Foundationalism is a position concerning the structure of knowledge. According to it, every piece of knowledge is either:

(i) epistemically basic or immediately justified, or
(ii) justified, directly or indirectly, on the basis of epistemically basic pieces of knowledge.

If this is right, then if there is knowledge at all, then there is some immediate or foundational knowledge. Insofar as the foundationalist aspires to give an account of the structure of knowledge, he owes us an account of the nature of foundational knowledge.

In this paper I will not argue for the claim that every non-basic piece of knowledge is justified on the basis of basic knowledge. My purpose is to present the outlines of a phenomenologically based account of immediate justification, according to which the facts or states of affairs towards which our beliefs are intentionally directed can sometimes serve as reasons or evidence for what we believe. On the view I defend here, there are cases in which one’s reason for believing that, say, one is in pain is the fact that one is in pain. I will also argue that the sorts of empirical facts that can serve as reasons for noninferentially justified beliefs are not confined to facts about one’s own occurrent mental states, but include facts about the physical world as well. Right now, for instance, I know that I am in front of a computer, and my reason for believing that I am in front of a computer is the fact that I am in front of a computer. In many such cases, including the present one, such knowledge is epistemically foundational. Since at almost any given time we stand in a similar sort of relation to some local set of facts as I now stand to the fact that my computer is in front of me, and since we typically are exposed to a wide array of different facts even over short spans of time, foundational knowledge is both rich in content and easy to obtain. A large part of the paper will consist in trying to answer objections to this view.

1.

One of the principal tasks of phenomenological inquiry is to provide a description of the conscious mental states and acts in virtue of which the entities that show up for us manage to show up for us, and in the precise ways that they do. An essential aspect of that task, at least with respect to any act that exhibits intentionality or directedness towards an object, is to “ask it what it was aiming at and what it acquired” (Husserl 1969: 177). The preeminent way for an act to “acquire” its object is for the act to render its object present to consciousness in the flesh. This is a familiar phenomenon. Think, for instance, about what it is like to experience a searing pain in your toe. Hopefully your mental act did not acquire its object in the manner that I have in mind, otherwise you will just have actually experienced a searing pain in your toe.

At least some acts of foundational knowledge are foundational in virtue of acquiring their objects in a very distinctive way. To give an example, right now I believe that my door is open. This is not because someone told me it was open. It is not because I
examine the rest of my beliefs and found that the proposition <the door is open> coheres with them or that its negation does not. It is not because I know or believe some proposition <q> such that the proposition <the door is open> is probable given <q>. It is not because the proposition <the door is open> somehow just seems true. It is, rather, because (a) I am undergoing a perceptual experience that presents the door as being precisely the way that the proposition <the door is open> represents it as being, namely open, (b) I am thinking that proposition, and (c) my acts of thinking and perceiving are synthesized in a distinctive way. Note that I am not justified in believing <the door is open> because I believe that (a)-(c) are occurring. It is because they are occurring. This is a case of what Husserl calls “fulfillment,” and what I have elsewhere called “primary epistemic fulfillment” (Hopp 2011: section 7.1). A great deal has been and remains to be said about this sort of act and its various types, but it is quite familiar: it is a matter of finding an object to be as one thinks it to be (see Willard 1995: 138-9).

In this act, as in any act of knowing, we can distinguish several different features and components. To keep things simple, consider first what any arbitrary act of knowing involves. The first obvious feature of acts of knowing is that they are intentional acts. That is, they represent the world as being a certain way. When I come to know that my door is open, my act of knowing represents my door, and represents it as being open. The door’s being open is the object of that act—what the act is about. Note that the act does not merely represent the door. It also represents how things stand with the door. The property of being open is just as much a part of the full intentional object of my act of knowing as the door itself is (Husserl 1970: 579; Smith and McIntyre 1982: 6-9).

It would be tempting to conclude straightaway that what I know, when I know that the door is open, is the fact that the door is open. It is equally natural to say that what I know is the proposition <the door is open>. However, I do not stand in the same relation to the proposition <the door is open> that I do to the fact that the door is open. First, on any viable view whatsoever, propositions represent the world as being a certain way. But what I am thinking about when I think that the door is open does not represent the world as being a certain way. The fact that the door is open does not represent anything at all. Therefore, my act of thinking is not about a proposition. Second, my act of thinking that the door is open represents the same thing that the proposition <the door is open> represents. But the proposition does not represent itself. So, my act of thinking does not represent the proposition.

In the case of any instance of knowledge, then, we can distinguish between (i) the act of knowing, (ii) the propositional content known, and (iii) the fact known (about). Only (iii) is the intentional object of an act of knowing. In the case of fulfillment, things are more complicated, since (at least) two acts—the fulfilling and the fulfilled acts—converge on the same object. That is, acts of fulfillment have two contents that are about the same...

---

1 Pollock and Cruz (1999) write: “Objects of belief are called ‘propositions’. For example, when I believe that there is a cat in the window, the object of my belief is the proposition that there is a cat in the window” (32-33). They then add, “As we use the term, propositions are just possible objects of belief” (33). So their view does not contradict the view above, since, on this understanding of propositions, propositions might turn out to be facts. However, since the objects of belief are not always about something, it does run afoul of a basic truism about propositions, namely that they are always about something.
state of affairs. That this sort of complexity is present in such acts becomes clear when we consider how the content of either the fulfilling experience or the thought that it fulfills can remain constant while the content of the other varies (Husserl 1970: 680). My thought that the door is open can be fulfilled on the basis of many experiences that differ in content from the one I am actually having. Were I three feet closer, or viewing the door from another angle, my experience would still fulfill my thought that the door is open. There is no proposition \(<p>\) such that having the thought that \(<p>\) fulfilled entails that I am undergoing just this type of perceptual experience. And I could fulfill a number of other thoughts on the basis of exactly this type of experience of the door, including thoughts with the propositional contents \(<\text{this door is white}>\), \(<\text{this door is taller than me}>\), \(<\text{the door is over there}>\), and many others. There is no proposition \(<p>\) such that in virtue of having this perceptual experience, I am entertaining, believing, or judging \(<p>\).

Despite the multiplicity of contents in fulfillment, we are not therefore aware of two objects. Rather, “the object, at once intended and ‘given’, stands before us, not as two objects, but as one alone” (Husserl 1970: 291).

A further feature of acts of knowledge, and of beliefs generally, is that they typically do not simply arise out of nowhere, but are rationally motivated. We generally have reasons, or at least imagine ourselves to have reasons, for believing what we do. In the case of inferential knowledge and belief, we believe that the world is a certain way because of other ways we believe the world to be. I might believe that my wife is home because I believe (i) that her coat is on the hook and (ii) if her coat is on the hook, then she is home. In fulfillment, by contrast, we believe the world is a certain way because we are presented with that very portion of the world itself. In fulfillment, “The object is actually ‘present’ or ‘given’, and present as \(\text{just what we have intended it}\)” (Husserl 1970: 762). In primary epistemic fulfillment, the object must be present \textit{in person}. Memory and imagination also present their objects, but not \textit{in person}. With respect to empirical states of affairs, only perception does that.

Beliefs formed in this way are foundational or epistemically basic. My belief that \(<\text{my door is open}>\) is epistemically basic insofar as it does not epistemically depend on my having any more evidence than that which my present experience makes available to me, and what my experience makes available to me is the door’s being open. While no empirical belief formed in this way is infallible or indefeasible, fulfillment is the only sort of intentional act in which we verify a proposition, not by consulting authorities, other propositions, theories, or even other parts of the world, but by turning to the portions of the world that those propositions represent. There are lots of good reasons to believe the proposition \(<\text{the door is open}>\). One of the very best is the fact that the door is open. Because of the intentional relation I now stand in with respect to that fact—because that fact is directly present to me as I think it to be (but \textit{not} because I believe that it is present to me)—that fact is my reason for believing that the door is open. It is my \textit{evidence} for believing \(<\text{the door is open}>\). More generally, fulfillment is that unique intentional act in which our evidence for a fulfilled proposition \(<p>\) is the fact which \(<p>\) represents.

I take the view that ordinary empirical facts sometimes constitute our evidence for what we believe to be very commonsensical, and I take that to be a prima facie virtue. The fact that my door is open is an excellent reason to believe the proposition \(<\text{the door is open}>\).
open>; more generally, the fact that makes any proposition \(<p>\) true is an excellent reason to believe that proposition. And sometimes facts of that sort are present to us in such a way that they can be our evidence. I also think that this view is phenomenologically defensible.

2.

One straightforward objection to the view that mind-independent facts can constitute one’s evidence for noninferential beliefs is that the obtaining of such a fact plainly is not sufficient for one to believe, much less know, any propositions about them. The fact that my door is open does not entail that anyone knows it.

Richard Fumerton has an argument that the “source of noninferential justification” for a belief can never be “the fact that makes the noninferentially justified belief true” (Fumerton 2001: 11). The fact that Fumerton is in pain, for instance, is not the source of his noninferentially justified belief that he is in pain. After all, “When you believe that I am in pain, my pain does not justify you in believing that I am in pain … so there must be something different about my relationship to my pain that enters into the account of what constitutes my justification” (Fumerton 2001: 11). Similarly, then, the fact that the door is open cannot be my source of justification. My belief is justified because of the special relation I bear to that fact.

Suppose that one’s source of justification were one’s evidence. On this reading of the argument—which is not, I believe, the one Fumerton intends—the fact that Fumerton is in pain cannot be his evidence for his belief that he is in pain. Rather, his evidence is his special relationship \(R\) in which he stands to his pain. This version of the argument, however, is flawed, and we can see so by using Fumerton’s original argument to show that the special relationship \(R\) that Fumerton bears towards his pain cannot be his evidence that he is in pain. That relationship, which I believe to hold between Fumerton and his pain, does not justify me in believing that he is in pain. So, there must be something special about his relationship \(R\) that justifies him in believing he is in pain. But then his relationship \(R^*\) to \(R\) cannot be his evidence either, since I am thinking, right now, that he bears \(R^*\) to \(R\) (to the pain), and I am still no closer to knowing that he is in pain.

Since Fumerton obviously does know that he is in pain, and obviously knows this in part because of the special relationship \(R\) in which he stands to his pain, what shall we say? Well, we should abandon the assumption (which is not Fumerton’s) that the source of justification for a belief is, or even supervenes on, the evidence that one has for the content of the belief.

There is an ambiguity involved in statements about what justifies our beliefs. A statement such as “S’s belief B that <p> is justified by M” could mean

(a) M is the evidence on the basis of which S believes <p>.

It could also be taken to mean

(b) M is one of the factors in virtue of which S’s belief B that <p> is justified.

In (a), what justifies is evidence, and what is justified is the content of the belief, namely the proposition <p>. Evidence is, in the first instance, evidence for what we believe, and what we believe are the sorts of things that can, for instance, appear as the conclusions of arguments. Those sorts of things are not token mental states, but propositions. If you prove
the Pythagorean Theorem, what you prove to be true is a proposition, not your state of believing it. If both you and Timmy prove it, there is only one thing that was proven. In (b), what justifies is some feature or fact concerning B itself, the state of believing, and what is justified is the token act or state of believing. If you and Timmy are each justified in believing the Pythagorean Theorem, then there are at least two things in the world that are justified.

The distinction between evidence and sources of justification, or between evidential and nonevidential justifiers (Lyons 2009: 24), is also forced on us as soon as we recognize where evidence sits in the nexus of the intentional act. Earlier I distinguished the act itself, its content, and its object, or what it is about. Only the objects of consciousness, the things of which we are aware, can and do function as evidential justifiers. That evidence occupies the object position in the nexus of intentionality is often built into our talk of evidence: it is what we look for, discover, are presented with, examine, gather, and analyze. My evidence for the proposition <my door is open> is what my perceptual experience presents, and what it presents is the fact that my door is open. My perceptual experience, which is not about itself, is not the evidence of which I am conscious, but the consciousness of evidence.²

Since something can function as evidence only when made an object of our mental acts, we can frame a more general argument similar to Fumerton’s own that the epistemic status of a belief never supervenes on the evidence of which one is aware. The single best way of acquiring empirical knowledge is to be in a situation in which the object one is thinking about is also present to one perceptually, and is perceived to be as one thinks it to be. Any object whatsoever can, however, be thought about emptily (Husserl 2001: 113). Anything that can be perceived, sensed, “given,” or introspected—including Fumerton’s pain—can also be merely thought about without being perceived, sensed, given, or introspected. Since anything whatsoever can be emptily thought of, so can any piece of evidence. But those acts in which a piece of evidence is given in fulfillment have a greater epistemic status than those in which it is emptily thought of, as Fumerton’s argument makes clear. Since both acts are of the same objects, the epistemic status of an act is not wholly determined by what it is the consciousness of, but also depends on the manner in which it lays hold of that object. Not all of the factors in virtue of which a belief is justified serve as evidence for the content of that belief.

This conclusion is evident for other, more familiar reasons as well. For instance, one obviously epistemically relevant factor involved in a belief’s being justified is that it falls under a true epistemic principle as an instance. Consider this somewhat remote variation on Husserl’s “principle of all principles”:

² See Pryor 2000, 519: “your experiences give you justification for believing p, but it would be misleading to call these experiences your “evidence” for believing p. For saying that your experiences are your ‘evidence’ for a perceptual belief suggests that your justification for that perceptual belief depends in part on premises about your experience—as if you were introspectively aware of your experiences, and your perceptual belief were based in some way on that awareness.”
If something is intuitively present to consciousness as one thinks it to be, then the person to whom it is present is prima facie justified in believing it to be just the way it is presented as being.1 If this principle is a justifier, it is normally a nonevidential justifier, and it justifies not by serving as a piece of evidence that I use to justify what I believe, but by serving as a sufficient condition for my state of believing to have a positive epistemic status. If I perceive the door as being open, and think of it as being open, then, according to the principle, I am prima facie justified in believing that the door is open. I can, however, perceive and think about the door without recognizing that my doing so satisfies this or any other epistemic principle. “If I call this intuited object a ‘watch,’ I complete, in naming it, an act of thought and knowledge, but I know the watch, and not my knowledge” (Husserl 1970: 837). I do not need to know, either occurrently or dispositionally, that my beliefs satisfy true epistemic principles in order for them to do so, and learning that they do does not, in general, give me any better reason to endorse the contents of those beliefs.4 This is one reason why a successful educational system need not offer any course on epistemology or phenomenology. Students’ knowledge of grammar, chemistry, and geography will not be compromised by their inability to identify the epistemically relevant features of their beliefs, nor will their knowledge of those subjects be improved by learning how to do so.5

If this is right, then we should endorse externalism about the sources of justification of our beliefs: sources of justification need not be internal to our minds in any sense of ‘internal’—not as constituents of the stream of consciousness, not as contents of our mental acts, and certainly not as objects of those acts. Nothing said above, however, speaks against internalism about the evidence or reasons in virtue of which one justifiably believes the content of a belief; on my view evidence must be “internal,” and must be internal in only one of the senses above, as an object of awareness (which does not entail that it is “internal” in either of the other senses). We should reject State Internalism, but can happily accept Reasons Internalism.6

The trouble with many externalist views, such as unrefined versions of reliabilism, is that insofar as a reliabilist epistemology makes a belief’s reliability, or something appreciably like it, sufficient for justification, and insofar as the consciousness of evidence is not necessary for reliability, such a theory entails that the consciousness of evidence is not necessary for justification. This is deeply objectionable, but only for reasons that support Reasons Internalism. It in no way supports the sort of internalism according to which “all of the factors needed for a belief to be epistemically justified for a given person be cognitively accessible to that person, internal to his cognitive perspective” (Bonnj

---

1 Husserl’s version reads: “every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition … everything originary … offered us in ‘intuition’ is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being … but also only within the limits in which it is presented there” (Husserl 1983: 44).

4 Willard 2000: 33; Pryor 2000: 519. As Van Cleve argues, an epistemic principle “is not a principle I have to apply to in order to gain knowledge; I need only fall under it” (Van Cleve 1979: 70).

5 Compare Husserl: “The existing sciences are essentially neither enhanced nor downgraded by the truths of critique of knowledge” (Husserl 2008: 186).

6 See Hopp 2011: 94-5. In Hopp 2008, I call these views “Strong” and “Weak” Internalism, respectively.
1992: 32), since many of those factors—such as falling under a true epistemic principle—do not figure at all among the evidence on whose basis we believe ordinary propositions. Between the poles of epistemological reflection and theorizing, on the one hand, and differentially responding to promptings from the environment or its Continental cousin, “skillful coping,” on the other, lies a vast space of fully conscious, fully rational life, a space in which we live through, rather than examine, conscious acts, and in which we spend the overwhelming majority of our emotional and intellectual lives. A credible account of knowledge ought to depict us as acquiring knowledge in that space. Reasons Internalism does.

Distinguishing between evidential and nonevidential justifiers opens up another reading of Fumerton’s argument on which it is unassailable, but does not threaten the view that facts can be evidence. On this reading, the source of Fumerton’s justification for his belief that he is in pain is not the fact that he is in pain, but it might be his evidence that he is in pain, since it is what he is conscious of. But then, provided open doors are objects of perception, the fact that my door is open can also be my evidence that my door is open, even though it is not the source of justification for my belief.

3.

One piece of evidence against my view is that we often say that someone has “better evidence” or a “better reason” for a proposition than someone else, even when there is no difference in the object of which they are conscious. If you just think that the door is open, you have much worse evidence than I do. How, then, can my evidence be identical with the object of which I am conscious?

The answer, I think, is rather simple: the claim that I have better evidence than you in this context means, has the same truth conditions and sense as, the claim that I have better access to the evidence than you do. Since the distinction between evidence and sources of justification is subtle, we can expect there to be a number of contexts in which the distinction is not expressly observed. We should even expect our ordinary way of talking to sometimes obscure it. Often, in characterizing something as someone’s “evidence” for what he believes, we imply that it functions as evidence for his justified beliefs, just as in characterizing something as “perceived” we imply that it is related to some mind in some distinctive way. But just as it is not essential to something that is perceived to be perceived, so it is not essential to any piece of evidence for a justified belief that it function as someone’s evidence for a justified belief. There are also plenty of contexts in which we speak of evidence as something thoroughly mind-independent in a way that sources of justification are not. If a scientist discovers a new meteorological phenomenon M that strongly indicates that widespread climate change is occurring, she will have discovered, not created, evidence that climate change is occurring. And it might be better evidence than M* for climate change, not because anyone has any better access to M than to M*, but solely because the probability of there being widespread climate change given M is greater than it is given M*.

4.
A number of philosophers appear to hold that only mental states can function as evidence. This is often simply built into their definitions of epistemic concepts. Jack Lyons writes, “An evidential justifier for a belief is any state that serves as part or all of the agent’s justifying grounds, that is, evidence, that is, reasons, for that belief” (Lyons 2009: 23). Pollock and Cruz write, “a state M of a person S is a reason for S to believe Q if and only if it is logically possible for S to become justified in believing Q by believing it on the basis of being in state M” (Pollock and Cruz 1999: 195).

In many cases, I suspect that the issue may be largely verbal—that what is infelicitously characterized as a “reason” or “evidence” is just what I would call the consciousness of a reason or evidence. Richard Feldman, however, explicitly argues that mental states, rather than ordinary facts, are evidence:

While we might ordinarily say that your reason for thinking that the tree is a maple is that its leaves are a particular shape, the fact that the leaves are that shape is not part of your evidence. What you are going on in judging the tree to be a maple is your belief that it has leaves of particular shape, and perhaps ultimately you are going on how the tree looks to you (your perceptual experience). These are internal, mental states you are in (Feldman 2005: 273).

The key to evaluating this argument is to understand just what “going on” amounts to. Unfortunately Feldman does not say. But under any plausible construal of it, the argument is defective. If what I am “going on” is what I am conscious of, as an object, then this argument is flawed for two reasons. First, in having a perceptual experience of the shapes of the tree’s leaves, I am conscious of the fact that the leaves are shaped in the way that they are—otherwise the experience wouldn’t be of the leaves being shaped as they are but of something else. Second, my judgment is not intentionally directed upon my own beliefs or mental states, so they are not part of what I am “going on.” But since my evidence is what I “go on,” the shape of the leaves is part of my evidence, while my awareness is not.

If, on the other hand, what I am “going on” is not the object of my acts of awareness but the acts of awareness themselves, then the argument is flawed for a different reason: my mental acts are the consciousness of evidence or reasons, not the evidence or reasons of which I am conscious, in which case what I am “going on” is not my evidence or reasons. But then the argument does nothing to cast doubt upon the claim that my reason—my evidence—for thinking the tree is a maple is the fact that its leaves are shaped in a certain way. If, as is the case, my evidence is what I am conscious of, and if what I “go on” is my consciousness of it, establishing that the shape of a leaf is not what I “go on” does not establish that it is not my evidence.

5.

So far I have defended objections to the view that facts can be evidence for noninferentially justified beliefs by distinguishing evidential and nonevidential justifiers. I have also argued that facts concerning one’s own mental acts are, typically, nonevidential justifiers. The fact that I see my door as being open is not my evidence for believing <the door is open>, even though it is a nonevidential source of justification for my belief.
One objection to this view is that in the process of justifying what we believe to others, we very frequently do appeal to facts about our own mental lives. If the proposition <the door is open> is challenged, I will provide an argument that it is true, one of whose premises will be that I see, or saw, that it is open. Not only that, but my inability to make such an appeal would render me incapable of justifying what I believe to others. In order to justify what I believe to others, I must present evidence that my state of believing it is justified.

This point is perfectly compatible with the view I am defending. If you call upon me to justify my belief that the door is open, I will take the request to imply that you do not have the same sort of access that I do to the relevant state of affairs. I assume that your access to the door is through my access to it (Alston 1989:163). I will accordingly attempt to establish that I know that the door is open, from which you may safely infer that the door is open. In order to establish the former claim, I will appeal to the fact that I stand or stood in an appropriate epistemic relation to the door, i.e. that I see or saw it. That I justify my claim that the door is open by first establishing that I see (saw) and know that the door is open, however, does not show that I am verbally expressing a line of reasoning that led me to believe that the door is open; the proposition <I know the door is open> is not a premise I use to establish <the door is open>. Rather, <the door is open> is one of the premises I use to establish <I know the door is open>. Even if, as may be the case, I invariably know <the door is open> if and only if I know <I know the door is open>, I do not know the former in virtue of knowing the latter. This is one way that epistemic ascent works: what serves as a nonevidential source of justification for some non-epistemic belief that <p> serves as evidence for epistemic propositions such as <S knows that p>.

6.

Even if my claims that facts can be objects of consciousness, that they can be our evidence, and that knowing about them does not depend on knowing one knows about them are all true, one might reject my claim that non-mental, worldly facts can be evidence for noninferentially justified beliefs. In order for a fact to be evidence for such a belief, one must stand in a very intimate sort of intentional relation to that fact. According to a long tradition of thinking about sense experience and knowledge, however, we never do stand in that sort of relation to mind-independent entities.

The general line of reasoning here is familiar. I’ll choose an appropriately modified version of an argument presented by Richard Fumerton, whose theory of acquaintance is very similar in its structure to Husserl’s theory of fulfillment:

1. In order for me to be noninferentially justified in believing any proposition <p>, I must be acquainted with the fact F that <p> is about.⁷
2. In any (putative) act of fulfillment, if any component of the act does acquaint me with a physical fact, it is the perceptual experience E.

⁷ Fumerton actually holds that it might be sufficient for one to be acquainted with a fact that is very much like the one that <p> is about (Fumerton 1995: 77). This premise is close enough for my purposes.
3. Acquaintance is a “real relation”; necessarily, if S is acquainted with some fact F, then F obtains (and any proposition <p> which is true if and only if F obtains is true).  

4. For any veridical perceptual experience E, there is a possible indistinguishable nonveridical experience E* in which I am not acquainted with any physical fact.  

5. Any experience E* which is indistinguishable from a veridical experience E is of the same determinate type as E.  

6. If two experiences E and E* are of the same determinate type, then E is an act of acquaintance if and only if E* is.  

7. So, no veridical perceptual experience E acquaints me with any physical fact.  

8. So, no (putative) act of fulfillment with E as a constituent provides me with noninferentially justified beliefs about physical facts.  

A simpler way to express the worry is this: if we cannot directly perceive physical objects, then propositions about them cannot be fulfilled at all, and, as the possibility of hallucinations proves, we cannot directly perceive physical objects.  

Still, I think it is problematic in a number of ways. In the first place, and as many disjunctivists would quickly point out, premise (5) of the argument above is not at all obvious. It is just as plausible to insist that perceptual experiences do, essentially, establish a real relation between us and a physical fact or object, and conclude that hallucinatory experiences do not belong to the same determinate kind as perceptual experiences.  

This point is contentious, however, and there are several reasons I do not wish to rest my case against the argument above on it. First, even though I do not think that hallucinatory experiences can be of or about the same individuals that veridical experiences are about (Hopp 2011, section 6.4), they do still purport to present us with physical facts. Even if there is no actual individual which a hallucinatory experience is of, it does depict the world as containing an individual with such-and-such properties. What makes a hallucination an error is that there is no such individual.  

Secondly, illusions are another type of nonveridical experience in which the individual presented does exist, but does not have some of the properties the illusory experience presents it having. But in that case, an illusory experience presents its subject with a fact or state of affairs that does not obtain; illusion is a species of hallucination with respect to states of affairs. Furthermore, illusory experiences and veridical ones can have precisely the same content. If I misperceive my white door as yellow, my experience presents my door as being yellow, and there is a possible veridical experience that would have exactly that same content. The possibility of such illusions—experiences with the same conditions of satisfaction and contents as veridical experiences—is enough for the argument’s purposes.  

I suggest the real problem with this argument is the first premise, according to which in order for one to be noninferentially justified in believing any proposition <p> about the physical world, one must be acquainted with the fact F that <p> is about. Fumerton holds not only that our knowledge of the world is epistemically indirect, but that

---

8 As Fumerton puts it, “If direct epistemic access to the table is anything like a real relation, then it cannot be present when the table is not present” (Fumerton 1995: 165).
it is invariably *intentionally* indirect. The reason, apparently, is that our perceptual states are not acts of acquaintance. “When one is acquainted with a fact, the fact is there before consciousness. Nothing stands ‘between’ the self and the fact” (Fumerton 1995: 76). It is fairly clear that Fumerton believes that only acts of acquaintance have this character, and because acts of perception are not acts of acquaintance, there must be something that does stand between them and the physical world. These are “our past and present sensations” (Fumerton 1995: 161) or perhaps “truths about the phenomenological character of my subjective experience and fleeting sensations” (Fumerton 1995: 32). We can, then, frame an argument for premise 1 of the main argument along the following lines:

(a) In order for me to be noninferentially justified in believing any proposition \(<p>\) about an object \(x\), my access to \(x\) must be intentionally direct.

(b) In order for my access to \(x\) to be intentionally direct, I must be acquainted with \(x\).

In support of (a), consider the case above. Can my belief that the Matterhorn is snow-covered be noninferentially justified on the basis of an experience of a photograph of it? No, it cannot. My justifiably believing that also depends on my justifiably believing that the photograph accurately represents the Matterhorn. But in that case, my belief that the Matterhorn is snow-capped is inferentially justified; it depends on my having justified beliefs about the accuracy of the photograph of which I am directly aware.

I am not convinced that this argument for (a) is sound. It seems quite plausible to claim, with the “inferential externalist,” that my justification only depends on the accuracy of the photograph, not on any beliefs I have about its accuracy. But I am not convinced the argument is unsound either.

Premise (b), however, is pretty clearly false. Before saying why, let me say something about the notion of intentional or representational indirectness. According to one prominent conception, I see some object \(x\) indirectly just in case there is some other object \(y\) such that I see \(x\) in virtue of seeing \(y\) (Jackson 1977: 19-20). This does not capture what philosophers standardly mean in characterizing our access to an object as “indirect.” For instance, if this were true of perception in general, one could only indirectly hear a sentence or a melody because one hears it only in virtue of hearing its words or notes. One could not hear a musical chord directly, since one hears it in virtue of hearing its constituent tones. Nor could one hear a tone directly, since one hears a tone in virtue of hearing its timbre, volume, and pitch. One could not even sense a visual sense datum directly, since one would sense it in virtue of sensing its properties and parts. If this is what is meant in saying that our awareness of something is “indirect,” then premise (a) of the argument is deeply implausible.

Husserl has a much better way of capturing something like the phenomenon Jackson describes by characterizing acts directed upon complex objects as *founded*. An act \(A\) is founded just in case:

(i) \(A\) contains other acts \(a_1, a_2, \ldots a_n\) as parts;
(ii) \(A\) could not exist if those part-acts did not; and
(iii) \(A\) is intentionally directed upon an object \(O\) which is not the object of any of \(a_1, a_2, \ldots a_n\) (Husserl 1970: 788).
The hearing of a melody, for instance, is founded because it consists of acts directed upon the individual notes, could not exist if those acts did not, but has a different object—the entire melody—from any of those constituent acts. But it is not indirectly about the melody. Rather, consisting of such part-acts is precisely what’s needed for it to be directly of the melody, just as hearing all of the words of a sentence is what lets you directly apprehend that sentence. In a standard case of hearing a sentence, neither the words nor the acts directed upon them “stand between” your hearing and the sentence heard.

An act is indirectly about an object x, rather, just in case (a) the act is about x in virtue of representing some other object y which in turn represents x, and (b) the subject of that act uses y as a representation of x. Hearing a melody is not indirect, because the partial acts making up the hearing of the melody A are parts, not objects, of the act of hearing A, and neither they, nor the notes they represent, represent the melody. An example of an indirect act would be an act of apprehending the Matterhorn in virtue of perceiving a photograph of it. My consciousness of the Matterhorn is indirect because my perceptual act is directed upon a photograph, which in turn represents the Matterhorn, and I use the photograph as a representation of the Matterhorn. It is important that I use the representation in a certain way (Husserl 1970: 594). Being aware of something that just happens to represent x is not sufficient for being indirectly aware of x, since one might be aware of such a representation without being aware of x at all. A photo of the Matterhorn might mean nothing to a cat, and a young child will likely not be image-conscious of Sarah Palin by watching Tina Fey’s parodies.

Given this notion of indirectness, which seems quite close to the one Fumerton and other indirect realists rely upon, we can see why not every intentionally direct act is an act of acquaintance. When I just think about the planet Saturn while perceiving the layout of my living room, I am not indirectly aware of Saturn. There is no other thing that I am first representing which in turn represents Saturn. Sure, a vague image of Saturn might float before my mind’s eye. But it might not, and whether it does or doesn’t is immaterial. Nor am I thinking directly of my idea or concept of Saturn. I am using the concept, but not representing it, just as, in speaking, I use words without talking about them. But my act of merely thinking about Saturn is hardly an act of acquaintance. An act can directly represent an object even when that object does not exist. False propositions represent states of affairs that do not obtain. My thought that Saturn is inhabited is directly of its object, but it represents something—Saturn’s being inhabited—which does not obtain. We can even think of the god Saturn directly.

Since an act of mere thought can be directly of its object, why should we suppose that perceptual acts must be indirectly of theirs simply because they are not acts of acquaintance? I think we should not. In the first place, introducing mental objects to mediate between our mental acts and the world does nothing to explain how intentional acts can be erroneous or of objects which do not exist (Willard 1967: 517). Hallucinations, one might think, could not be directly of anything in the world, but they are directly of something, perhaps appearances or sensations. Are these appearances or sensations directly about any worldly objects? If so, then a representation’s being directly about something does not entail that its object exists or that the representation is accurate, in which case the appearance explains nothing that we could not explain by appealing to
an act which is \textit{directly} about what does not exist. And if the appearance is not directly about anything in the world, then either (a) the appearance is not about anything at all, or (b) it is about another intermediary. If the latter, we face the same problem all over again. If the former, appealing to the appearance does nothing to explain how the hallucination is an error—that is, how it is a hallucination at all.

Hallucinations are not inaccurate merely because they do not represent the mind-independent world as it is. If that were a sufficient condition for inaccuracy, then everything that lacks representational properties altogether—mufflers, earrings, walruses—would be inaccurate, as would every intentional act that represents something besides the mind-independent world. They are inaccurate, rather, because they represent the mind-independent world as it is not. If my experience simply terminates in an appearance which exists and has the properties my experience presents it as having, then my experience is not mistaken about anything.

Furthermore, if my experience is hallucinatory or illusory, it is not mistaken because it can be factored into a veridical act directed at an appearance or a set of sensations and a mistaken inference from those to some proposition about the world. Hallucinations and illusions are \textit{perceptual} errors, not mistaken judgments or inferences. As Mark Johnston puts it, “being susceptible to visual hallucination is a liability that just comes with having a visual system” (Johnston 2004: 124). If hallucinations were faulty inferences, then, since faulty inference is a failure of rationality, hallucinations would appear to be failures of rationality. But hallucinations, like perceptual experiences, are neither rational nor irrational; it just makes no sense to attribute those properties to them.

That perceptual experiences can be wrong about the world, and that hallucinations are, at least shows that both are about the world—that worldly states of affairs are, if not their direct objects, at least among their objects. That such acts are not only directed upon such things as sensations or sense data is clear from other phenomenological considerations as well. The basic characteristic of perception is that, unlike mere thought, memory, and imagination, it “is that mode of consciousness that sees and has its object itself in the flesh” (Husserl 2001: 140). A perception of a sense datum or sensation is, or would be, what Husserl calls adequate or “self-posing.” “In the case of self-posing perceptions, the identity of the object and the identity of the perception are one and the same; I mean different perceptions have different objects” (Husserl 1997: 22). That is, any change in one’s experience of such a thing is a change in the thing one experiences. One cannot take a closer or better look at a self-posed object, for instance, since in changing one’s experience, one will simply encounter a different object. Nor can one perceive such an object in better or worse conditions, for the same reason. Sensations and sense-data are typically held to be, or defined into existence as, such objects.

Not everything we perceive has this character. At least some of the things we perceive—possibly all the things we perceive—are things one can take a closer look at or perceive under better or worse conditions. It might even be essential to our experience that we—or even our experiences themselves—strive for a “maximal grip” on perceived objects (Kelly 2010: 152). As I walk towards the house, my perceptual experience changes, yet I continue to see the same thing, and what I see it gives itself perceptually as the same thing. The conditions under which I view it can improve or deteriorate, and,
again, the perceived object not only remains the same, but is given as the same. Even properties such as color, shape, and size are not self-posing, as the phenomenon of perceptual constancy shows. As the house gets closer, its intrinsic shape and size do not perceptually appear to change, even though my experience of them changes. I can try to get a closer or better look at the shape and color of the house, which I could not do if the color and shape were presented adequately.

So if hallucinatory and veridical experiences of such things as houses and colors are indirect, in what way are they indirect? Not, I think, in the way that being conscious of something by means of a sign is indirect. In sign-consciousness, not only is the signified object not present in the flesh (unless you have some other access to it not mediated by the sign), it is not present mediate by way of anything that is presumed to resemble it. Neither the written nor the spoken word sign ‘dog’ resembles a dog, and smoke does not resemble fire.9 If perceptual consciousness were a kind of sign-consciousness, then we would not think that it matters whether the physical objects of which we are indirectly conscious resemble the objects that we directly perceive, since its not mattering to us is part of what makes something function as a sign. However, we do, most of us, think that physical objects resemble and must resemble the ones we directly perceive. Something that does not resemble what we see directly, when we see a tree, is not a serious candidate for being a tree.

A much more promising and historically popular answer is that perceptual experiences are indirect in the way that image-consciousness is indirect. However, neither hallucinating nor perceiving is anything like the consciousness of something by way of an image. The first problem with this suggestion is that in image-consciousness, the image-subject—the thing the image represents—is not given as present in the flesh. If I am looking at a picture of the Matterhorn while outdoors in Zermatt, I might believe, even very strongly and with psychological immediacy, that the Matterhorn is present, but that is a very different phenomenon from the Matterhorn’s being present to me in the flesh. I do not thereby see it itself.

The second problem with this proposal is this: in order for an image to function as an image, it must resemble, and be apprehended as resembling, what it depicts. Sometimes images resemble what they represent by tricking our perceptual systems into representing them, the images, nonveridically. Consider how the aptly named trompe l’oeil paintings work: they look realistic not because real violins, say, look flat, but because the painted violins do not. Similarly, a Necker cube is not a cube. It is something else, a schmube, all of whose parts are, but do not appear to be, situated on a plane. (The Gestalt-shift that occurs with Necker cubes could not occur if we saw them veridically, or fully-veridically, since it involves an apparent shift in the distance-in-depth of its parts.) A Necker cube does not function as a good image of cubes because real cubes look, nonveridically, to be schmubical, but because schmubes look, nonveridically, to be cubical. Within limits to be discussed, a two-dimensional image functions as a good

---

9 A sign might resemble what it signifies, as in the sentence “The first letter is ‘A’,” but that is inessential to its being a sign. It does not become and function as an image or likeness just because of that. See Husserl 1970: Investigation 6, section 14a.
image of a three-dimensional object to the extent that the image does not look two-dimensional. After the discovery of perspective, but not before, competent painters could effectively “trick the eye,” and perspective does not do that by making the drawn images look flat. That is what previous artistic techniques accomplished. Of course, two-dimensional images rarely fool us into believing they are three-dimensional, and we can readily appreciate how far even expertly done paintings fall shy of looking genuinely three-dimensional when we contrast them with stereoscopic images, such as the famous photographs by T. Enami or, better still, by looking at the sorts of objects such images depict. Still, properly executed images can produce something like an illusion of depth by exploiting other, non-binocular depth cues, such as appropriate angular sizes, occlusion, and texture gradients. Our perceptual experiences of such images are partly nonveridical.

If, therefore, a two-dimensional sense datum or “fleeting sensation” could serve as a good image of a cube or a violin, our perception of it would have to be nonveridical too. So, contrapositively, if sense data or sensations cannot be misperceived, then if there are accurate sensations that serve as images of cubes and violins, they are not two-dimensional. Infallibly and adequately perceived objects can only look like the three-dimensional objects they accurately depict if they are three-dimensional. This, however, raises a speckled-hen problem (Chisholm 1942). A three-dimensional object is one that could be seen from other points of view, from further or closer up, for instance. Even if we suppose that there is no volumetric perception of such an object—no consciousness of its solid shape—or any “empty” intentions towards its unseen or occluded sides and parts, there is still the possibility of getting a better or worse view of it. But with that possibility, as we all implicitly understand, comes the possibility of one’s beliefs about it having greater or lesser grades of justification. My belief that something is thus-and-so is more justified when I see it in good conditions. Moreover, one reason a belief about, say, an object’s shape is more justified when one sees it from the right distance and orientation is that one thereby rules out its having a shape that was not ruled out from an inferior viewing position. That’s part of what makes a good condition good; by ruling out more possibilities than others, it carries more information. In sunlight we can rule out an object’s having a number of colors that, as far as we could tell when viewing it under neon lights, it might have. If this is how things stand with sensations, then, assuming they have and must have determinate shape and color properties, they cannot be perceived adequately, and various beliefs we have about their determinate properties will be defeasible. If, however, they do not have determinate shape and color properties—if they are like the hen-sense-datum that has a lot of speckles but no determinate number of them—then it is hard to see how they have shape and color properties at all. So, the dilemma: if sensations are accurate images which can only be perceived veridically, then they are three-dimensional, but if they are three-dimensional, then our perception of them must be inadequate.11

10 For the difference between volumetric and 3-D perception, see Briscoe 2008: sec. 2.
11 For a different and more detailed account of just how badly a sense-datum view handles the phenomenology of seeing three-dimensional objects and the sorts of errors that can arise with respect to them, see Siewert 1998, sec. 7.4.
A third problem with construing perception as image-consciousness is that while an image must resemble what it represents, it cannot resemble it too closely (Husserl 2005: section 9). What sustains our ability to reckon differently with images than with the objects they represent—to not run away from images of lions or start up conversations with the people depicted on the movie screen—is that we grasp, whether correctly or not, various ways in which the image-object differs from the image-subject. The photograph on the table differs from the Matterhorn in all sorts of ways. It’s only a few inches tall and made of paper. If an object—the twin-Earth Matterhorn, say—resembles the Matterhorn too closely, image-consciousness would fall away, and we would have a straightforward act of perception aimed simply at that resembling object. The twin-Matterhorn might remind us of the Matterhorn, but being reminded of something is not image-consciousness. This is also why the extent to which an object can be given adequately is the extent to which image-consciousness of it is impossible. You cannot be image-conscious of a pain or an odor, since anything that resembles a pain or an odor closely enough to serve as an image of it would be painful or smelly, and so would present the thing itself in the flesh in a way that image-consciousness does not. The best we can do to represent, say, an odor by way of an image is to depict something that holds the promise of a certain olfactory experience, such as the heavy, noxious looking cloud emanating from Pepé Le Pew’s tail.

If, therefore, perceptual experiences of the physical world, whether veridical or not, were acts of image-consciousness, then we should be conscious of some objects besides the physical ones, and conscious of them functioning as images, and conscious, however marginally, of the ways in which those images both resemble and differ from the physical objects that they represent. But there does not seem to be anything like that occurring in perceptual consciousness, whether veridical or nonveridical. When I look at an open door, I cannot find any object x of which the following is true: x has many of the properties that an open door has, but differs from the door too closely, and were x to resemble the door too closely, I would no longer be image-conscious of the represented door, but would have a straightforward perception that terminates in x. But that is true of every image of a door that can in fact function as an image.

The considerations above—together with the felt phenomenological openness to the world that virtually everyone agrees, however grudgingly, characterizes perceptual consciousness—very strongly suggest that perceptual acts, including hallucinatory and illusory experiences, are intentionally direct vis-à-vis their terminal objects, and that their terminal objects are worldly ones. This at least gives us reason to reject the argument that because the hallucinator does not have “direct access” to the world, “you do not have direct access” either (Fumerton 1995: 165). The victim of hallucination does not have access to the world because he does not successfully perceive it. But his act is directly of the world. Veridical perception is also directly of the world. The difference is that in this case we do have access. So, we have direct access to the objects of veridical perception.

The question now is whether that sort of direct access is enough for our perceptual beliefs to be noninferentially justified. The mere fact that perceptual acts are intentionally direct does not establish that beliefs based upon them are or can be noninferentially
justified or even justified at all. I might believe that Saturn is the second largest planet for no reason, or infer it from something else, all the while thinking about it directly.

Perceptual experiences, however, are not just intentionally direct, as we have seen. They present their objects as existing and bodily present, and are the only acts directed upon physical objects that do that. Does the presentational character of perception have any epistemic significance? Of course it does, just as the presentational character of sensation and introspection has epistemic significance. Suppose I have a perceptual experience of the door’s being open, and that the experience fulfills my belief that the door is open, and that I have no additional reasons to believe that the door is open. If I were to replace the experience with an act of imagining that the door is open, or a mere thought that the door is open, my belief would become less justified. In fact, it would cease to be justified at all. Imagining and merely thinking that the door is open are not, by themselves, proper sources of justification of any degree or variety whatsoever for the belief that the door is open. Perceptual experiences are a source of at least some justification, of some type and positive degree, for beliefs about the states of affairs that they present.

My belief that <the door is open> is justified to some degree in the context of fulfillment. Is it inferentially justified? Only if fulfillment is inference. But it is not. Inferential or indirect justification involves believing one thing on the basis of other things. If my belief that <p> is justified on the basis of some set of propositions p₁, p₂...pₙ it cannot be the case that each of p₁, p₂,...pₙ is about the very same state of affairs that <p> itself is about.¹² In fulfillment, however, the perceptual act and the thought it fulfills must be directed upon the same state of affairs (though the perceptual act will almost invariably be directed upon many more states of affairs). So, my belief that the door is open is, when fulfilled by a veridical perceptual experience directed upon that very state of affairs, justified, and noninferentially so. Fumerton argues that it is not because, first, “the victim of hallucination has the same kind of justification you have” (Fumerton 1995: 165), and “in the nonveridical situation it is implausible to conclude that the justification is noninferential” (184). Contrary to Fumerton, however, fulfillment is a form of noninferential justification even in matching nonveridical cases. It is perfectly plausible to suppose that the victim of hallucination has noninferentially justified beliefs.

Of course I could justify the proposition <the door is open> inferentially, just as you might offer an argument to yourself that you exist. I might, for instance, conclude that the door is open because (a) I am having an experience of the door-is-open-type (b) if I have a perceptual experience of that type, then (probably) the door is open. This is not, however, a superior source of epistemic justification to the original act of fulfillment. Whatever vulnerabilities my original, noninferential belief possesses will simply accrue to the conjunction of (a) and (b). As a description of what we actually do, this is not remotely plausible. As a prescription for what we ought to do, it is not remotely attractive, promising, as it does, more labor for the same wage.

¹² Though some of them might. For instance, one might conclude <Clark Kent flies> on the basis of i. <Superman flies> and ii. <Clark Kent = Superman>. The conclusion and premise i. are about the same state of affairs.
So, perceptual experiences provide noninferential justification for the beliefs they fulfill. Furthermore, they can and very often do provide positive justification of a very high degree. The difference between merely thinking or imagining that <the door is open> and having that thought fulfilled by a suitably rich perceptual experience in favorable circumstances is not that in the latter case it is *just a little* more justified than in the former. It is massively more justified. It is also, in almost every suitably rich and clear case, more justified than it would be if based on hearing from a reliable source that the door is open, remembering that it is open, or inferring from other perceptual beliefs that it is open. If I heard that it was open from a reliable source, I would, if it really mattered to me, still feel some motivation to go see for myself. But if I saw for myself, clearly and distinctly, I would normally feel no motivation to consult the testimony of a reliable source (“Hey Dan, come and look at this door and tell me whether it’s open”) or infer it from any of my other beliefs.

The degree of justification that fulfillment confers on our true noninferential empirical beliefs is high enough to allow those beliefs to qualify, in a wide range of cases, as *knowledge*. Consider a vivacious, clear, harmonious and multi-faceted nonveridical experience of an open door, an experience that is subjectively indistinguishable, by a very capable and alert subject, from a veridical experience. Assuming, as I have, that this experience’s content is the content of a possible veridical experience, what would we have to do to transform a belief fulfilled by it into a case of knowledge? One answer, which I find at least somewhat plausible, is that in addition to doing whatever is necessary to rule out Gettier cases—arranging things so there are no defeaters for my belief, for instance—we need simply to ensure that the world is in fact the way the experience depicts it as being—that there is an open door there—ensure that the perceiver’s perceptual systems and sense organs are functioning properly, and establish a nomic, causal relationship between the open door and those systems. But if that’s enough to transform such a belief into knowledge, then beliefs fulfilled by comparably clear, veridical perceptual experiences are cases of knowledge, since the modifications above simply transformed the hallucination into a case of veridical perception.

Noninferential knowledge does not, on this view, have to be absolutely certain or indefeasible. If knowledge did have to be indefeasible, then the claim that we cannot noninferentially know that any doors are open should be greeted with a yawn. Any theory of knowledge that renders our knowledge of open doors absolutely indefeasible has probably gone terribly wrong somewhere. As Husserl puts it, if the task of acquiring knowledge “lies in the production of absolutely complete givenness, then it is a priori unsolvable; it is an unreasonably posited task. What we will conclude from this is therefore in the first instance the fact that the knowledge of reality cannot have this ideal, insofar as we may have confidence that knowledge accomplishes something actually rational and does so because it posits rational goals” (Husserl 1997: 114–15). The important point is that experiences of fulfillment have a degree of justification that is very high, and our justification for believing what we do on the basis of the presentational consciousness of states of affairs is not seriously undermined by the merely schematically
imagined metaphysical possibilities to which skeptical arguments regularly appeal. Perceptual beliefs about the actual world can be undermined, but only by sources of justification comparable in strength, and the act of conceiving of the skeleton of a weird possible world is not such a source.

I cannot pretend that this argument would satisfy any skeptic. My position is dogmatic, in Pryor’s sense,13 insofar as I hold that the consciousness of an object in the flesh is, just in virtue of being what it is, a source of justification, and no skeptic, qua skeptic, would likely agree to that. I am not confident, however, that there is any single better answer to the skeptic, nor am I confident that the skeptic is someone who needs to be answered in terms of premises that he could or must accept. In any case, it is an undeniable empirical fact, and at one time a cause of some personal disappointment while I tried to provoke my students, that the majority of us are fairly unmoved, in our empirical beliefs, by skeptical arguments. Merely imagined—or, more properly, merely conceived of—possibilities simply do not in most cases provide any actual psychological resistance to the massive evidential and belief-motivating power of perceptual experience and the huge body of belief that it fulfills. This might be because we are constituted to be irrational. But I suspect thinkers such as Reid and Husserl are right in thinking that it is because we are constituted, within familiar limits, to be rational.

13 “…[W]hen you have an experience as of p’s being the case, you have a kind of justification for believing p that does not presuppose or rest on any other evidence or justification you may have” (Pryor 2000: 532).
Works Cited


Johnston, M. (2004), ‘The Obscure Object of Hallucination’, Philosophical Studies,