Introduction: perceptual evidence

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The essays collected in this special issue concern a topic of perennial significance for philosophy: the question of how perception provides us with reasons or evidence for forming beliefs about the surrounding world. Although traditional approaches to this question are well entrenched, the present volume demonstrates the possibilities for continued progress, both as a result of new insight into existing frameworks and problems, and when ideas from other areas of philosophy are brought to bear on recalcitrant debates.

The fruitfulness of the latter approach is well demonstrated by Susanna Schellenberg's essay 'Phenomenal Evidence and Factive Evidence', in which she applies her previously developed theory of perceptual content to explain evidential asymmetries between good and bad cases of perceptual experience. This essay, along with critical responses by Matthew McGrath, Ram Neta, and Adam Pautz, and Schellenberg's replies, builds on her previous work on this topic by testing her view against classic examples in the epistemology literature.

The remaining essays in the volume address a variety of topics central to questions about perceptual evidence, including the nature of reasons (Comesaña and McGrath, Schnee), anti-skeptical arguments (Huemer, Marušić), the view that justification tracks evidence (Lyons), relevant alternatives and closure (Carter and Pritchard), and the epistemic role of experience (Byrne, Glüer, Smithies). Together these contributions provide an indication of the excellent work being done in one of the most active areas of contemporary epistemology.

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