispositionalist is going to be committed to a form of error theory. The error this time is to think of the property as an intrinsic property rather than as a relational property. As I avoided projectivism as a default account due to the complexity of adopting an error theory, if dispositionalism is subject to the same complaints, it might lose its appeal as a default account. The three problems, aside from circularity, are that we cannot see dispositions; the structure of colour is different to the structure of dispositions; and, as experience is important for a dispositionalist account, it should figure in the way things look. The fourth problem of circularity has been dealt with in previous sections.

I will discuss each problem as McGinn puts it forward to apply to colour, and show that the differences between colour and sensuous properties relevantly make sensuous properties immune from similar criticism. The important difference between the two is the role that different senses play in the perceiving of the properties. Colour is only perceptible via sight; sensuous properties are only apprehended via affect. However, sensuous properties are accessed via the different senses. Finding something disgusting is not limited to any particular sense; something can be disgusting to all five standard senses and something else can be disgusting to only one. The way we access the disgusting is through all the senses, but it is affect as a kind of "sixth" sense through which we come to know the property.

The first problem is that we cannot see dispositions in the way in which we can see colours (540-1). We can see manifestations of the dispositions but not the dispositions themselves, whereas we can see the colour itself. We might be able to identify manifestations of the disposition with

the colour, but the dispositionalist account identifies the disposition itself with the colour. If this is the case and if we identify colours with dispositions, then we are committed to systematic error in our perceptions. If part of the appeal of the dispositionalist account is that it meets our basic understanding of the world, then such a conclusion is undesirable.

The problem does not apply to sensuous properties. Sensuous properties are affectively experienced via all the senses — it does not matter if we cannot see the disposition. Likewise, it does not matter if we cannot hear, touch, taste or smell the disposition. Because of the access through different senses, there is no clear way in which we experience a sensuous property. In addition, as was argued in chapter 3, we do apprehend sensuous properties as both a manifestation of a disposition and the disposition itself. When we find something disgusting, we apprehend both the disgustingness and the similarity to other things which we have labelled "disgusting" — we apprehend both the manifestation of disgustingness and the dispostion to appear in a way which is shared by other things.

McGinn's problem was that dispositions are not visible properties in the same way that colours are; but it is not as clear that dispositions are not experiential properties in the same way that sensuous properties are. This point will become clearer in the discussion of the next problem.

The second problem which McGinn raises is that the structure of colour is different to the structure of dispositions (541-2). According to the dispositionalist, colour is made up of relations between the object, perceiver and conditions. Colour as we perceive it, however, is an intrinsic property of the object. We do not perceive the relations; indeed, "Being seen as red is not like being seen as larger than or to the left of" (542). Again, the dispositionalist account commits us to erroneous perceptions. Again, sensuous properties are relevantly different. While we might attribute a property to the external object, as I argued we do in our everyday attributions of sensuous properties like "The animal decay is disgusting" and "The Elgar cello concerto is ethereally beautiful" in 1.1.2 and 2.3, we also apprehend the property as involving something relational to the perceiver. I can find the animal decay disgusting at the same time that I can observe that the maggots are utterly attracted to it, and there is no contradiction. Likewise, I do not find my experiencing the Elgar cello concerto as ethereally beautiful contradictory or

more right than someone else's experiencing it as repulsive even though I might try to direct her attention to the features which I think make it so attractive. Further, if we apprehend the sensuous property as a manifestation of a disposition, we apprehend it as being relational and being in the circumstances in which it is manifest. If I apprehend the animal decay as disgusting and apprehend it as being so because of its disposition to appear in a way which is shared by other things, then I apprehend it as something that is in relation to my experience. We do therefore experience sensuous properties as relational, so McGinn's problem that the structure of the property is different to the structure of dispositions does not apply.

The third problem is that the dispositionalist account analyses colour by referring to the experience of the perceiver; as a result, the experience is part of the property (542). However, experiences do not get represented in perceptions of red. If experience is involved in the analysis, then it should have some part in the way things look. If it does not, then the dispositionalist account is again committed to an error theory of our perceptions. As I argued in chapter 3 and went over above, we do apprehend the role of experience in a sensuous property. The experience and the property's relation to us as the perceiver are part of our apprehension. In addition, as the dispositionalist definition need not be reducing the property to constituent parts so much as explicating and increasing understanding, the constituent part made up of experience does not need to be represented fully in the perception at all.

As can be seen, sensuous properties are sufficiently different to colour not to run into the same kinds of problems. McGinn proposes a supervenient account as a solution to these problems, but it is not necessary in the case of sensuous properties. The apprehension of sensuous properties involves an apprehension of the role of experience and of a relation to the perceiver in a way which an apprehension of a colour does not necessarily involve. As McGinn (545) notes, supervenience tells us something about the interdependency of properties. This is done in the stronger dispositional account as well. If for some other reasons the stronger dispositional account were to fail, the dispositionalist could come back to supervenience as a way to capture the interdependency; but it is not necessary at this stage.

8

Conclusion

Sensuous properties are properties of a specific kind, ones which involve both a sensuous aspect and an evaluative aspect. The property of disgustingness is made up of how it feels and an evaluation that the thing which is disgusting has little or no value. If we felt differently, we would not identify the property as being disgusting even if it had the same physical properties. The property of ethereal beauty, likewise, is made up of the feeling of utter attraction and an evaluation that the thing which is ethereally beautiful has great value.

Because of the sensuous nature of these properties, in order to come to know them we need to be in an affective state. We can rationalise and work out the value but, unless we also experience the relevant affective state, we do not come to know the full property which includes the sensuous aspect. This experiential factor is vitally important when determining what the nature of the relation between affect and sensuous property might be. It is this experiential factor which also distinguishes sensuous properties from secondary qualities. Secondary qualities like colour are linked to one sense, whereas sensuous properties are linked to affect via all the senses. Because we more fully experience a sensuous property – consider feeling disgusted and try to link it to one particular area of your body – sensuous properties are different to properties such as colour. These differences are important in determining whether a dispositionalist account of sensuous properties meets the same problems as a dispositionalist account of colour.

The sensuous properties are not completely mind-independent, as Johnston argues. Because of the experiential aspect of the properties, the best account of the relation between sensuous properties and affect is one which highlights the importance of the experience and the relation with the perceiver. The account which does so is the dispositionalist account: an object has a disposition to present affective experiences of disgust (or any other sensuous property) to standard perceivers in normal conditions.

A dispositionalist account captures the experience and the inter-related concepts of the property, the perceiver and the conditions, by being circular. One cannot fully explain what the property, standard perceivers of sensuous properties, and normal conditions under which to perceive are without referring to each other. Contrary to what Johnston argues, such circularity is not incoherent and is in fact virtuous. The circularity builds into the dispositionalist account the importance of there being a perceiver and conditions in relation to the actual property in the object. That is why the circle in a dispositionalist formulation is in fact suited for sensuous properties. It is suited, and it is not incoherent. The dispositionalist is not making identity claims and reducing the property to constituent parts where part of the whole contains itself. That would be incoherent and it would not enhance understanding. The dispositionalist is rather providing a conceptual equivalence and enhancing the understanding of the properties involved, such as the important role of the perceiver's experience and the conditions. The dispositionalist account, through providing a conceptual equivalence, is still explaining the sensuous property in terms of other features. This might introduce worries that we do not apprehend the property in the way in which we apprehend dispositions, and we might feel the need to weaken the account to a supervenience account where the sensuous property is not identified with a dispositional property but merely supervenes. However, as we do understand an ascription of a sensuous property as true in virtue of the experience, and we do apprehend the role of the perceiver when we apprehend a sensuous property, these worries are not serious with regards to a dispositionalist account of sensuous properties.

A detectivist account, such as Johnston's, is unable to capture the role of the perceiver's experience. While the detectivist can introduce a relation to the perceiver and conditions in order

to explain how we are attuned to different properties, the detectivist has to make a stronger claim that, regardless of the role of the perceiver in attuning to a property, the property itself is mind-independent. The detectivist is then faced with the problem of making sense of an object having different contradictory properties at the same time. As was shown, the detectivist cannot explain this without introducing a perceiver, thus undermining the claim that sensuous properties are essentially mind-independent.

The projectivist account is in turn caught out by the problem of accounting for the evaluative aspect in the sensuous property, and how our affective states can be intelligible and authoritative in the ways that they are. The evaluative aspect of the full sensuous property is captured by the dispositionalist account by there being some mind-independent feature in the object. Because there is something which is not dependent on the subjective sensations of the perceiver and which we apprehend, the dispositionalist can explain why affect has the authority and intelligibility that it does. We apprehend something that is mind-independent which makes our beliefs and actions intelligible.

The focus of this paper was to respond to Mark Johnston's attack on dispositionalism from a detectivist perspective. I have shown that Johnston is wrong to dismiss dispositionalism as a plausible account and that Johnston's reasons for defending a detectivist account do not rule out a dispositionalist account. I accepted the problem of the authority of affect for projectivism, and showed that it did not apply to dispositionalism. However, while I was focussing on defending dispositionalism from a detectivist attack, there is still room for a projectivist attack. For example, Simon Blackburn argues for a "quasi-realism" about ethical value by arguing that ethical statements express practical considerations and not objective truths. It is thus a version of projectivism. He argues, however, that the projectivist is permitted to use the realist language of our everyday judgements. Quasi-realism could possibly be adapted to sensuous properties, and might be able to provide a way to account for the authority of affect. I dismissed Blackburn's reasons for adopting a quasi-realist position with regard to ethical value as not being obviously applicable to sensuous properties, but a more comprehensive rejection of the position is needed. That is a further project.

Sensuous properties lie somewhere between secondary qualities and ethical value. Because of this, the implications of a dispositionalist account of sensuous properties, and why a dispositionalist account is best suited, could be used to relook at other debates. If a dispositionalist account is the best account for affect and sensuous value, it might provide insights into the nature of the relation between secondary properties and perception and between ethical value and how we come to know what is good or bad. For example, sensuous properties like disgustingness or ethereal beauty are not specific to one sense organ, like colour is to sight and temperature is to touch. We do sense sensuous properties through our senses, but we experience them through our full affective responses. The overall experience is vital for the sensuous property, more so than for colour. If eyesight is damaged, then the perceiver will not perceive colour; colour is something which is available only to the eyes. A consequence of this insight could be that colour is mind-independent.

On the other hand, if we remove or damage all sense organs, then our capacity to experience sensuous properties is inhibited or taken away. If we remove or damage all sense organs, it seems possible that we still have access to what is good or bad. This insight might suggest that ethical value is something mind-dependent or that it is not sensed.

Another implication is with emotions and potential knowledge from emotions. On some accounts, emotions are in part made up by affect. If affect responds to a mind-independent property, even if the property is dispositional, then emotions potentially do give us knowledge of the world.

Regardless of what implications this discussion could have for other debates, a dispositionalist account remains the default account for the relation between affect and sensuous value because of its ease at addressing important features of affect, and because of its ability to fully capture the experiential nature of sensuous properties.

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