





## Perceptual Experience: Relations and Representations

by

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### Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to elaborate and assess the Relational View of perceptual experience, and to compare it to its main rival, the Representational View. Roughly stated, the core claim of the Relational View is that *veridical* perceptual experience is basically a matter of perceiving material entities in one's environment. By contrast, the Representational View holds that all kinds of perceptual experience consist in a propositional attitude—i.e., in representing a proposition to the effect that one's environment is a certain way.

In Chapter 1, I attempt to improve upon previous articulations of the Relational View's account of veridical experience by way of contrasting it with the Representational View. I then turn to the Relational View's account of *non-veridical* perceptual experience (i.e., illusions and hallucinations), and I argue that the most plausible account is a version of *disjunctivism*—roughly, a view on which veridical and at least hallucinatory experiences are fundamentally different. Finally, I outline and assess the main motivations that have been offered for the Relational View.

In Chapter 2, I consider existing objections to the Relational View, and I argue that several of them are misguided. An objection that *isn't* misguided, however, is the worry that the Relational View cannot give plausible accounts of non-veridical perceptual experiences. I argue that this objection is not (yet) fatal to the Relational View on the grounds that certain Relationalist accounts of illusions and hallucinations have been under-explored, and I conclude Chapter 2 by elaborating and defending them.

Finally, in Chapter 3, I develop a novel objection to the Relational View. The Relational View has been criticized for the difficulties it faces in giving plausible accounts of non-veridical experiences, but it is usually taken for granted that it offers a plausible account of *veridical* experience. I argue that any theory of perceptual experience should be able to accommodate the role perceptual experience plays in explaining belief. I consider four kinds of ways in which the Relationalist might attempt to accommodate this role in the case of veridical experience, and I argue that the only viable ones require weighty metaphysical commitments. I conclude that if the Relationalist cannot defend these commitments, we should endorse the Representational View.

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## Introduction

This dissertation is concerned with the metaphysical structure of perceptual experience. By ‘perceptual experience’, I mean experience associated with the sense modalities (vision, hearing, touch, smell, and taste) in virtue of which it appears to one that one’s environment is a certain way. For example, I am currently the subject of a *visual* experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana, in virtue of which it appears to me that my environment contains a yellow, crescent-shaped banana. By ‘*metaphysical structure of perceptual experience*’, I mean the most fundamental psychological account of perceptual experience. (What I mean will become clearer in the course of presenting rival accounts of perceptual experience’s metaphysical structure.)

Before philosophical reflection, it may seem obvious what the metaphysical structure of perceptual experience is: it is natural to suppose that having a perceptual experience is just a matter of *perceiving* something. After all, we tend to describe our experiences in terms of what they are *of*. If you asked me to describe the perceptual experience I’m having right now, I would say that it is a perceptual experience of *a yellow, crescent-shaped banana*.<sup>1</sup> This tendency suggests that perceptual experience is simply a matter of a certain sort of relation obtaining between the subject of the experience and what the experience is of (i.e., the objects of experience).<sup>2</sup> Plausibly, this relation is that of *perceiving*—or more precisely, one of its determinates (the relations of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling). Let ‘(PEP)’ stand for the claim that the metaphysical structure of perceptual experience simply consists in the subject’s perceiving something.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Byrne and Logue 2009: viii.

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘object’, when *not* followed by ‘of experience’, is typically used to refer to an entity in a particular ontological category—the sort of entity that is concrete, bounded, distinct from properties but instantiates them, and distinct from events and states of affairs but constitutes them. So, for example, the banana on my desk is an *object* that instantiates the *property* of yellowness and is a constituent of the *event* of the banana’s being moved to the left. By contrast, the phrase ‘objects of experience’ picks out whatever it is that is perceived, and this category includes entities in various ontological kinds (not just objects, but also properties, events, etc.). Presumably, the objects of visual, tactile, and perhaps auditory experiences include objects, but it is not obvious that this is true of the objects of olfactory and gustatory experiences. For example, the primary objects of gustatory experiences may be *tastes* (e.g., saltiness), which are properties. As is common in the philosophical literature on perceptual experience, I will focus primarily on *visual* experience, but I will note how the claims under discussion bear on experiences in the other modalities when appropriate.

While (PEP) is initially plausible if we don't think too much about it, to borrow a phrase from David Hume, the "slightest philosophy" immediately undermines it (1777/1993: 104). For it takes only a moment's reflection to realize that one can have a perceptual experience even if one doesn't perceive anything in one's environment. My experience of the banana on my desk is, we may suppose, a *veridical* perceptual experience—that is, in having this experience, I see the banana on my desk, and it is the way it looks to me to be (yellow, crescent-shaped, and so forth). Contrast this experience with a *total hallucination*, e.g., an experience "as of" a yellow banana, in which the subject perceives nothing at all in her environment. It appears to the subject of such a hallucination that her environment contains a yellow, crescent-shaped banana, but even if there happens to be, she does not perceive it. Such an experience could arise from the perceptual centers of a subject's brain receiving stimulation from some complicated machine (as in the "brain in a vat" scenario). Although it seems to such a subject that she perceives the world around her, she is in fact perceptually isolated from it.<sup>3</sup>

A historically quite popular theory of perceptual experience, the *Sense-Datum View*, aims to account for hallucination without giving up on (PEP). On this theory, hallucination does consist in perceiving *something*. But since the subject of a hallucination doesn't perceive any *material* entities in his environment, the sense-datum theorist claims that the objects of hallucination are *immaterial* entities (otherwise known as *sense-data*).

A proponent of the Sense-Datum View also holds that *veridical* experience involves perceiving sense-data. One way to argue for this claim begins with the observation that it is possible for one to undergo "subjectively seamless transitions" between veridical experiences and hallucinations. To borrow (and slightly modify) an example of Mark Johnston's (2004: 122), suppose that a subject is lying on an operating table in a dark room, and that she is having a veridical experience of the lights on the ceiling. The lights are then turned off, but a surgeon

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<sup>3</sup> As I use the term 'perceptual experience', it applies to both veridical and hallucinatory experiences. (Some prefer to reserve the term for experiences that involve perception of entities in one's environment.) By '*veridical* perceptual experience', I mean roughly what Siegel (forthcoming) means by '*strongly* veridical perceptual experience'—i.e., a perceptual experience in which the *things perceived* are as they perceptually appear to be. (I say 'roughly' because the category of strongly veridical experiences includes a certain type of illusion, which we will discuss in Chapter 3, section 5. As I will use 'veridical experience', it doesn't refer to such illusions.) Siegel contrasts strong veridicality with *weak* veridicality, which is a sort of veridicality even hallucinations can have. A hallucination is veridical in this weaker sense just in case it appears to the subject that her environment is a certain way and, as it happens, her environment really is that way.

simultaneously manipulates the subject's brain so as to make it seem to her as if there are ceiling lights on. If the manipulation is carried out just right, the subject will be unable to notice the transition from veridically perceiving the lights on the ceiling to hallucinating lights on a ceiling. For this reason, one might think that if the subject is seeing immaterial things when she is hallucinating, she must also be seeing immaterial things when she is veridically perceiving. For how could she go from seeing material things to seeing immaterial things *without even being able to notice*? It would be rather odd (although not impossible) for things to be so metaphysically different and yet indistinguishable to the subject. And what goes for veridical experiences of ceiling lights goes for veridical experiences in general, including my veridical experience of the banana.

Note that on the Sense-Datum View as I have characterized it here, veridical experience is exactly like hallucination except with respect to how it is *caused*. The subject of a hallucination perceives sense-data because of something funny going on with her perceptual system (e.g., her brain being stimulated by a complicated machine). By contrast, the subject of a veridical experience of a banana perceives sense-data (roughly) because the banana in her environment plays a role in causing them.

In characterizing both veridical and hallucinatory experience as consisting in perception of something, the Sense-Datum View is compatible with the following principle:

(SST) If it is possible to undergo subjectively seamless transitions between two experiences, then they have the broadly the same metaphysical structure.

(SST) does not say that two experiences that satisfy the condition in the antecedent have *exactly the same* metaphysical structure. For example, one might reject the argument for the Sense-Datum View given two paragraphs back, and endorse a view on which *hallucinatory* experiences involve perceiving *sense-data* while *veridical* experiences involve perceiving *material entities*. Such a view would satisfy (SST), since the experiences would have the structural similarity of consisting in perception of *something*.

The motivation for (SST) is analogous to one of the claims in the argument for the Sense-Datum View: just as one might think it implausible that two *objects of experience* could be metaphysically completely different and yet indistinguishable, one might think it implausible that one could go back and forth between having experiences with radically different metaphysical structures without being able to notice. (SST) has traditionally been regarded as a fixed point to theorize around, although some have come to question its motivation. In particular, one might wonder whether we should assume at the *outset* that it's implausible that one could undergo subjectively seamless transitions between experiences with completely different metaphysical structures. Perhaps we should remain open to this possibility in case an otherwise attractive theory of perceptual experience predicts it.

In any event, the Sense-Datum View fell out of favor for a variety of reasons. For one thing, immaterial entities don't fit very well into a respectable scientific worldview. More importantly, the sense-datum theorist has a difficult time explaining how we perceive things like bananas and desks. The sense-datum theorist claims that there is a *sense* in which we perceive such things—we “indirectly” perceive them, in virtue of “directly” perceiving the sense-data they play a role in causing. However, this distinction is notoriously difficult to explain.<sup>4</sup> In light of these worries about the Sense-Datum View, a central aim of philosophy of perception in the last half-century or so has been to articulate a viable alternative.<sup>5</sup>

According to one of the alternatives, the *Representational View*, the subject of a hallucination perceives nothing at all. Rather, she *represents* her environment as being a certain way—for example, as being such that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped thing before her. In addition, the Representational View holds that *all* perceptual experiences consist in representation. Just like a hallucination as of a banana, my veridical experience of the banana on my desk consists in my representing that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped thing before me.<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Dretske 1969, 62-75.

<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the Sense-Datum View still has contemporary defenders: see, e.g., Robinson 1994. (Foster 2000 also argues that the objects of perceptual experience are immaterial entities, but he doesn't endorse the Sense-Datum View as I've characterized it here. Foster denies that the immaterial objects of experience are caused by material things like bananas because he denies that there are any material things—he is an *idealist*. For simplicity's sake, I've ignored idealist versions of the Sense-Datum View.)

<sup>6</sup> A Representationalist may, but need not, hold that the only difference between a veridical experience of a banana and a banana hallucination is a causal difference. A version of the Representational View that holds that the



Representational View’s account of veridical experience is a huge improvement over that of the Sense-Datum View, since it can easily accommodate the fact that we perceive things like bananas—representing my environment as being a certain way does not involve anything immaterial intervening between me and the banana.

Since the Representational View holds that veridical and hallucinatory experience both consist in representation, it is compatible with (SST): a subject who undergoes subjectively seamless transitions between veridically perceiving and hallucinating represents her environment as being a certain way throughout. However, the Representational View is incompatible with (PEP), since it holds that hallucinatory experience doesn’t consist in perceiving anything at all, and that veridical experience isn’t *simply* a matter of perceiving something. The Representational View characterizes veridical experience as involving something “over and above” the obtaining of the perceptual relation, viz., a specific sort of propositional attitude we don’t have a name for in ordinary language.<sup>7</sup>

Another alternative to the Sense-Datum View is the Relational View (also known as “Naïve Realism”). The core idea of the Relational View is that *veridical* experience simply consists in the subject’s perceiving the objects in his environment as they really are. In essence, the Relational View replaces sense-data with the “mind-independent physical things we know and love” (Brewer 2008: 171). All versions of the Relational View accept a modification of (PEP) restricted to veridical experience—one can think of the Relational View as aiming to retain (PEP) without indulging in the ontological excesses of the Sense-Datum View.

Some versions of the Relational View accept (PEP) without qualification. For example, as I noted above, one might hold a view on which *hallucinatory* experiences simply consist in perceiving *sense-data* and *veridical* experiences simply consist in perceiving *material entities*. Or one might follow Mark Johnston (2004) in maintaining that veridical experience consists in perceiving a complex of properties and the objects that instantiate them, while hallucinatory experience just consists in perceiving a complex of uninstantiated properties. Any version of the

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difference is more than just causal is one on which veridical but not hallucinatory experience consists in representing object-dependent propositions (see Chapter 1, section 1a).

<sup>7</sup> Of course, this is not to deny that the perceptual relation obtains between the subject of a veridical experience and its objects. (See Chapter 1, section 1a for possible Representationalist views on the relationship between veridical experience and the obtaining of the perceptual relation.)

Relational View that accepts (PEP) without qualification is compatible with (SST), as all kinds of experience have the metaphysical structure of a subject bearing the perceptual relation to something.<sup>8</sup>

However, some versions of the Relational View only endorse a modification of (PEP) restricted to veridical experience. The idea is that while veridical experience is just a matter of perceiving material entities as they really are, hallucinations have a completely different nature. This claim is a version of what is known as *disjunctivism* about perceptual experience. A disjunctivist version of the Relational View is incompatible with (SST), since it holds that a subject who undergoes subjectively seamless transitions between veridically perceiving and hallucinating goes back and forth between perceiving things and being in a completely different sort of mental state.

In summary: the desire to account for hallucination while retaining (PEP) and (SST) gave rise to the Sense-Datum View, which is now widely regarded as unsatisfactory. Its two main heirs are the Representational and Relational Views.<sup>9</sup> The Representational View forsakes (PEP) but is compatible with (SST). Versions of the Relational View that endorse (PEP) are compatible with (SST), while versions of the Relational View that endorse only a version of (PEP) restricted to veridical experience are incompatible with it.

The aim of this dissertation is to clarify what is at stake in the debate between the Representationalist and the Relationalist, and to make some progress in determining which view is correct. Before these tasks can be accomplished, however, there is much preliminary work to do—specifically with regard to the Relational View, which is all too often misunderstood and thus unfairly maligned. The proponents of the Relational View bear some responsibility for this unfortunate situation, as their characterizations of the view are often less than perspicuous. Thus, the first task of Chapter 1 is to give a more precise characterization of what the Relational View claims about veridical experience by contrasting it with the Representational View. Next, I will

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<sup>8</sup> I will set aside the version of the Relational View that accounts for hallucination in terms of the subject perceiving sense-data on the grounds that commitment to immaterial entities is undesirable.

<sup>9</sup> The Representational and Relational Views are not the only alternatives to the Sense-Datum View. For example, adverbialism (see, e.g., Ducasse 1942) holds that perceptual experience consists in certain non-representational modifications of a subject—e.g., an experience as of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana consists in the subject sensing “yellowly” and “crescent-shapedly.” I am limiting my focus to the Representational and Relational Views on the grounds that they are widely regarded as the main contenders.

outline the Relationalist options for accounting for non-veridical experience. I argue that Mark Johnston's version of the Relational View is dubious, and thus that any plausible version of the Relational View is a version of disjunctivism. After characterizing disjunctivism in detail, I will present and evaluate the main motivations for the Relational View (two stemming from introspection, one having to do with the connection between perceptual experience and our capacity to represent particular objects, and one having to do with phenomenal character—i.e., “what it is like” to have an experience).

Once the Relational View has been clarified, we are in a better position to see whether it deserves the bad reputation it has in some circles. In Chapter 2, I discuss three common types of objections to disjunctivism, and thus to any plausible version of the Relational View: one type based on the fact that a hallucination can be *subjectively indistinguishable* from a veridical experience, one type based on the fact that a hallucination can have the same *phenomenal character* as a veridical experience, and one type that appeals to scientific research on perception. I conclude that none of these objections are sound. Nevertheless, a disjunctivist version of the Relational View does face serious difficulties in giving an account of non-veridical experience, and I conclude Chapter 2 by elaborating and defending what I take to be the most promising accounts.

Alas, I build up the Relational View in Chapters 1 and 2 only to attempt to tear it down in Chapter 3. I begin by proposing that any theory of perceptual experience should be able to accommodate the role perceptual experience plays in explaining cognition and behavior. I argue that the Relational View has trouble accommodating the role experience plays in explaining perceptual belief. I consider four Relationalist attempts to accommodate that role, and conclude that although two of them are in principle viable, they require rather grandiose metaphysical commitments.

I stop short of concluding that the Relational View is false, however. There is still some hope for the Relational View—in the conclusion of this dissertation, I summarize what has yet to be done in order to settle the debate between the Relationalist and the Representationalist once and for all.

## Chapter 1

### The Relational View Explained

As we noted in the introduction, when one is asked to describe one's perceptual experience, one can do no better than describing what the experience is of. If asked to describe my current experience, I would say that it's an experience of a yellow, crescent shaped banana to my left. As we also noted, it is natural to move from this observation to a claim about the metaphysical structure of experiences: namely, that such experiences "...are relations to mind-independent objects" (Martin 2006: 354), or, in other words, that they consist in "...a simple relation holding between perceiver and [mind-independent] object" (Campbell 2002: 115). Such claims are supposed to apply (in the first instance, at least) to *veridical* experiences, i.e., perceptual experiences in which a subject perceives something that is as it appears to her to be. As a first pass, we can articulate the Relational View's account of veridical experience as follows: it simply consists in the obtaining of the relation of *perceiving* between the subject of the experience and its (material, mind-independent) objects. For example, my veridical experience of the banana on my desk is basically a matter of the obtaining of the relation of perceiving between me and the banana (as well as some of its properties).<sup>10</sup>

Usually, Relationalists don't say much more than this about veridical experience. But they cannot rest here, as the claim that veridical experience consists in the subject perceiving material entities seems dangerously close to uncontroversial (*pace* the idealist, who thinks that all we perceive are our own "ideas"). Since the Relational View's account of veridical experience is supposed to be a genuine alternative to the accounts offered by other theories, it requires further elaboration.

The task of the first section of this chapter is to elaborate the Relationalist account of veridical experience. Relationalists have had much more to say about *non-veridical* experiences, and in the second section I will sketch the available Relationalist accounts. Once we have a

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<sup>10</sup> Sometimes the Relational View's account of veridical experience is described in terms of the phenomenal/subjective/qualitative character of experience (i.e., "what it is like" to have the experience): see, e.g., Campbell 2002: 114-5, Brewer 2008: 171, and Fish 2009: 15. I will discuss the relationship between this characterization of the Relational View and my own in section 1b.

better understanding of what the Relational View is claiming, in the third section I will turn to the motivations offered for endorsing it.

### ***1. The Relational View and veridical experience***

The claim that veridical experience in some way *involves* the obtaining of the perceptual relation between the subject and material entities is practically uncontroversial. However, it is natural to interpret the Relational View as claiming more than this: specifically, as claiming that there's *nothing more* to veridical experience than the obtaining of the perceptual relation. To elaborate this claim and appreciate its significance, it is helpful to compare the Relational View to its main rival: the Representational View. I will begin this section by outlining the Representational View and contrasting its account of veridical experience with that of the Relational View. Then, I will call attention to some important features of the Relational View's account of veridical experience.

#### *1a. The Representational View vs. the Relational View*

The Representational View is endorsed in various forms in Peacocke 1983, Harman 1990, Dretske 1995, Block 1996, and Tye 2000 (among others). The common thread uniting these views is the claim that having a perceptual experience consists in representing one's environment as being a certain way. More precisely, the claim is that perceptual experience consists in bearing a specific *attitude* toward a *proposition* to the effect that one's environment is a certain way.<sup>11</sup> The attitude isn't one we have a name for in ordinary English (unlike attitudes of the form *believing that p* and *desiring that p*), but we may call it the attitude of *perceptually representing that p*.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> I should note that, in the works cited, Ned Block and Christopher Peacocke aren't concerned to argue for the Representational View *per se*; rather, they take the Representational View for granted and argue for a particular version of it. Specifically, they reject the view that the phenomenal character of experience supervenes on the propositions perceptually represented—they think that an experience's phenomenal character can vary independently of its representational content. The view that Block and Peacocke oppose is sometimes called 'Representationalism' (in Block 1996 it's called 'Representationism'), but this view should not be confused with what I'm calling the Representational View.

<sup>12</sup> One might hold that there is a specific propositional attitude associated with each sensory modality (e.g., *visually representing that p* vs. *aurally representing that p*). Also, note that talk of perceptual representation of an *object* (like

It is no easy task to specify *exactly* which proposition I'm perceptually representing when I look at my banana. First, we may ask whether these propositions are Russellian, Fregean, or coarse-grained possible worlds propositions.<sup>13</sup> Second, there is debate about whether visual experiences involve representation of "high-level" properties, such as causal relations or natural kind properties (like the property of being a banana), in addition to "low-level" features like color, shape, motion, and location.<sup>14</sup> A third choice point for the Representationalist has to do with whether perceptual experience involves representation of object-dependent propositions (e.g., that *this thing* is yellow, crescent-shaped, and at such-and-such a location) or object-independent propositions (e.g., that *there is* a unique yellow crescent-shaped thing at such-and-such a location).<sup>15</sup> (We will return to these intra-Representational View disputes in the last chapter.)

It is worth pausing to flag a potential misconception of the Representational View. On this misconception, propositions are objects of experience—the perceptual relation is identical to the relation of perceptual representation, where the non-subject relatum is a proposition. The idea is that what it is to perceptually represent a proposition is to *perceive* it. For example, on this misconception, my veridical experience of the banana on my desk would consist in my *perceiving the proposition* that this banana is yellow.

This interpretation of the Representational View involves at least two confusions. First, propositions are not objects of experience. We perceive entities like bananas and desks, and (in some sense, to be discussed in detail in the final chapter) we perceive some of the properties of entities like these. But whatever it is to perceive an entity and its properties, it does not amount to perceiving the *proposition* that the entity has those properties. For whatever their nature, propositions are quite different from the sorts of entities we perceive (such as bananas and

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the banana on my desk) or a *property* (like yellowness) should be understood as shorthand for the claim that a *proposition* having to do with that object or property is perceptually represented.

<sup>13</sup> See Siegel 2005 for discussion of this issue.

<sup>14</sup> For an affirmative answer, see Siegel 2006.

<sup>15</sup> For the view that perceptual experience involves representation of only object-independent propositions, see, e.g., McGinn 1982 and Davies 1992; for the view that perceptual experience involves representation of object-dependent propositions, see, e.g., Chalmers 2006 and Tye 2007.

colors).<sup>16</sup> Second, if the Representational View did hold that perceptual experience consists in a subject perceiving propositions, it would simply be a strange version of the *Relational View*. The Relational View holds that veridical experience consists in the subject bearing the relation of perceiving to the objects of experience, and in this case, the objects of experience would be *propositions*.

In short, the Representational View is *not* the view that propositions are the objects of experience. Rather, it holds that veridical experience involves two relations to two different sorts of entities—the relation of *perceiving* to the *objects of experience* (which are entities like objects, events, and the properties of such entities) and the relation of *perceptually representing* to a *proposition*.<sup>17</sup>

Now, there's a further question for the Representationalist about the place of the perceptual relation in veridical experience. On one version of the Representational View, veridical experience is *exhausted* by the subject's perceptually representing a proposition about her environment. While the obtaining of the perceptual relation between the subject and the objects of experience is of course involved in the subject's having a veridical experience, the obtaining of this relation does not *constitute* the experience. Call this the "relation excluding" Representational View. This is the typical version of the view. But there is conceptual space for another version of the view, on which non-hallucinatory experience is constituted both by the subject's perceptually representing a proposition *and* the obtaining of the perceptual relation. Call this the "relation including" Representational View.

One might suspect that that the difference between these two views is merely verbal; that they simply reflect different ways in which we might apply the term 'perceptual experience'. The relation-excluding Representationalist uses 'perceptual experience' to pick out phenomenal

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<sup>16</sup> It is tempting to interpret John McDowell as holding that we perceive propositions: "*That things are thus and so* is the conceptual content of an experience, but if the subject of an experience is not misled, that very same thing, *that things are thus and so*, is also a perceptible fact, an aspect of the perceptible world" (1994: 26, emphasis in original). 'That things are thus and so' refers to something I can believe, i.e., a proposition; thus, McDowell appears to be claiming that propositions are perceptible. Mark Johnston tentatively interprets McDowell as claiming just this, and rejects this claim on the following grounds: perception is a relation to *concrete* reality, but "[t]he objects of judgment [i.e., propositions] are bearers of truth-values, and when their subject matter is contingent those bearers can be either true or false...*But concrete reality does not consist of items that could have been false*" (2006: 269-70, emphasis in original).

<sup>17</sup> For objections to the Representational View, see Brewer 2006 and Johnston 2007. Since the Relational View is the primary focus of this dissertation, I will not explore these objections here.

states of subjects that consist in representing one's environment as being a certain way, while the relation-including Representationalist uses the term to pick out such states *plus* the obtaining of the perceptual relation (in the case of non-hallucinatory experience). If there were no considerations that could justify one choice over the other, then the difference would be merely verbal. But arguably, we should use the term 'perceptual experience' to pick out those entities that play a role in explaining the phenomena that perceptual experiences are supposed to explain (e.g., the cognitive and behavioral phenomena attendant on perceptual experience). On this understanding of the difference, the relation-excluding Representationalist holds that we can give a complete psychological explanation of such phenomena without appealing to the fact that the perceptual relation obtains between the subject and things in her environment, while the relation-including Representationalist denies this.

The relation-including Representational View may seem like a hybrid of the Relational and Representational Views, but this is only because we have yet to specify the nature of the perceptual relation. For suppose that the perceptual relation is analyzed in terms of representation: for example, suppose that it is a necessary condition on a subject's bearing the perceptual relation to an object or a property that the subject perceptually represents a proposition having to do with that object or property. Given such an account of the perceptual relation, the view just described isn't properly characterized as a hybrid of the Relational and Representational Views. For Relationalists strongly oppose the claim that veridical experience consists in representing propositions; and if the obtaining of the perceptual relation *presupposes* this claim, the Relationalists cannot consistently *oppose* it. Thus, the Relationalists must have a different account of the perceptual relation in mind.

An outline of such an account is suggested by William Fish. He holds that "[t]he distinctive feature of [the Relational View] lies in the claim that, when we see the world, the subject is *acquainted* with...mind-independent objects and their features—where 'acquaintance' names an irreducible mental relation that the subject can only stand in to objects that exist and features that are instantiated in the part of the environment at which the subject is looking" (Fish 2009: 14, emphasis in original). Fish doesn't go as far as identifying the acquaintance relation



with the perceptual relation, but, at least *prima facie*, such an identification seems plausible on grounds of parsimony.

The Relationalist's acquaintance relation has two important features. First, it is *irreducible*—it cannot be analyzed in terms of the subject's representing certain propositions (or in terms of anything else, for that matter). Second, the acquaintance relation is supposed to have a certain sort of "immediacy" to it (Fish 2009: 14-5, fn. 19). In ordinary talk, one might say that I am *acquainted* with Bob although he's in his office and I'm across the hall in mine, on the grounds that we've interacted on a number of previous occasions. But this is not how the Relationalist thinks of perceptual acquaintance—one can be acquainted with something in the Relationalist's sense only if it is *present* to one. Further, the immediacy of acquaintance is supposed to provide for an especially intimate mode of epistemic access to the entities with which one is acquainted.<sup>18</sup> The idea is (roughly) that being acquainted with something puts one in a position to have at least partial knowledge of what it's like "in itself", independently of us. (In this respect, the Relationalist's notion of acquaintance is much weaker than Russell's, on which the objects of acquaintance are *mind-dependent* entities, and acquaintance with them affords one *complete* knowledge of them.)<sup>19</sup> Granted, this aspect of the acquaintance relation is somewhat mysterious. I won't attempt to demystify it here, but it is worth demystifying—it might be of help in elucidating the intuitive idea that perception of an entity puts us in closer cognitive contact with it than, say, mere thought about it ever could.<sup>20</sup>

I should note that some Relationalists might object to certain aspects of this elaboration of Fish's characterization of acquaintance. For one thing, as we saw above, Fish claims that one can only be acquainted with properties "that are instantiated in the part of the environment at

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Johnston 2007: 233 on the intimate epistemic access associated with perceptual presence.

<sup>19</sup> See Russell 1912: 42, and Hellie 2009 on the history of the notion of acquaintance.

<sup>20</sup> I'll just mention one potential problem that should be addressed in the course of demystifying this aspect of the acquaintance relation. As we noted in the introduction, I could undergo a subjectively seamless transition between veridically perceiving the banana on my desk and having a hallucination as of a qualitatively identical banana (at least in principle). So I could go from being acquainted with an object to being acquainted with nothing at all (or, on Johnston's account, to just being acquainted with a sensible profile). But this seems like an odd result—if I'm acquainted with *more* in having my veridical experience than in having my hallucination, then why can't I tell? I don't mean to suggest that there couldn't be *any* introspectively inaccessible differences between my experiences. However, given how intimate the relation of acquaintance is supposed to be, it is odd to suppose that I could be acquainted with a thing in one case but not in another and not be able to tell. The contact that the acquaintance relation provides us with objects in our environment doesn't seem to be all that intimate if we can't tell when we've *lost* it.

which the subject is looking” (2009: 14). Mark Johnston denies this; he holds that one can be acquainted with a property even if it isn’t instantiated by anything in one’s environment. (I will scrutinize this claim in section 2a.) Furthermore, one might resist the idea that one can be *acquainted with properties* at all. As we will see in Chapter 3, the Relationalist has a number of other accounts of property perception available to her, so I will not characterize the Relational View as committed to the claim that we are acquainted with properties as well as the entities that instantiate them.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, note that a *relation-excluding* Representationalist could accept the Relationalist’s characterization of the perceptual relation in terms of acquaintance. Since the relation-excluding Representationalist doesn’t think the obtaining of the perceptual relation is part of veridical experience’s metaphysical structure, endorsement of the acquaintance account of the perceptual relation doesn’t amount to endorsement of a hybrid Relational/Representational View. On the other hand, if one with relation-including Representationalist sympathies were to accept the acquaintance account of the perceptual relation, one would thereby become a proponent of a hybrid Relational/Representational View.

In summary, we can isolate the following four accounts of veridical experience:

The Relational View: veridical experience is exhausted by the obtaining of the perceptual relation between the subject and the material objects of experience, where the obtaining of the perceptual relation between the subject and at least the non-property objects of experience consists in the subject’s being acquainted with them.

The relation-excluding Representational View: veridical experience is exhausted by the subject’s perceptually representing her environment as being a certain way.

The relation-including Representational View: veridical experience is exhausted by (i) the subject’s perceptually representing her environment as being a certain way, and

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<sup>21</sup> Note that a version of the Relational View that denies that we are acquainted with properties rejects the identification of the perceptual relation with the acquaintance relation.

(ii) the obtaining of the perceptual relation between the subject and material objects of experience, where this is analyzed in terms of representation.

The hybrid Relational/Representational View: veridical experience is exhausted by

(i) the subject's perceptually representing her environment as being a certain way, and  
 (ii) the obtaining of the perceptual relation between the subject and the material objects of experience, where the obtaining of the perceptual relation between the subject and at least the non-property objects of experience consists in the subject's being acquainted with them.

On this taxonomy of the views, there are two main questions about which their proponents disagree:

(a) Does veridical experience consist (wholly or in part) in representing one's environment as being a certain way?

(b) Does veridical experience consist (wholly or in part) in the obtaining of the acquaintance relation?

The various views answer these questions as follows:

	(a)	(b)
Relational View	No	Yes
Representational View	Yes	No
Hybrid View	Yes	Yes

So far we've only discussed accounts of *veridical* experience. Representationalists hold that *all* perceptual experiences consist in representation of one's environment as being a certain

way (and perhaps also in the obtaining of the perceptual relation in cases where an object is perceived). But what does the *Relationalist* have to say about non-veridical experience? Here Relationalists divide; this is the topic of the next section. But before moving on to that topic, we should explore some of the implications of the Relational View's account of veridical experience.

*1b. Important features of the Relational View's account of veridical experience*

So far, I have characterized the Relational View as committed to the following two claims:

- (i) veridical experience is exhausted by the obtaining of the relation of perceiving between the subject and the (material) objects of experience;
- (ii) to perceive an object or event is to be *acquainted* with it (in a weak Russellian sense).

Several clarificatory points are in order.

First, note that it isn't a consequence of the Relational View's account of veridical experience that any two veridical experiences of the same object are mentally exactly alike (which is an absurd claim—veridical experiences of the same object can of course be very different). For one veridical experience of a particular object may involve perception of different *properties* than another veridical experience of that same object. For example, suppose that my friend and I both veridically perceive the banana on my desk. My veridical experience may well differ from my friend's if he is viewing the banana from a different perspective. Perhaps he can see a splotch of brown on the banana that isn't visible from where I'm sitting. Or perhaps we are looking at the banana from opposite sides of my desk, such that it looks to my friend to be to the right of my computer while it looks to me to be on the computer's left-hand side. What the

Relational View *is* committed to is that any two veridical experiences of the same object *as having the same properties* are mentally exactly alike.<sup>22</sup>

Second, note that on the Relational View, a veridical experience is not merely *caused* by the objects of experience—rather, it is *constituted* either by the *event* of the perceptual relation’s coming to obtain between the subject and the objects of experience, or by the *state of affairs* of the relation’s so obtaining. This has a perhaps surprising consequence, depending upon your prejudices or pre-existing theoretical commitments. The consequence is that “...the object perceived is a constituent of the conscious experience itself” (Campbell 2002: 117); or as Martin puts it, “[s]ome of the objects of perception—the concrete individuals, their properties, the events these partake in—are constituents of the experience” (2004: 39). That is, veridical experiences literally extend beyond the subject’s head to encompass what the experience is of. This is simply because the banana is a constituent of the event of the perceptual relation coming to obtain between me and it, and it is a constituent of the state of affairs of the relation’s so obtaining. One might resist this consequence of the Relational View on the grounds that experience is “inner”, or contained within the head; surely, one might say, we don’t want to say that Mars is literally part of my experience when I gaze into the night sky! Arguably, this reaction flows from certain questionable presuppositions, which we’ll discuss in Chapter 2.

Finally, a remark is in order about formulations of the Relational View’s account of veridical experience in terms of phenomenal/subjective/qualitative character (i.e., “what it is like” to have an experience). Here are some examples: John Campbell describes his version of the Relational View as holding that “...the qualitative character of [a veridical] experience is constituted by the qualitative character of the scene perceived” (2002: 114-5). Bill Brewer describes his version as holding that “...the core subjective character of [veridical] perceptual experience is given simply by citing the physical object which is its mind-independent direct object” (2008: 171). William Fish describes his version as holding that “...the phenomenal character of [a veridical] experience...is the property of acquainting the subject with such-and-

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<sup>22</sup> Brewer adds a third term to the perceptual relation in order to capture facts having to do with perspective (see Brewer 2008: 171). But this doesn’t appear to be mandatory; the Relationalist can capture such facts by appeal to perception of perceiver-relative spatial properties of objects.

such a presentational character [i.e., certain properties instantiated by the objects of experience]” (2009: 15).

Note that these claims about phenomenal character flow naturally from the Relational View as I’ve formulated it. Arguably, it’s no accident that all veridical experiences have phenomenal character. A plausible explanation of this fact is that phenomenal character is either identical to or supervenes on some aspect of the experience’s metaphysical structure. Given this assumption, if a veridical experience is exhausted by the obtaining of a certain relation between the subject and material entities, we have no choice but to account for the experience’s phenomenal character in terms of the obtaining of this relation. A natural account to give is analogous to the account typically offered by proponents of the Sense-Datum View. According to the usual version of the Sense-Datum View, what it is like to have an experience is understood in terms of what the *immaterial objects* of the experience are like. The Relational View can give an analogous account of the phenomenal character of veridical experience, the only difference being that the entities that “constitute” phenomenal character are material. On the assumption that what one says about the metaphysical structure of experience constrains what one can say about its phenomenal character, the formulation of the Relational View’s account of veridical experience in terms of experience’s metaphysical structure is more fundamental than the formulation in terms of phenomenal character.

## ***2. The Relational View on illusions and hallucinations***

In the last section, I described the Relational View as holding that veridical experience solely consists in acquaintance with certain material entities in one’s environment, as well as in perceiving certain properties of those entities. But this account cannot be extended to non-veridical perceptual experiences, i.e., illusions and hallucinations. Recall that a (total) *hallucination* is an experience in which it seems to the subject that she perceives material entities in her environment, but in fact she perceives nothing of the sort (e.g., an experience had by a “brain in a vat”). The Relational View’s account of veridical experience cannot be extended to hallucinations simply because they don’t involve the obtaining of the acquaintance relation between the subject and material entities in her environment. *Illusions*, by contrast, are (roughly)

experiences in which the subject perceives material entities in her environment, but at least some of those entities aren't as they appear to be—e.g., an experience in which a green banana looks yellow.<sup>23</sup> The Relational View cannot be straightforwardly extended to illusions, because while the Relationalist can say that the subject of the banana-illusion is acquainted with a banana, the subject doesn't perceive *its* color (the banana looks yellow, but it's really green). Yellowness must get into the picture somehow, but it doesn't get into the picture by way of the subject perceiving a property the banana instantiates (since the banana isn't yellow).

One prominent Relationalist, Mark Johnston, adapts the Relationalist account of veridical experience to the cases of illusion and hallucination. Other Relationalists hold that at least hallucination requires a fundamentally different account—this view is known as *disjunctivism* about perceptual experience. In the first part of this section, I will outline Johnston's view and offer some considerations against it. In the second part, I will give a detailed characterization of disjunctivism (deferring discussion of the details of Relationalist accounts of illusion and hallucination to Chapter 2).

### 2a. Johnston's view

Mark Johnston holds that *any* sort of perceptual experience involves acquaintance with a “sensible profile,” which is “a complex, partly qualitative and partly relational property, which exhausts the way the particular scene before your eyes is if your present experience is veridical” (2004: 134).<sup>24</sup> The subject of a veridical experience of a yellow banana is acquainted with the banana and an instantiated sensible profile that includes yellowness. The subject of a hallucination as of a yellow banana is acquainted with only an *uninstantiated* sensible profile that includes yellowness. The subject of an illusory experience (of, say, a green banana that looks yellow) is acquainted with a particular material object (the green banana) and an *uninstantiated* sensible profile (which includes yellowness).

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<sup>23</sup> This characterization of illusion isn't quite accurate, as it doesn't capture a sort of experience known as *veridical illusion*: i.e., an experience in which one perceives material entities that are as they appear to be, but is still defective in some respect. We will discuss veridical illusions in Chapter 3, section 5, but until then, the rough characterization of illusion in the main text will suit our purposes.

<sup>24</sup> Recall that the official characterization of the Relational View is neutral on whether we are *acquainted* with properties in addition to the things that instantiate them. However, it is clear that Johnston thinks that we are, as he says that “[s]ensory awareness...acquaints us with sensible profiles” (2004: 149, emphasis removed).

There are at least a couple of causes for concern about this proposal. First, recall that the obtaining of the acquaintance relation is supposed to put the person on the “subject end” of it in especially intimate contact with the things on the “object end” of it. It is natural to suppose that such intimate perceptual contact has implications for the phenomenal character of one’s experience—in particular, to suppose that if one is acquainted with an entity, the fact that one is acquainted with it is reflected in the phenomenal character of experience in some way. One might try to accommodate this idea by claiming that one’s acquaintance with an object gives one’s experience of it a certain “phenomenal particularity,” i.e., the feel of involving confrontation with a *particular* object. As I veridically perceive the banana on my desk, it seems to me that I perceive *that very banana*—to put the thought in terms of Johnston’s account, that the sensible profile of which I am aware is *instantiated* by *that very banana*.

However, in light of the fact that *hallucinations* can also have phenomenal particularity, this move isn’t available for Johnston’s account. Obviously, Johnston can’t account for the phenomenal particularity of hallucinations in terms of acquaintance with material objects in one’s environment. Rather, he suggests that acquaintance with a sensible profile explains the phenomenal particularity of a hallucination: the spatio-temporal properties in a sensible profile “[mimic] spatial and temporal extent and thereby [mimic] particularity” (Johnston 2004: 142). Setting aside the question of whether this is a plausible explanation of phenomenal particularity, the important thing to note is that if we accept it as an explanation of the phenomenal particularity of hallucinations, it’s hard to see why we shouldn’t accept it as an explanation of the phenomenal particularity of veridical experiences as well.<sup>25</sup> Acquaintance with the object that instantiates the sensible profile would drop out as irrelevant to the experience’s phenomenal particularity. So it seems that Johnston is committed to saying that one’s acquaintance with an object isn’t reflected in the phenomenal character of one’s experience of it, and if that’s the case, he owes us an explanation of how this is compatible with acquaintance providing for especially intimate contact with objects.

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<sup>25</sup> Although perhaps Johnston could argue that the property of being acquainted with something that *mimics* particularity cannot “screen off” the property of being acquainted with a *genuine particular* from explaining phenomenal particularity. Cf. M.G.F. Martin’s account of hallucination (discussed in Chapter 2, section 4b).



A more pressing worry about Johnston's account can be briefly expressed as follows: given that perception is a relation to the world, there's something suspicious about the claim that a hallucinating subject who is perceptually cut off from the world around her nevertheless perceives something. Let us try to make this worry more precise.

This worry starts with the recognition that perception is a relation between a subject and *the world*. Of course, it's not a relation between a subject and the entire *universe*—we need to specify which bits of the universe a given subject can bear the perceptual relation to. Some parts of the world cannot be perceived by a normal human subject in any context (e.g., quarks, propositions). Other parts of the world are in principle perceptible, but given one's location, one isn't in a position to perceive them. For example, Bob is in principle perceptible; but since he's in his office and I'm not, I'm not in a position to perceive him. Also, some parts of the world are in principle perceptible, but given that one's perceptual system is being interfered with in a certain way, one isn't in a position to perceive them. For example, suppose that I have joined Bob in his office because he has asked me to try out his new hallucination-generating machine, which (as it happens) works perfectly. In this case, even if Bob is standing right in front of me, I'm not in a position to perceive him. (Or, as a less far-fetched example, I might interfere with my own perceptual processes by closing my eyes.)

Anything one perceives is a part of what we may call a subject's *perceptual environment*: the bit of the world that the subject would be in a position to perceive from her location given the unimpeded operation of her perceptual system. To illustrate this idea further, let's focus on visual perception. Very roughly, my *visual* environment includes the parts of the universe that reflect or emit light that can (more-or-less directly) reach my retina given my current location, as well as the visible properties of such things. My visual environment excludes things behind me (at least in the absence of mirrors), things that are completely occluded by things in front of me, and things that are simply too far away and/or too small for me to see given how much light they emit or reflect. (So a distant star may be part of my visual environment, but a tiny rock orbiting it can't be.)

Now we are in a position to explain what's so suspicious about Johnston's account of non-veridical experience. First, one can only perceive entities that are in one's perceptual

environment. This follows from the claim that perception is a relation between a subject and a certain portion of the world, that portion being all or part of the subject's perceptual environment. Second, it is plausible that a *property* counts as being in one's perceptual environment only if it is *instantiated* by something in one's perceptual environment. (Note that a property need not be instantiated by an object or event to count as being in one's perceptual environment; it could be instantiated by light, or by a region of space.) It's just not clear what else it could be for a property to count as being in one's perceptual environment. It wouldn't do to suggest that a property is in one's perceptual environment only if one *perceives* it—if my eyes are closed, there are plenty of entities in my visual environment that I don't see. Given this second claim, Johnston's account of non-veridical experience contradicts the first, as it allows for the possibility that a subject perceives properties that are not in her perceptual environment. For example, on Johnston's account, the subject of a hallucination as of a yellow banana perceives a sensible profile including yellowness regardless of whether anything in her perceptual environment is yellow. So Johnston's account is incompatible with the plausible claim that one only perceives entities that are in one's perceptual environment.

Johnston would object to this argument on the grounds that we sometimes perceive properties that aren't instantiated by anything:

When we survey cases, the idea of awareness of sensible profiles uninstantiated in the scene before the eyes can come to seem quite natural. When we close our eyes and look at the sun we are visually aware of some specific shade of orange. Nothing having the shade is presented or given in experience. Similarly, in the pitch dark, one is visually aware of a certain shade of black ("brain-greyness") and not of any black shaded (brain-grey) thing. It won't do to say that one is visually aware of nothing in the pitch dark; the question could obviously arise as to whether there is a tint of indigo in what one is aware of in the pitch dark. The case of visual awareness of a quality in the pitch dark must stand as a difficulty for those views which hold that in all cases in which you have visual experience some physical particular is appearing to you, even if it is the air or the space

before your eyes. In the pitch dark, you are not seeing the air or the space before your eyes. It's *too* dark to see such things. (2004: 141, emphasis in original, footnote omitted)

If it's true that we can perceive properties that aren't instantiated by anything, then one of the premises of the argument given in the last paragraph is false: either a property doesn't have to be instantiated by something in one's perceptual environment in order to be in that environment, or it is possible for one to perceive an entity that isn't in one's perceptual environment.

However, the examples Johnston offers in the passage above do not support the claim that we can perceive uninstantiated properties. When I'm facing the sun with my eyes closed, I perceive orange *light* passing through my eyelids. And when I'm in the pitch dark, I don't perceive *blackness*. Rather, I perceive *darkness*, i.e., an absence of illumination. There's a difference between blackness and darkness; plausibly, rod vision is sensitive to qualities that are related to but different from colors (something like levels of ambient illumination). Darkness is instantiated by "the space before my eyes"—and it's the one thing it's *not* too dark to see.<sup>26</sup>

In light of these worries, I will set Johnston's view aside in what follows, and I will assume that any plausible version of the Relational View is a version of *disjunctivism*.<sup>27</sup>

## 2b. Disjunctivism

All the prominent Relationalists save Johnston endorse *disjunctivism* about perceptual experience. This subsection is devoted to characterizing disjunctivism in detail.

Take a situation in which I have a veridical experience—say, a situation in which I see the banana on my desk, and it is as it looks to me to be (yellow and crescent-shaped). Call this *the good case*. There are other possible situations in which I have an experience that is *subjectively indistinguishable* from my veridical experience of the banana. Let us say that an experience  $e_1$  is subjectively indistinguishable from an experience  $e_2$  just in case a subject of  $e_1$

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<sup>26</sup> If you doubt that we can see darkness, consider the veridicality conditions of an experience had in dim lighting (say, the experience I'm having of the banana on my desk after having turned off the lights). If the banana looked as brilliantly yellow as it would have looked in bright lighting conditions, my experience wouldn't be veridical. Plausibly, my experience is veridical only if it reflects the fact that my surroundings are poorly illuminated. (Of course, just because an object *doesn't* look to have a property it really *does* have doesn't make one's experience of it illusory.)

<sup>27</sup> For further critical discussion of Johnston's view, see Dunn 2008.

and  $e_2$  is not in a position to know by introspection alone that  $e_1$  is not  $e_2$ .<sup>28</sup> Take a case in which I have an illusion that is subjectively indistinguishable from my experience in the good case: say, a case in which I see a green, crescent-shaped banana on my desk that looks yellow to me. Call this a *bad case*. And finally, take a case in which I have a total hallucination that is subjectively indistinguishable from my experience in the good case, and also call this a *bad case*. As a first pass, we can characterize disjunctivism as follows: "...the experiences in the good case and [at least the hallucinatory]...bad [case] share no mental core, that is, there is no (experiential) mental kind that characterizes [all the] cases" (Byrne and Logue 2009: ix). The qualification is required because some disjunctivists hold that the experience in the *illusory* bad case has some mental properties in common with the experience in good case (see, e.g., Langsam 1997 and Alston 1999).

Note that the experiences in the good and bad cases may well have *non-mental* commonalities: perhaps the property of having such-and-such a neural proximal cause. The restriction of the disjunctivist's claim to *mental* commonalities raises the question of what exactly a mental property is in the first place. It's clear enough which properties are supposed to count as mental for the disjunctivist's purposes: e.g., the property of consisting in perceptually representing the proposition that there is a yellow, crescent shaped thing before one, the property of consisting in the subject's being acquainted with a banana that looks yellow and crescent-shaped to her, and the property of consisting in the subject's being acquainted with yellow, crescent-shaped sense-data. The disjunctivist is concerned to deny that the experiences in the good and at least the hallucinatory bad case have any of these properties in common. But in virtue of what do these properties count as mental?

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<sup>28</sup>This definition of subjective indistinguishability is based on Williamson's account of indiscriminability in his 1990: ch. 1. (I am treating 'indiscriminability' and 'indistinguishability' as synonyms.) I intend this definition to be neutral on the question of which ontological category experiences fall under (e.g., events, states of affairs, or properties of subjects). The 'by introspection alone' clause is intended to accommodate cases in which  $e_1$  is subjectively indistinguishable from  $e_2$  in the sense intended, but their subject is in a position to know that  $e_1$  is not  $e_2$  on the basis of another's testimony, or (if they are events) on the basis of knowledge that they occur at different times. ('introspection' is a placeholder for whatever method it is by which one acquires knowledge of one's own mental states.) Finally, it must be stipulated that the subject has an excellent memory of the experiences and has the relevant concepts:  $e_1$  might be subjectively distinguishable from  $e_2$  in the sense intended, but their subject might not be in a position to know that they are distinct because she doesn't remember them well enough, or because she doesn't have the concept of an experience.

Here is a plausible (albeit rough) proposal: a property is *mental* iff it is the sort of property that figures in psychological explanations.<sup>29</sup> Perceptual experiences are frequently invoked in psychological explanations of cognition and behavior. For example, part of the explanation of why I believe that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped banana on my desk is that I am having a perceptual experience of such a banana; and part of the explanation of why I'm reaching to my left is that I'm having an experience of the banana as being to my left (along with the fact that I want to eat the banana). Of course, psychological explanations can be more or less fine-grained. In ordinary contexts, one need mention only that I'm having a perceptual experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana in explanations of my cognition and behavior. But philosophers of perception are typically after what would count as more fine-grained explanations, explanations that make it clear how it is even possible for perceptual experience to play these explanatory roles in the first place (e.g., explanations in terms of acquaintance with entities of some sort, or in terms of representation of propositions). One question of interest to the philosopher of perception is this: what metaphysical structure must perceptual experience have in order to play a role in explaining associated cognitive and behavioral phenomena? In short, mental properties are those properties that could be invoked in psychological explanations (be they very fine-grained explanations or more coarse-grained ones).

Now that we've gotten at least a bit clearer on what mental properties are supposed to be, a couple of qualifications of our characterization of disjunctivism are in order. First, the experiences in the good and bad cases certainly have *some* mental commonalities. One kind of commonality includes those that don't fully capture the phenomenal character of the experiences, e.g., the property of *being a perceptual experience*. In light of this fact, disjunctivism should be characterized as denying that experiences in the good case and (at least some of) the bad cases have any *reasonably specific* mental commonalities—specific enough to be absent when one veridically perceives, say, a red tomato, or the same banana after it turns brown.

Another kind of mental commonality across the cases includes those that don't fully describe the nature of the experiences, e.g., the property of *being a perceptual experience as of a*

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<sup>29</sup> I'm assuming we have a good enough handle on what counts as a *psychological* explanation without giving some prior account of which properties count as mental/psychological: roughly, to give a psychological explanation is to explain why a subject is in a given mental state without reference to, e.g., the subject's subpersonal states.

*yellow, crescent shaped (etc.) banana*. This property (suitably elaborated) fully captures the phenomenal character of the experiences, but in a much more coarse-grained way than the disjunctivist has in mind. It is better to interpret the disjunctivist as claiming that the experiences in the good and at least the hallucinatory bad case have no *primitive* mental commonalities—that is, that the cases do not have any mental properties in common that cannot be explained in terms of other mental properties.<sup>30</sup> The idea is that the property of *being a perceptual experience as of a yellow, crescent shaped (etc.) banana* can be explained in terms of a property like that of *consisting in perceptually representing that that (banana) is yellow, crescent-shaped, (etc.)* or the property of *consisting in the subject's being acquainted with a banana that looks yellow, crescent-shaped (etc.)*—where these latter two mental properties are primitive.<sup>31</sup>

Taking the above qualifications into account, we arrive at the following characterization of disjunctivism about perceptual experience: The experiences in the good case and at least the hallucinatory case have no reasonably specific, primitive mental properties in common.

It should be clear that disjunctivism follows from the Relational View, assuming that Johnston's version of it is false. The Relationalist holds that my experience in the good case is exhausted by my being acquainted with the banana (and its looking to have certain properties). *Pace* Johnston, I am not acquainted with anything in the hallucinatory case (and thus nothing looks to me to have any properties). Thus, whatever account is given of the hallucinatory experience, it will not have any reasonably specific, primitive mental commonalities with the experience in the good case.

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<sup>30</sup> This is an addition to the characterization of disjunctivism Alex Byrne and I defended in our 2008. The property of being an experience in which *the banana looks yellow and crescent-shaped to me* counts as a reasonably specific mental commonality across the good and illusory cases. Byrne and I argued that this fact undermines any version of disjunctivism that treats the experiences in the good and illusory cases as radically different (2008: 87-8). I now think that this argument is uncharitable; surely no one *denies* that the banana looks yellow and crescent-shaped to me in both the good and illusory cases. Rather, those who treat the good and illusory cases as radically different hold that being an experience in which the banana looks yellow and crescent shaped to me isn't a *primitive* mental property—they hold that we should give a *different mental explanation* of this property in each case.

<sup>31</sup> Another mental property that doesn't count as primitive is that of being *subjectively indistinguishable* from the good case experience. (As we will see in the next chapter, this property plays a central role in M.G.F. Martin's account of hallucination.) For this property is explained in terms of another mental property, i.e., the property of being the good case experience. Everyone thinks that the experiences in the good and bad cases share this indistinguishability property (the good case experience is subjectively indistinguishable from itself, of course). Because of the "primitiveness" qualification, we don't get the implausible result that disjunctivism denies this.

So what exactly can the Relationalist say about the experiences in the bad cases? I will defer discussion of this question until Chapter 2 (section 4). Since we now have a better understanding of what the Relational View is, let us first turn to the question of why one might endorse it.

### ***3. The motivations for the Relational View***

In this section, I will outline four potential motivations for the Relational View: two based on introspection, one having to do with perceptual experience's role in explaining our ability to represent propositions about particular objects, and one having to do with avoiding a difficult question about phenomenal character. I should note that the authors who present these motivations offer elaborate cases for them, to which I will not do justice in my relatively brief summaries. The goal of this section is simply to convey a rough sense of these motivations and the biggest problems that they face. Finally, note that none of considerations I will present below motivate the Relational View uniquely—they are motivations for characterizing veridical experience in terms of the acquaintance relation, and so they motivate the hybrid Relational/Representational View just as well.

#### ***3a. Introspection***

According to M.G.F. Martin, "...we should think of [the Relational View] as the best articulation of how our experiences strike us as being to introspective reflection on them." (2004: 42). There are at least two ways of interpreting this claim. The first, most straightforward interpretation is that introspection of perceptual experience *alone* provides support for the Relational View. However, this is not the interpretation Martin intends. Immediately before the passage just quoted, Martin refers us to his paper "The Transparency of Experience", in which he argues that introspection of perceptual experience *alone* doesn't motivate the Relational View (2002b: 402). In this paper, his motivation for the Relational View is primarily based on introspection of *sensory imagination* (not just introspection of perceptual experience). So the second interpretation of the claim quoted above is that introspection of one's mental states *in general* (perhaps including, but not limited to one's perceptual experiences) provides support for the

Relational View. Regardless, it is worth considering whether introspection of perceptual experience alone can provide support for the Relational View. This is the task of the first part of this subsection; in the second part, I will turn to Martin's argument.

i. Introspection of perceptual experience

As I mentioned in the introduction, we tend to report the results of introspection of our perceptual experiences by describing what they are of. For example, if you ask me to describe the experience I'm having right now, I would say that it is an experience *of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana*. Plausibly, this tendency is a symptom of the fact that, when one has a perceptual experience, it seems that a bit of the world is revealed to one—to introduce a bit of jargon, it is a symptom of the fact that perceptual experience has a *world-revelatory character*. Mark Johnston illustrates the world-revelatory character of veridical experience in the following passage:

When one sees one's dogs running in the front yard, the whole content of the perceptual experience is of the dogs and their running being present in a certain way, a way that discloses something of the nature of the dogs and their running. THERE the dogs are, immediately available as objects of attention and demonstration, and as topics of one's further thought and talk. (2007: 233)

One might suggest that the most natural explanation of the world-revelatory character of perceptual experience is in terms of the especially intimate relation of acquaintance. It seems to the subject of a perceptual experience that a part of the world is revealed to her because she is *acquainted* with things in it. Moreover, given the intimacy of the acquaintance relation, this suggestion seems well-positioned to accommodate Johnston's claim that having a perceptual experience reveals at least something of the *nature* of its objects.

However, it can seem to a *hallucinating* subject that a bit of the world is revealed to her. The world-revelatory character of hallucinatory experience is naturally explained in terms of acquaintance only if a bit of the world *really is* revealed to a hallucinating subject—otherwise, what would she be acquainted with? Since the material objects in a hallucinating subject's



environment aren't revealed to her, the only options are to maintain that a portion of an "immaterial" world is revealed to her (as on a version of the Relational View that accounts for hallucinations in terms of acquaintance with sense-data), or that complexes of properties and relations are revealed to her (as on Johnston's view). But if I'm right that these views should be off the table, there is no viable version of the Relational View that can account for the world-revelatory character of hallucination in terms of acquaintance.<sup>32</sup> Of course, the Relationalist will insist that the world-revelatory character of *veridical* experience should be explained in terms of acquaintance. But the fact that we must give a completely *different* account of the world-revelatory character of hallucination undermines the claim that acquaintance figures in the most *natural* explanation of world-revelatory character.

Nevertheless, introspection indicates a striking phenomenological difference between perceptual experience and other mental states, e.g., thought, belief, knowledge, desire, and imagination. States of imagining and desiring may be said to have phenomenal character, but as a result of the fact that what one imagines or desires need not be the case, they don't have a world-revelatory character. And one might suggest that thoughts, beliefs, and states of knowledge don't have phenomenal character at all, much less world-revelatory character. (If one knows something, part of the world has been revealed to one, but there is no phenomenal character associated with a state of knowledge itself.)<sup>33</sup>

One might suggest that the best way of accounting for this striking phenomenological difference between perceptual experience and other kinds of mental states is to give an account of the former that is completely different from the accounts given of the latter. In particular, given that we characterize thought, belief, knowledge, desire, and imagination as propositional attitudes, we shouldn't characterize perceptual experience as a propositional attitude. Instead, we should adopt a Relationalist account on which veridical experience consists in acquaintance with

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<sup>32</sup> It seems plausible that at least part of the reason why the Sense-Datum View held sway as long as it did is the naturalness of explaining the world-revelatory character of perceptual experience in terms of acquaintance.

<sup>33</sup> This isn't beyond dispute. For example, a sudden insight, in virtue of which one comes to recognize relationships between certain propositions for the first time, might plausibly be described as having a world-revelatory phenomenal character. (Also, see Johnston 2007: 234.) But I'll play along with the suggestion that such mental states don't have phenomenal character for the sake of argument.

entities in one's environment, while non-veridical experience consists in something else altogether.<sup>34</sup>

However, it's not obvious that the phenomenological difference between experience and other kinds of mental states requires that our account of the former is *completely* different from our accounts of the latter. For example, Susanna Siegel suggests that “[visual] [e]xperiences could be entirely structured as a propositional attitude, yet involve a distinctively perceptual mode of entertaining content—either a mode specific to visual perceptual experiences, or a more generic mode shared by visual perceptual experience and experiences in (some or all) other sensory modalities, but not shared by belief [or any other kind of mental state]” (forthcoming). If perceptual experience involved bearing a distinctive sort of attitude to propositions, at least *prima facie* this could explain why perceptual experience has a world-revelatory character and other mental states don't.<sup>35</sup> In short, absent further reason for thinking that perceptual experiences must be *completely* different from other mental states in order to account for its distinctive world-revelatory character, we don't yet have a persuasive motivation for the Relational View.

#### ii. Introspection of sensory imagination

Let us turn to Martin's argument for the Relational View from introspection of sensory imagination. Sensory imagination is a species of imagination that corresponds to perceptual experience: just as I can see a yellow banana, I can *visualize* one, and just as I can hear a catchy tune, I can *hear it “in my head,”* so to speak (and so on for the other modalities). The argument relies on two premises, one more controversial than the other. The uncontroversial premise is that if one imagines a banana (say), then the situation one imagines contains a banana.<sup>36</sup> It is hard

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<sup>34</sup> Note that this motivation for the Relational View is incompatible with a version that accounts for non-veridical experience in terms of representation of propositions.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Pautz 2007: 519-20—he doesn't think that this is much of an *explanation*, but he argues that one isn't really needed anyway.

<sup>36</sup> Martin doesn't formulate the first premise in quite this way: instead, he starts with the claim that an imagining subject is *non-neutral* about whether the imagined situation contains a tree, that is, that an imagining subject believes of the imagined situation that it contains a tree (Martin 2002b: 414). Martin's premise isn't about the imagined situation, but rather about what the imagining subject *believes* about the imagined situation. Martin's premise also strikes me as obvious; nevertheless, his argument seems to be stronger and more straightforward if we

to see how this could be denied: if the situation one imagines doesn't contain a banana, then, whatever else one is imagining, one has simply *failed* to imagine *a banana*.

The more controversial premise is what Martin calls the 'Dependency Thesis', which says that to sensorily imagine a banana (for example) is to imagine *experiencing* a banana (2002b: 404). In other words, *all there is* to sensorily imagining a banana is imagining experiencing one. Note that the experience imagined is imagined "from the inside"—it's not the case that imagining a banana involves imagining oneself from a third-person point of view looking at a banana. Rather, one imagines *having* the experience. Martin supports the Dependency Thesis by appeal to introspection of sensory imagination. Since I will grant the Dependency Thesis for the sake of argument, we needn't trouble ourselves with the details of Martin's case for it.

Given these two premises, Martin's argument proceeds as follows:

1. When one sensorily imagines a banana, the scene imagined contains a banana.
2. To sensorily imagine a banana is to imagine perceptually experiencing a banana. (the Dependency Thesis)
3. As against the Relational View, a perceptual experience of a banana does not have the banana as a constituent. (supposition for reductio)
4. When one sensorily imagines a banana, the situation imagined doesn't contain a banana. (2, 3)
5. Contradiction (1, 4); a perceptual experience of a banana has the banana as a constituent.

Premise 3 supposes that the experience one imagines in imagining a tree doesn't have the tree as a constituent. This supposition together with the Dependency Thesis (premise 2) appears to generate a contradiction: if imagining a tree is simply a matter of imagining an experience of the tree, where the experience doesn't have the tree as a constituent, then the situation imagined doesn't contain a tree (it only contains the experience, which doesn't include the tree). But, as we

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use the claim in the main text. Nothing I will have to say about his argument hangs on which of these premises we use.

noted earlier, it is just plain obvious that when one imagines a tree, the situation one imagines contains a tree. If this is right, we should reject the claim that the experience one imagines when one imagines a tree doesn't have the tree as a constituent.

There are at least three problems with this argument. The first isn't an objection to the argument *per se*, but rather to its use as a motivation for the claim that veridical experience consists in the obtaining of the acquaintance relation. The claim that veridical experiences have their objects as constituents doesn't entail that they consist in the obtaining of the acquaintance relation; what I called the "relation-inclusive" version of the Representational View is compatible with this claim. Thus, while the Relational View entails the conclusion of this argument, the conclusion does not entail the Relational View or even the hybrid Relational/Representational View.

The second problem with the argument is that it's not clear that *denying* premise 3 would block the inference to 4. Suppose that the material objects of a veridical experience *are* constituents of it. *Prima facie*, one can imagine an entity without imagining all its constituents—for example, I can imagine George W. Bush without imagining his brain. Similarly, why should we think that imagining having an experience that *does have* a banana as a constituent automatically involves imagining a banana? More needs to be said about why we should accept this claim.

This point is minor in comparison to the third problem with the argument. It must be stipulated that the experience imagined when one sensorily imagines a banana involves *perceiving* a banana. Otherwise, the argument proves too much—if the experience imagined could be a *hallucination* as of a banana, then no theory of perceptual experience would be able to get the banana into the imagined situation (since no theory holds that hallucinations have material objects as constituents). But if we stipulate that the experience imagined when one sensorily imagines a banana involves *perceiving* a banana, then the argument proves too little—*any* theory of perceptual experience will be able to get the banana into the imagined situation. Since one cannot *perceive* a banana in the absence of bananas, one cannot *imagine* perceiving a banana without the scene one imagines containing a banana. The banana gets into the imagined

situation not by virtue of being a constituent of the experience imagined, but rather simply by virtue of the experience imagined involving *perception* of a banana.

In short, even if Martin's Dependency Thesis is granted, his argument is problematic. Moreover, even if the argument works, it establishes only that the objects of an experience are constituents of it, which doesn't entail that veridical experience consists in the obtaining of the acquaintance relation.

### *3b. Explaining our ability to "think" about particular objects*

In his book *Reference and Consciousness*, John Campbell articulates and motivates a version of the Relational View. The essence of his motivation is the following argument:

“...experience of objects has to be what *explains our ability to think about objects*. That means that we cannot view experience of objects as a way of grasping thoughts about objects. *Experience of objects has to be something more primitive than the ability to think about objects, in terms of which the ability to think about objects can be explained...* On the Relational View, experience of objects is a more primitive state than thought about objects, which nonetheless reaches all the way to the objects themselves.” (Campbell 2002: 122-3, emphasis mine)

Campbell's idea is that unless veridical experience involves acquaintance with objects in one's environment, then it is unclear how we could even come to think about such objects in the first place. In the passage above, he illustrates this idea by supposing that perceptual experience is just a special way of “thinking” about objects. By “our ability to think about objects”, Campbell almost certainly means something more general than is typically meant by such locutions: he likely means *the ability to bear an attitude* towards a proposition having to do with an object, whether this takes the form of believing, desiring, imagining, or some other propositional attitude. (No one thinks that a perceptual experience consists in *thinking* that *p*, where ‘thinking’

refers to something like entertaining—a specific propositional attitude distinct from believing, desiring, and so on.)<sup>37</sup>

Rather, Campbell is supposing that some version of the Representational View is true: that perceptual experience (including veridical experience) consists in representing propositions about one's environment. His contention is essentially that the Representationalist conception of perceptual experience cannot *explain* our capacity for conscious representations of objects in our surroundings because on this conception, perceptual experiences *just are* conscious representations of objects in our surroundings. (I add the qualifier 'conscious' because much scientific research on perceptual experience characterizes it as the upshot of *subpersonal*—i.e., unconscious—representational states. By Campbell's lights, perceptual experience cannot explain the capacity to be in *these* states because it *presupposes* such a capacity.)<sup>38</sup> Instead, Campbell thinks we should embrace the Relational View because it can explain our capacity consciously represent particular objects in terms of *acquaintance* with those objects—acquaintance with an object is a more “primitive” state than representing a proposition having to do with an object.<sup>39</sup>

This argument faces a couple of potential problems. First, it's far from obvious what role (if any) perceptual experience plays in explaining our capacity to consciously represent particular objects. Perhaps perceptual experiences are basic representational states that explain our capacity to be in other representational states, where our capacity to be in these basic representational states has some other sort of explanation. Or perhaps perceptual experiences have nothing to do with explaining our general capacity to represent particular objects. While it's plausible that one must have certain sorts of perceptual experiences in order to have the capacity to be in conscious

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<sup>37</sup> Not even David Armstrong and George Pitcher, although they come closer than anyone to this view: they think perceptual experiences consist in dispositions to believe things about one's environment (see Armstrong 1968: 222-3, Pitcher 1976: 92-3).

<sup>38</sup> I will discuss how scientific research on perceptual experience bears on the Relational View in Chapter 2, section 3.

<sup>39</sup> I should note that Campbell's expression of his motivation for the Relational View usually begins with the claim that perceptual experience is what explains our *knowledge of the reference of demonstrative terms*, not with the claim that it explains our capacity to think about particular objects (in the loose sense of 'think' outlined above). But presumably, Campbell doesn't see these claims as grounding independent motivations: experience plays a role in explaining our knowledge of the reference of demonstrative terms by explaining a necessary condition on such knowledge, i.e., the ability to think about particular objects. (One cannot know that 'that' refers to a particular object if one cannot entertain propositions having to do with that object.) So the argument summarized in the main text appears to be the more fundamental one.

representational states with certain contents (since perceptual experiences may be required for the acquisition of the relevant concepts), the *general* capacity for consciously representing particular objects may be something bestowed upon us by natural selection. Even if experience is necessary to activate the capacity or to employ it in certain ways, for all Campbell says, the capacity itself could be something that we're born with—and so not the sort of thing to be explained (or to be explained solely) by our perceptual experiences. Granted, one can't represent the world without input from the world; this is a platitude. But it is a further step to say that the input *must* take the form of *acquaintance* with particular objects. There is cause for concern that Campbell's argument inherits plausibility from its proximity to this platitude.

Another problem stems from the fact that, as we noted above, perceptual experiences presuppose *subpersonal* states that consist in representing one's environment as being a certain way. There is good reason to think that these subpersonal states include representations of particular objects (see Pylyshyn 2003, 2007). If that's right, then by Campbell's lights, perceptual experiences cannot explain our capacity to be in such subpersonal states (assuming, as Campbell does, that if X *presupposes* Y then X can't *explain* Y). Moreover, it is plausible that our capacity to represent particular objects at the subpersonal level is what explains our capacity to represent them consciously (with there being some other explanation of the subpersonal capacity). It would be difficult for Campbell to deny this. For just as we can ask what explains our capacity to *consciously represent* particular objects, we can also ask what explains our capacity to be *acquainted* with them. And Campbell's answer to the second question appeals to subpersonal perceptual processing: for example, in discussing a case of acquaintance with an object over a period of time, he says that "...the subject's experience can make it manifest to the subject that it is one and the same object that is in question over a period of time, *and...the possibility of such a state is explained by the possibility of the underlying information processing*" (2002: 131, emphasis mine). So why can't we give a similar explanation of our capacity to consciously represent particular objects?

In short, Campbell's motivation for the Relational View rests on a questionable assumption: namely, that perceptual experience explains our capacity to represent particular objects. Further, assuming that perceptual experience presupposes a capacity to represent

particular objects at the subpersonal level, it is difficult for Campbell to consistently maintain that perceptual experience explains our capacity to represent particular objects.

### 3c. *Avoiding a hard question about phenomenal character*

Yet another motivation for the Relational View, put forward by William Fish, is the claim that it allows us to circumvent a hard question about phenomenal character. The hard question is this: why is it like *this* to veridically experience a yellow thing (demonstrating the phenomenal character of my experience of the banana on my desk), rather than what it's like to veridically experience a *green* thing?<sup>40</sup>

One reason many feel the need to answer the question is this: if we *can't* answer it, then it is possible that what it's like for some other creature to veridically experience a yellow thing is what it's like for me to veridically experience a green thing. And if that's possible, our experiences don't function as "transparent windows" on the world that give us access to things as they really are in themselves. Our experiences would be "mediated" in some sense—not in virtue of sense-data looming between us and the world, but rather in virtue of the fact that there would be no deep connection between what it's like for us to perceive the world and what the world we perceive is like. Our veridical experiences of the world would be mediated by their arbitrary phenomenal characters—it would just be a *brute fact* that my veridical experiences of yellow things have the phenomenal character they in fact have.

One might think that the hard question cannot be answered; one might think it cannot be denied that it's possible that what it's like for some other creature to veridically experience a yellow thing is what it's like for me to veridically experience a green thing.<sup>41</sup> Alternatively, one could attempt to answer the hard question by claiming that an experience's phenomenal

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<sup>40</sup> Technically, this isn't the type of question with which Fish is concerned (see his 2009: 75-6). He is concerned with a related type of question posed by Joseph Levine (1983: 357-8), namely: why is it like *this* (demonstrating the phenomenal character of my veridical experience of the yellow banana) to be in such-and-such a *physical state* rather than what it is like to have an experience of a green banana? But it doesn't seem that *this* question is all that hard, at least considered in isolation—why isn't the reason it's like *this* to be in such-and-such a physical state that this physical state realizes a certain type of *psychological* state? The idea is that the ultimate explanation of why my state has the phenomenal character it does should be in terms of the metaphysical structure of my perceptual experience (i.e., its most fundamental psychological kind). If that's right, then the *really* hard question is that of why it's like *this* to have a veridical experience of the yellow banana on my desk.

<sup>41</sup> See, e.g., Peacocke 1983, Block 1996.



character supervenes on its representational content.<sup>42</sup> The idea is that in *all* possible worlds, *any* subject who consciously perceptually represents yellowness has an experience that shares some color phenomenology with the experience I'm having right now. The reason why my experience is like *this* rather than what it's like for me to veridically experience a green thing is given by appealing to its representational content.

However, is this really an answer to the hard question, or just an insistence that there is some answer to be had? All the claim that phenomenal character supervenes on representational content gets us is that all experiences that consist in representation of yellowness have some color phenomenology in common. But a genuine answer to the hard question will tell us *why* this is the case. That is, why does phenomenal character supervene on representational content in the first place? Why should the universe do us such a favor? And *did* the universe really do us a favor? What if, as things turned out, consciously representing yellowness determines a phenomenal character that is no guide whatsoever to what yellowness is really like? As Johnston puts the thought, “[i]f sensory awareness [and thus phenomenal character] were representational, we would inevitably face the skeptical question of how we could know that the human style of representation is not entirely idiosyncratic relative to the intrinsic natures of things” (2006: 284-5, footnote omitted). The worry at the heart of these questions is that the supervenience of phenomenal character on the properties represented doesn't provide for a tight enough connection between what it is like to have an experience and what the objects of experiences are like. If veridical experience is to afford the sort of access to the world that we hope it does, we require a closer relationship between phenomenal character and what we perceive.

This is where the Relational View comes in. According to the line of thought we're developing, the hard question arises as long as there's a metaphysical “gap” between the phenomenal character of an experience and what the experience is of. This is all but guaranteed if perceptual experiences are states of subjects in virtue of which they represent their environments. However, on the Relational View, veridical experience can be thought of as a state of affairs—the obtaining of the acquaintance relation between the subject and the objects of experience. The Relationalist holds that the phenomenal character of veridical experience

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<sup>42</sup> See, e.g., Dretske 1995, Tye 2000, Byrne 2001.

consists in the obtaining of the acquaintance relation. If the Relationalist helps herself to the claim that perceiving a property amounts being *acquainted* with it, she can sidestep the hard question about phenomenal character posed at the outset of this section. Given this claim, the Relational View holds that the phenomenal character of my experience consists in my being acquainted with the banana *and its yellowness*. It follows that *yellowness itself* is a constituent of my experience's phenomenal character (since the relata of the acquaintance relation are constituents of my experience).<sup>43</sup> In general, if *F*-ness itself is a constituent of the phenomenal character of veridical experiences of *F* things, then it's hard to even make sense of the hard question. What it's like to see *green* things simply consists in acquaintance with *greenness* (and so has greenness as a constituent), so it just doesn't make sense to ask why it *isn't* like that to be acquainted with a property *other* than greenness (i.e., to have an experience that doesn't have greenness as a constituent).<sup>44</sup>

No doubt, this motivation for the Relational View stands in need of considerable elaboration and clarification. Perhaps in this process, it will turn out that that it is rooted in confusion. Nevertheless, there seems to be something to the idea that if we seek to answer the hard question about phenomenal character solely in terms of states of subjects, we will find ourselves unable to answer it.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have argued that the Relational View's account of veridical experience is best understood as follows: veridical experience is *exhausted* by the obtaining of the relation of *acquaintance* between the subject and material entities, as well as the obtaining of the relation of perceiving between the subject and some of the properties of these entities (if property perception isn't characterized in terms of acquaintance). As for non-veridical experience, I suggested that the most plausible form of the Relational View is a version of *disjunctivism*. In the

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<sup>43</sup> Note that the Representationalist can't get the same mileage out of the claim that yellowness is a constituent of a Russellian proposition the subject represents—for what is represented (the proposition) isn't *part* of the experience, and so there's still a gap between the experience's phenomenal character and yellowness.

<sup>44</sup> As I will discuss in Chapter 2, section 2, the Relationalist must give a different account of the phenomenal character of non-veridical experience. For this motivation to work, the Relationalist must ensure that the hard question doesn't arise for the phenomenal character of non-veridical experiences as well.

next chapter, we will discuss specific disjunctivist accounts of non-veridical experience in greater detail.

We also considered the main motivations for endorsing the Relational View. My tentative conclusion is that most of these motivations are on shaky ground. Perhaps the most promising motivation is the claim that the Relational View will help us avoid a hard question about phenomenal character, but it is still in the embryonic stages.<sup>45</sup>

One might think that the Relational View just isn't worth taking seriously until the motivations for endorsing it are crystal clear. However, opponents of the Relational View shouldn't be too quick to give Relationalists grief about the murky motivations they offer for their theory—as the old saying goes, those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. One thing the Relationalists are absolutely right about is that Representationalists haven't exactly done the best job of motivating their own view (this project was taken up only fairly recently, upon pressure from Relationalists).<sup>46</sup> Previously, the Representational View was typically sold and bought as the least unattractive theory of perceptual experience around, in comparison to older theories like the Sense-Datum View and adverbialism. But now that the Relational View is gaining momentum, this sales pitch for the Representational View should be re-evaluated. For if the Relational View doesn't have any obvious defects (analogous to committing us to the existence of immaterial entities, as do the traditional versions of the Sense-Datum View), then the Representationalist cannot rest content with the claim that theirs is the only palatable theory on offer.

Now that we're clear on what the Relational View is, and what might motivate it, it is time to turn to the question of whether it is viable. In the next chapter, I will explore the main objections to the Relational View.

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<sup>45</sup> I should briefly mention a position that goes by the label 'disjunctivism': namely, the position argued for in McDowell 2008. The motivation for McDowell's view is different from those discussed above; he wants to provide a way to rebut the skeptic about the external world. McDowell's motivations shouldn't be regarded as motivations for the Relational View, however. First, see Byrne and Logue 2008 for an argument that the position advocated by McDowell is not the position I've been calling 'disjunctivism' above. Second, even if it were, not all versions of what I've been calling 'disjunctivism' are versions of the Relational View. (For example, one might endorse a Representationalist disjunctivism on which the propositions perceptually represented differ across the good and hallucinatory cases.)

<sup>46</sup> See, e.g., Travis 2004: 57 for such a complaint.

## Chapter 2

### The Relational View Defended

One reason for dismissing the Relational View is that it isn't even clear what it is claiming. Hopefully, that problem was rectified in the previous chapter. However, clarifying the Relational View is only half the battle. In this chapter, I will consider several well-known objections to the Relational View (from what I take to be the weakest to the strongest), and I will conclude that none of them is obviously fatal to it.

#### *1. Arguments from subjective indistinguishability*

Upon initial consideration of the Relational View, a common reaction is suspicion that certain facts about the subjective indistinguishability of experiences must be its undoing. Recall that an experience  $e_1$  is subjectively indistinguishable from an experience  $e_2$  just in case a subject of  $e_1$  and  $e_2$  is not in a position to know by introspection alone that  $e_1$  is not  $e_2$ . Consider *the good case* described in the last chapter: the case in which I see the banana on my desk, and it is as it looks to me to be (yellow and crescent-shaped)—let us now label this *the first good case*. Contrast this with another case in which I see a *qualitatively identical but numerically distinct* banana that is as it looks to me to be—let us call this *the second good case*. Finally, contrast the experiences in the first and second good cases with the experience in *the hallucinatory bad case* described in the last chapter. In the hallucinatory case, while I seem to see a yellow, crescent-shaped banana, I don't see anything at all. Let us assume that my experiences in these cases are all subjectively indistinguishable from each other.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> On the characterization of subjective indistinguishability we have been working with, it is a symmetric relation. However, one might hold that there is a sense in which the good cases are subjectively indistinguishable from the hallucinatory case. McDowell, for one, appears to hold this: "What does entitle one to claim that one is perceiving that things are thus and so, when one is so entitled? The fact that one is perceiving that things are thus and so. This is a kind of fact whose obtaining our self-consciously possessed perceptual capacities enable us to recognize on suitable occasions..." (2008: 387). The suggestion seems to be that, when I am in a good case (i.e., when I am perceiving things in my environment that are as they appear to me to be and nothing funny is going on), it is possible for me to know this by way of my "self-consciously possessed" perceptual capacities (which may amount to a form of introspection). This proposal may seem *prima facie* mysterious and/or implausible to some. But we need not engage with this issue here, as nothing I have to say hangs on it. The arguments in this section could be easily modified to accommodate a different characterization of subjective indistinguishability on which it is an asymmetric

One might be tempted to argue from the subjective indistinguishability of my experiences to the claim that experiences are completely “inner” entities (as against the Relational View). The argument proceeds as follows. First, one might insist that if two experiences are subjectively indistinguishable, then they must be mentally exactly alike. Second, if an experience consists in being *acquainted* with an object, then that object is a *constituent* of the experience (as the Relationalist accepts). Moreover, the property of consisting in acquaintance with a particular object is a mental property; thus, if two experiences are mentally exactly alike, then either *both* consist in the subject’s being acquainted with a particular object or *neither* does. Putting all this together, we get the result that if my experience in the first good case has the banana as a constituent, then so does my experience in the hallucinatory case. But that, of course, is absurd—the hallucinatory case could obtain in the absence of the banana. We also get the result that if my experience in the first good case has the banana on my desk as a constituent, then so does my experience in the second good case. But again, that’s absurd—my experience in the second good case is an experience of a *different* banana. In response to all this absurdity, the Relationalist’s opponent rejects the antecedent of these conditionals, and concludes that my experience in the first good case does not have the banana on my desk as a constituent after all—and in general, that experiences are completely “inner” entities.

The problem with this argument is that we have no reason to accept that subjectively indistinguishable experiences must be mentally exactly alike. In general, the fact that one thing cannot be told apart from another does not *entail* that they are exactly alike. To borrow an example from Austin (1962: 50), it might be that one cannot tell by visual perception that piece of soap fashioned to look like a lemon isn’t a lemon. But of course, a lemon and a piece of soap are quite different in many respects. Similarly, if one experience cannot be told apart from another by introspection, it does not *follow* that they are mentally exactly alike.

Moreover, there’s good reason to *deny* that subjectively indistinguishable experiences are mentally exactly alike. To see this, take a veridical experience of a black patch, and a subjectively indistinguishable veridical experience of a second black patch that is slightly but not noticeably lighter than the first. Now imagine a veridical experience of a *third* black patch that is

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relation (e.g., a *plural* as opposed to a *de re* notion of subjective indistinguishability—see Fish 2009: 87 on this distinction and fn. 57 below for an example of a plural notion).

slightly but not noticeably lighter than the second patch. Suppose further that while this third experience is subjectively indistinguishable from the second, it is subjectively *distinguishable* from the first (i.e., that the color difference between the *first* and *third* patches is noticeable). Now, if subjectively indistinguishable experiences are mentally exactly alike, then the third experience is mentally exactly like the second, and the second is mentally exactly like the first. Given the transitivity of the “mentally the same as” relation, the third experience is mentally exactly like the first. But that’s absurd—we are supposing that the first and third experiences are subjectively *distinguishable*, and you can’t subjectively distinguish experiences that are mentally exactly alike. The problem is that the proposal under consideration (if two experiences are subjectively indistinguishable, then they are mentally exactly alike) has the obtaining of an *intransitive* relation (subjective indistinguishability) as a sufficient condition for the obtaining of a *transitive* one (sameness in mental respects).<sup>48</sup>

There is a more plausible idea in the vicinity of the claim that subjectively indistinguishable experiences are mentally *exactly alike*—viz., the claim that subjectively indistinguishable experiences are mentally *similar*.<sup>49</sup> One might suggest that the claim that subjectively indistinguishable experiences are mentally similar is the result of an *inference to the best explanation* of their subjective indistinguishability. The Relationalist can take this suggestion on board as far as veridical experiences of qualitatively identical but numerically distinct objects are concerned—she can explain the subjective indistinguishability of these experiences in terms of sameness of the properties perceived. But since the disjunctivist Relationalist holds that veridical and hallucinatory experiences have no reasonably specific, primitive mental properties in common, she cannot explain their subjective indistinguishability in terms of mental similarity. For the sorts of mental commonalities that the disjunctivist allows (e.g., that of being a perceptual experience, that of being a perceptual experience as of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana, and that of being subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical

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<sup>48</sup> The argument in this paragraph (with a couple of inconsequential modifications) is taken from Byrne and Logue 2008: 70-1. (See footnote 25 of Byrne and Logue 2008 for an explanation of why the conclusion of this paragraph is not at odds with Delia Graff Fara’s assertion that “contrary to widespread philosophical opinion, indiscriminability [or indistinguishability] is transitive” (2001: 905).)

<sup>49</sup> Cf. the principle (SST) in the introduction.

experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana) wouldn't count as *explanations* of the subjective indistinguishability of veridical and hallucinatory experiences.

The Relationalist has no choice but to deny that the subjective indistinguishability of veridical and hallucinatory experiences has any explanation at the level of mental states. Perhaps it requires no explanation at all, or perhaps it can be explained by similarity of *subpersonal* states of subjects' perceptual systems—e.g., sameness or similarity of the neural realizers of the experiences (see Thau 2004: 249). While some might find this denial hard to accept (see, e.g., Johnston 2004: 127), it is not obviously false. So as it stands, this objection to the Relational View has little dialectical force.

## ***2. Arguments from phenomenal sameness***

One might think that the Relational View cannot accommodate the fact that veridical and hallucinatory experiences can have the same *phenomenal character*—for example, that “what it is like” for me to see the banana on my desk can be exactly the same as what it would be like for me to have a banana-hallucination.<sup>50</sup> Note that this is a different objection from the one considered in the last section: if two experiences are subjectively indistinguishable, it's not necessarily the case that they have the same phenomenal character. It's possible that the phenomenal difference between two experiences is so subtle that the subject is unable to distinguish them, even under the best introspective conditions. This follows from considerations raised in the previous section. In short, what it's like to have a veridical experience of a black patch is *different* from what it's like to have a veridical experience of a *noticeably lighter* one. But one could have a veridical experience of a third patch that is subjectively indistinguishable from both of these experiences. If subjective indistinguishability entailed phenomenal sameness, then it turns out that what it's like to have a veridical experience of the first black patch would be

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<sup>50</sup> Arguably, the Relationalist can account for phenomenal sameness of veridical experiences of qualitatively identical but numerically distinct objects, since he holds that such experiences can involve perceiving the *same properties*. The Relationalist may be able to account for sameness of phenomenal character of veridical experience and *illusions* by claiming that they involve perceiving *similar* properties (see section 4a below).

the same as what it is like to have a veridical experience of the noticeably lighter patch (which is absurd).<sup>51</sup>

The objection from the possibility of phenomenal sameness across veridical and hallucinatory experiences goes as follows. According to disjunctivism, a veridical experience and a hallucinatory one share no reasonably specific, primitive mental properties, even if they are subjectively indistinguishable. On the assumption that a phenomenal character is a reasonably specific, primitive mental property, the disjunctivist Relationalist must deny that veridical and hallucinatory experiences can share a phenomenal character—that what it’s like to hallucinate can be exactly the same as what it’s like to veridically perceive.

One option is to embrace this counterintuitive result. William Fish does; he goes as far as claiming that “hallucinations lack phenomenal character altogether” (2009: 81). He holds that there’s really nothing it’s like to hallucinate, although it would misleadingly seem to a hallucinating subject that there is. Fish does an admirable job of elaborating and defending this claim (see his 2008 and his 2009: Chapter 4). But if the Relationalist wants to avoid such an uphill battle, another option is available—namely, rejecting the assumption that phenomenal character is a *primitive* mental property (a property that can’t be explained in terms of another mental property). Many of the Relationalist’s opponents reject this assumption anyway—for example, proponents of the Representational View often explain phenomenal character in terms of experience’s *representational content*.<sup>52</sup>

A difference is that while the Representationalist can offer the same account of the phenomenal character of veridical and hallucinatory experiences, the Relationalist must give a different account of each (assuming that the sorts of mental properties veridical and hallucinatory experiences can have in common aren’t good candidates for explaining the phenomenal character

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<sup>51</sup> However, phenomenal sameness entails subjective indistinguishability: it’s not clear how one could distinguish one’s experience from another by introspection alone if what it’s like for one to have them is exactly the same. Note that Soteriou 2005 discusses objections to disjunctivism having to do with subjective indistinguishability and phenomenal sameness. However, he conflates the objections I have distinguished because he attributes to the disjunctivist’s opponent the claim that “subjectively indiscriminable experiences have the same phenomenal character” (Soteriou 2005: 178). In light of the “black patch” argument in the main text, this isn’t the most charitable construal of the disjunctivist’s opponent, which is why I treat subjective indistinguishability and phenomenal sameness as sources of distinct objections.

<sup>52</sup> As I noted in the first chapter (fn. 11), there is an intra-Representational View dispute about whether an experience’s phenomenal character can be exhaustively characterized in terms of its representational content.



of both kinds of experiences). So on this option, the Relationalist must insist that phenomenal character is *multiply realizable*. The idea is that just as some mental states (e.g., pain) have a *functional* specification that can have different *physical* realizers (e.g., C-fibers firing vs. “foot cavities” inflating—see Lewis 1978), we can think of a perceptual experience as of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana as having a *phenomenal* specification that can have different *mental* realizers. The Relationalist can say that the phenomenal character of my veridical experience of the yellow, crescent shaped banana on my desk is realized by my acquaintance with the banana and my perception of yellowness and crescent-shapedness, while the phenomenal character of a banana-hallucination is realized by whatever the Relationalist wants to say that hallucinations consist in (see section 4b below). In short, the proposal is that a veridical experience of a banana and a banana-hallucination can have the same type of phenomenal character—it’s just that what *realizes* this phenomenal type differs across these experiences. Call this the “multiple realizability” proposal.

One might complain that the multiple realizability proposal doesn’t offer an *explanation* of phenomenal sameness—in *virtue of what* is my veridical experience of the banana on my desk of the same phenomenal type as a banana-hallucination? Surely they must have something “deeper” in common, one might insist. It is true that this proposal doesn’t offer an explanation of phenomenal sameness *at the level of mental states*. But it’s not clear why any such explanation is required. Perhaps there’s no explanation of this sameness to be had at *any* level, or perhaps an explanation can be given in terms of sameness of neural realizers (as suggested in response to the argument from explanation of *subjective indistinguishability*).

However, even if one accepts that the multiple realizability proposal is viable, one might question whether there is any good reason to endorse it. For one might suggest that the phenomenal character of an experience is its only explanatorily relevant feature: in explaining why I believe there’s a banana in front of me, and why I reach out to grasp it, all we need to appeal to as far as my experience is concerned is its phenomenal character. If an experience’s phenomenal character is its only explanatorily relevant feature, then it’s reasonable to suppose that two experiences with the same phenomenal character are of the same “fundamental kind”—that is, that the most basic mental characterization that can be given of the experiences (and thus,

of their phenomenal character) is exactly the same.<sup>53</sup> For no explanatory power would be gained by a giving more “fine-grained” characterization of the experiences (e.g., a characterization in terms of the *particular objects* one perceives in having an experience, if any).

This is too quick. Plausibly, the fact that my veridical experience is of *this very banana* does some explanatory work. For example, as the result of my current veridical experience, I believe certain singular propositions (e.g., the proposition that *that* is yellow and crescent-shaped), propositions I wouldn’t have believed had I been perceiving a different banana or hallucinating. Also, when I reach out, I *succeed* in grasping the banana in front of me, and one might think that the fact that I have a banana in my hand isn’t adequately explained by my having an experience with a certain phenomenal character and the world “doing me a favor” (to borrow a McDowellian phrase from a different context) by matching how things appear to me to be.<sup>54</sup> So there is at least *prima facie* reason to believe that the fact that one perceives particular objects plays an important role in explaining one’s cognition and behavior.<sup>55</sup>

Before moving on to the next objection, we should pause to consider why Relationalists don’t typically endorse the multiple realizability proposal. It’s not as if it simply hasn’t occurred to any of them, as Martin endorses an analogous proposal regarding veridical experiences of qualitatively identical but numerically distinct objects:

Our aim is to reconcile the claim that two experiences of distinct objects could be phenomenologically the same with the claim that particulars should figure in the phenomenal character of an experience. To do this we suggested that particular objects are relevant to the *phenomenal nature* of a particular episode of experiencing on its own, rather than to the *phenomenal character* of the experience which it would share with distinct experiences of the same kind... (2002a: 187, emphasis mine)

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<sup>53</sup> This elaboration of the notion of a “fundamental” kind is drawn from Martin 2006: 361.

<sup>54</sup> See Martin 2004: 63-4, Williamson 2000: ch. 2, Peacocke 1993, and Yablo 1997 for elaborations of this line of thought.

<sup>55</sup> Moreover, if the Relationalist can make good on any of the motivations for the view discussed in Chapter 1, then we may be forced to accept that phenomenal characters are multiply realizable—*regardless* of whether the fact that one perceives a particular object has any role in explaining one’s beliefs and behavior.

It is natural to interpret Martin as claiming that phenomenal *character* is a repeatable phenomenal *type*, while an experience's phenomenal *nature* is what realizes that type.

However, Martin resists extending this idea to veridical experiences and *hallucinations*. His resistance stems from the particular account of hallucination he favors. Martin's account is restricted to *causally matching* hallucinations, which are hallucinations that have the same proximal neural causes as veridical experiences.<sup>56</sup> For reasons that will be discussed in section 4b, Martin holds that *all there is* to having a causally matching hallucination (at least in *mental* terms) is to be in a state that is subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience of a certain kind.<sup>57</sup> For example, consider a hallucination as of a banana that has the same proximal neural cause as the veridical experience I'm having of the banana on my desk. Martin claims that such a hallucination simply consists in being in a state that is subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana. On this view, causally matching hallucinations do not consist in what I've called *primitive* mental properties; they can be characterized only in relation to veridical experience.

We will discuss this account of hallucination in greater detail below. But for now, let us consider whether this account is consistent with the multiple realizability proposal. This is an important question, as Martin-style accounts of hallucination are the most popular among Relationalists.<sup>58</sup> If such accounts of hallucination are incompatible with the multiple realizability proposal, then most Relationalists will be left without a way to accommodate the intuitive idea that what it's like to have a hallucination can be exactly the same as what it's like to have a veridical experience.

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<sup>56</sup> Martin is neutral about how to characterize hallucinations that don't have the same proximal neural causes as veridical experience (see his 2004: 71).

<sup>57</sup> Earlier, I construed subjective indistinguishability as a relation between experiences. Notice that the notion of subjective indistinguishability in play in Martin's account of hallucination is different: it is a relation between an experience and a *kind* of experience (e.g., the kind: veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana). An experience *e* is subjectively indistinguishable from a kind of experience *K* just in case it is not possible for the subject of *e* to know by introspection alone that *e* is not one of the *K*'s (see Martin 2006: 364).

<sup>58</sup> Fish's account of hallucination in his 2008 and 2009: ch. 4 is in terms of subjective indistinguishability (although he offers a different account of subjective indistinguishability than Martin does). Brewer doesn't argue for a particular account of hallucination, but he says he accepts Martin's account (2008: 173). (It is unclear how Campbell wants to account for hallucination; as for Johnston, recall that we set aside his account of hallucination in Chapter 1.)

Martin's argument for the inconsistency of his account of hallucination with the multiple realizability proposal is as follows. On the multiple realizability proposal, we need some way of fixing a determinable notion of phenomenal character, i.e., of characterizing a phenomenal type. In other words, we need to be able to formulate a description that applies to all and only experiences with a certain phenomenal character. According to Martin, given his account of hallucination, we must fix phenomenal types in terms of subjective indistinguishability. Thus, we arrive at the following description that is supposed to apply to all and only the experiences that share a phenomenal character with my veridical experience of the yellow, crescent-shaped banana: being subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana.<sup>59</sup> Call this description '(D)'.

Martin thinks that there are two problems with (D) as a way of fixing a determinable phenomenal character (2006: 372). First, if something is a determinable, we should be able to characterize it independently of its determinates—e.g., we can characterize the color red without mentioning scarlet or vermilion. However, (D) refers to a veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana, which is a determinate of the determinable. (Presumably, such a *veridical experience* counts as a determinate of the phenomenal character because it consists in what *realizes* the phenomenal character, viz., the obtaining of the perceptual relation between the subject and the objects of experience.) Second, if a determinable is realized, it is realized by a specific determinate—e.g., if something is red, it is either scarlet or vermilion or some other specific shade of red. However, this is not so in the case of a causally matching hallucination, given that (D) is our characterization of the determinable phenomenal character. For on Martin's account, the mental nature of a causally matching hallucination as of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana is exhausted by the subject's having an experience that is subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana. But this is basically just (D), which is supposed to be our characterization of the *determinable*. So it turns out that no specific determinate realizes the determinable in cases of causally matching hallucination.

There are at least two problems with this argument. First, (D)—being subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana—does not

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<sup>59</sup> Of course, I am oversimplifying the description for the sake of easy exposition; the fully elaborated description would refer to many more properties than just yellowness and crescent-shapedness.

adequately characterize the phenomenal type to which my experience belongs. For it also applies to experiences that have slightly but not noticeably different phenomenal characters.<sup>60</sup> Second, and more importantly, even if (D) did apply to all and only experiences with the same phenomenal character as my current experience, it wouldn't be the *only* way of characterizing its phenomenal type. We could characterize it by ostension, as in (D\*): an experience such that it's exactly like *this* to have it.<sup>61</sup>

Even if Martin's own argument for the incompatibility of the multiple realizability proposal with his account of hallucination fails, one might nevertheless be skeptical of the suggestion that a *relational* property—like the property of being subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience of a certain kind—can *realize* anything. I suspect that the suggestion seems odd only because talk of multiple realizability has its home in discussions of the relation between the mental and the *physical*. It would indeed be strange to suggest that the *physical* realizer of (say) pain is some sort of physical relational property. However, it doesn't seem nearly as strange to suggest that a “high-level” mental property is realized by a “lower-level” *mental* relational property. So there is no obvious barrier to claiming that the phenomenal character of a banana-hallucination is realized by the property of being subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana.

### 3. *Arguments from science*

So far, we've considered objections to the Relational View that appeal to what we know about perceptual experience by introspection (and a little imagination): namely, the fact that a hallucination can be subjectively indistinguishable from, and phenomenally the same as, a

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<sup>60</sup> See the beginning of this section for discussion of why subjective indistinguishability doesn't entail phenomenal sameness, and see Martin 2004: 76-9 for considerations that could ground responses to the claim that (D) cannot adequately characterize a phenomenal type.

<sup>61</sup> Martin suggests that any way of fixing the determinable phenomenal character other than (D) won't do: “if...we seek some characterization of phenomenal character in substantive terms independent of veridical perception, then we are faced with the problems of explanatory exclusion or screening off” (2006: 372). Briefly put, the problem of explanatory exclusion is this: if we admit any mental commonalities across veridical and hallucinatory experience, such commonalities would “screen off” the obtaining of the acquaintance relation from doing any explanatory work in the case of veridical experience. However, the problem of explanatory exclusion arises only if the mental commonalities are *primitive*, but on the multiple realizability proposal, the property of being an experience such that it is like *this* to have it isn't primitive. The project is to *explain* this property in terms of other mental properties—in this dialectical context, it is the explanandum, not the explanans, and so it cannot “screen off” the preferred Relationalist explanans.

veridical experience. However, some object to the Relational View not on the basis of “*first-personal*” investigation of perceptual experience, but rather on the basis of “*third-personal*” investigation—that is, on the basis of empirical research on perceptual experience. Such objections are the focus of this section.

Tyler Burge has insisted that disjunctivism (and thus any plausible version of the Relational View) is incompatible with a principle presupposed by empirical research on perceptual experience, which he calls the *Proximality Principle*:

Holding constant the antecedent psychological set of the perceiver, a given type of proximal stimulation (over the whole body), together with associated internal afferent and efferent input into the perceptual system, will produce a given [explanatorily relevant] type of perceptual state, assuming that there is no malfunctioning in the system and no interference with the system. (2005: 22, emphasis removed)<sup>62</sup>

The one example Burge gives to support his claim that empirical research on perception presupposes this principle involves research on apparent motion. In one sort of apparent motion case, a subject is presented with two stimuli at different locations, one after the other. If the time interval is small enough, the subject will have an illusion as of one object moving. According to Burge, a primary goal of research on apparent motion is to discover *biasing principles*, i.e., principles that govern the perceptual system such that it is disposed to interpret a certain kind of input in a particular way. Biasing principles are supposed to be operative in any case of perceptual experience, be it veridical or illusory. However, if the Proximality Principle is false, then it seems that the conclusions reached about biasing principles by way of studying cases of apparent motion cannot be generalized to cases of veridical experience. For even though an illusion as of motion and a veridical experience can result from the same proximal stimulation, this commonality simply isn’t explanatorily relevant (Burge 2005: 23).

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<sup>62</sup> I’ve added ‘explanatorily relevant’ to Burge’s formulation of the principle to save it from triviality—for of course, any two experiences with the same type of proximal cause will be of the type *having such-and-such type of proximal cause*. In any case, it’s clear from the context that this is what he means.

Let us grant Burge the claim that empirical research of perception presupposes the Proximality Principle. His argument against disjunctivism is that it is incompatible with this indispensable principle. Burge characterizes disjunctivism as follows:

Disjunctivism makes two closely related negative claims. It claims that there is never an explanatorily relevant mental state type in common between (and specific to) a veridical perception and a referential perceptual illusion. And it claims that there is never a mental state type in common between (and specific to) perception of an object and perception of a would-be duplicate substitute for the object that would be, in the context, perceptually indiscernible to the perceiver. (2005: 25)

Burge doesn't explicitly say what the close relationship is between the two negative claims, but it seems that the second is a generalization of the first. The first claim is only about pairs of veridical and illusory experiences, but the second claim applies to pairs of veridical and illusory experiences *and* to pairs of veridical experiences of qualitatively identical but numerically distinct objects. (In contrast to a veridical experience of an object, a subjectively indistinguishable illusion involves perception of a "would-be duplicate substitute" object that would, *in the context in which it is perceived*—e.g., holding fixed the lighting conditions and so forth—be perceptually indiscernible from the object of the veridical experience.)

Disjunctivism as Burge characterizes it is certainly incompatible with the Proximality Principle. A veridical experience of an object, an illusory experience, and a veridical experience of a qualitatively identical but numerically distinct object could result from the same proximal stimulation (all other things being equal); however, Burge's disjunctivist claims that there is no "explanatorily relevant" mental type these experiences all fall under (contra the Proximality Principle). However, Burge has mischaracterized what the disjunctivist is—or at least ought to be—claiming.

First, the disjunctivist should not endorse the second negative claim Burge attributes to her, which entails that there is no explanatorily relevant mental commonality between my veridical experience of the yellow, crescent-shaped banana on my desk and a veridical

experience of a qualitatively identical but numerically distinct banana. Rather, the disjunctivist should say that the experiences involve perceiving the same *properties* (yellowness and crescent-shapedness).<sup>63</sup>

Second, it's curious that Burge characterizes the disjunctivist as committed to the claim that veridical experiences and *illusions* have no explanatorily relevant mental similarities. For one of the authors he discusses, Paul Snowdon, articulates a version of disjunctivism on which illusions are characterized along the same lines as veridical experiences. According to Snowdon, disjunctivism is the view that there is no (presumably primitive and reasonably specific) mental element shared by the states specified by the following disjuncts: "(there is something which looks to [a subject S] to be F) v (it is to S as if there is something which looks to him (S) to be F)" (1979/80: 185). Notice that the left disjunct describes *both* veridical experience *and* illusion. In an illusory visual experience, there is something that looks a certain way to the subject—it's just not the way it looks.

The commitment shared by all disjunctivists is that veridical experiences and *hallucinations* are radically unlike. Ironically, Burge is sympathetic to *this* commitment: "Genuine hallucinations are...not obviously perceptual states. They are not the products of the full operations of the perceptual system. Hallucinations caused by tickling the brain, or by internal pathology, are not clearly a perceptual state. They could be confused with one—as a memory could be confused with one" (2005: 42). This view is compatible with the Proximity Principle only if hallucinations caused by "tickling the brain" have different proximal causes than veridical and illusory experiences, which is what Burge seems to think. He holds that the proximal cause of an experience is some sort of bodily event prior to any perceptual processing in the brain, rather than some sort of neural state (2005: 25).<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. fn. 50.

<sup>64</sup> A slight wrinkle is that some experiences one might be inclined to call hallucinations are not caused by "tickling the brain" or by "internal pathology", e.g., an experience generated by a virtual reality machine. Presumably, Burge would insist that such experiences should be characterized in the same way as veridical and illusory ones. However, there's room to argue that such experiences aren't hallucinations. The way that virtual reality machines work, I take it, is basically by feeding light to the eyes in such a way that it seems to the subject that she's perceiving particular objects in her environment. The subject of a total hallucination perceives nothing at all in her environment, not even light. So if a subject of a virtual reality machine experience counts as misperceiving the light being fed to her eyes, then her experience is a quite radical illusion, not a hallucination.



So by Burge's own lights, a version of disjunctivism that characterizes illusions along the same lines as veridical experiences is perfectly compatible with the Proximality Principle.<sup>65</sup> Most disjunctivists aren't wedded to the idea of characterizing illusion like hallucination—many of them talk very little about illusion, and the proposal that it should be characterized in the same way as hallucination is often thrown in as little more than an afterthought. So Burge's criticism of disjunctivism *at best* applies only to a version of disjunctivism that could be abandoned in favor of one that isn't vulnerable to the criticism.

Third, Burge's characterization of disjunctivism doesn't even adequately describe those versions that account for illusion along the same lines as hallucination. He says that disjunctivism holds that there is no explanatorily relevant perceptual type that a veridical experience and a "causally matching" illusion both fall under. However, this characterization of disjunctivism is far too strong. Disjunctivism can allow that there are all sorts of ways of classifying experiences, including ways that don't involve reference to the objects of experience. And disjunctivism can also allow that some of these ways have explanatory relevance. For example, in everyday contexts, the very general fact that one is having a perceptual experience as of (say) a yellow, crescent-shaped banana can play a role in explaining one's beliefs and behavior—the property of being a perceptual experience as of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana is an explanatorily relevant perceptual type. But *no one*, the disjunctivist included, would deny that the property of being a perceptual experience as of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana is shared by a veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana and an illusory experience of a green, crescent-shaped banana that looks yellow. All that the disjunctivist who groups illusions with hallucinations is committed to is this: that none of the mental commonalities between veridical and illusory experience are both *reasonably specific* (specific enough not to characterize an experience with a different phenomenal character) and *primitive* (explainable in terms of other mental properties).<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> This version of disjunctivism is called *VI v H* disjunctivism in Byrne and Logue 2008: 69.

<sup>66</sup> See Campbell forthcoming for a different line of response to Burge's challenge. Campbell's response rests on a misunderstanding of the Proximality Principle—essentially, Campbell construes it as claiming that the *only* explanatorily relevant way of classifying perceptual experiences is in terms of their proximal causes. But the Principle says no such thing—it just says that there's *an* explanatorily relevant perceptual type experiences with the same proximal causes fall under. Funnily enough, Burge and Campbell are guilty of the same lack of charity—each assumed that the other must claim that his way of classifying experiences is the *only* explanatorily relevant way!

Despite the fact that Burge's challenge from the Proximality Principle fails, there is still at least a *prima facie* tension between the Relational View and empirical research on perceptual experience. As John Campbell acknowledges, "[v]ision science classically appeals to a notion of 'representation' that is recognizably propositional" (forthcoming). That is, such research presupposes that perceptual experience involves representing propositions about one's environment (e.g., the visual system is characterized as representing line orientations, colors, and so on). Campbell continues:

Can we say therefore that [the Relational View] has been refuted by vision science? Only if classical vision science makes an authoritative claim to comprehensive description of all the phenomena of vision. It should go without saying that classical vision science makes no such claim, and has no experimental support for such a claim. In particular, the phenomena of visual awareness have proven quite difficult for classical vision science to describe and explain. How to characterize visual awareness, and its relation to the phenomena described by classical vision science, are open questions. Any responsible use of something like Russell's notion of acquaintance with seen objects must, of course, try to characterize its relation to phenomena described by classical vision science, such as Treisman's information-processing characterization of visual attention. But I see no difficulty of principle in giving such an account. (forthcoming)

I agree with Campbell that there are no obvious obstacles to reconciling the Relational View with scientific theories of perceptual experience. But how might such a reconciliation go?

One way the Relationalist can secure compatibility with the science is to confine representation to the *subpersonal* systems underlying *conscious* perceptual experience. There is plenty of conceptual space for the idea that the personal and subpersonal levels should be accounted for differently. As an analogy, consider the set of a play. We would characterize what goes on backstage in terms of manipulations of pulleys and levers. But we wouldn't characterize what goes on onstage in those terms. Rather, the best description of what goes on onstage is in terms of the events in the story being acted out—say, Peter Pan flying across a bedroom. So

*prima facie*, the fact that representation is involved at the subpersonal level puts no constraints on our characterization of the personal level. We are free to think of the subpersonal representations of the perceptual system as *enabling* (non-representational) perception of objects and properties in one's environment.<sup>67</sup>

Burge, however, suggests that such a strategy is in tension with the science: "...it will not do to claim that the [scientific] theory of vision is entirely about something other than vision and visual states of individuals, ordinarily so-called. Fairly early in the processes it describes, the theory attributes states that are recognizably perceptual and recognizably states of individuals, not *merely* of subsystems" (2005: 22). It is true that scientists characterize conscious perceptual states in representational terms. But the real issue is this: can we *translate* such claims about conscious perceptual states into the Relationalist framework *without loss of explanatory power*? Nothing Burge says indicates that we cannot. When the scientist says that a veridically perceiving subject consciously perceptually represents that there's a yellow, crescent-shaped thing in front of her, the Relationalist can translate this claim roughly as follows: the subject is *acquainted* with a banana and perceives its yellowness and crescent-shapedness.<sup>68</sup> This latter claim can do all the same explanatory work as the former (e.g., at least *prima facie*, it is just as good at explaining what the subject says and does). So the Relational View appears to be just as empirically adequate as the Representational View.

Given that scientists studying perception aren't primarily concerned with the considerations motivating the Relational View (e.g., the "world-revelatory" character of perceptual experience, explaining why a perceptual experience has the particular phenomenal character it does), it stands to reason that it wouldn't occur to them to frame their theories in Relationalist terms. As Campbell notes,

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<sup>67</sup> Something along the lines of this strategy is suggested in Campbell 2002: 118.

<sup>68</sup> Of course, if the scientist makes the same claim about the subject of an illusion or a hallucination, the Relationalist translation would be different. One might object that Relationalist explanations of perceptual belief are worse than Representationalist ones on the grounds that they're "disunified": the belief that there's a banana before one is explained in terms of the obtaining of the acquaintance relation if the subject is veridically perceiving, but in other terms entirely if she's hallucinating. Perhaps it's true that we should prefer more unified explanations to less unified ones, all other things being equal. But according to the Relationalist, all other things *aren't* equal—he thinks we have independent reasons to accept his view and independent reasons to reject the Representational View (see Chapter 1), reasons that would presumably take priority over theoretical virtues like unity in explanation. So this counts as a point against the Relational View only if the view is *completely* unmotivated.

...those familiar with scientific work on vision sometimes assume that consciousness of the world is what happens when at some stage in the cognitive processing, the contents being processed acquire the extra dimension of being “subjectively available”. The tendency is to suppose that it is the very same contents that are cognitively processed as figure in the contents of consciousness... (2002: 118)

The scientists followed the path of least resistance: they assumed that the metaphysical structure of the personal level was the same as that of the subpersonal level (i.e., representational). However, it's not obvious that any scientific theory of perceptual experience requires this assumption for its explanatory power. Thus, we shouldn't make too much of the fact that scientists make this assumption.

#### ***4. The Relational View and non-veridical perceptual experience***

In sections 1 and 2, we considered objections to the Relational View based on considerations having to do with a certain type of non-veridical perceptual experience—specifically, based on the fact that a hallucination can be subjectively indistinguishable from, and phenomenally the same as, a veridical experience. These objections to the Relational View don't work, and we were able to see this without discussing the details of the Relationalist's account of non-veridical experience. Nevertheless, the Relationalist still must prove that she can account for hallucination and illusion in light of her commitment to disjunctivism. In this section, I will argue that there are at least promising starting points for such accounts. The accounts I will defend are neither maximally clear nor entirely unproblematic, but they are at least promising enough that we can't conclude that the Relational View is obviously false on the grounds that it lacks viable accounts of non-veridical experience.

##### ***4a. The Relational View and illusions***

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, section 2, the Relationalist cannot straightforwardly extend her account of veridical experience to illusions; i.e., perceptual experiences in which one perceives

something that appears to have a property it doesn't in fact have. Recall that, according to the Relational View, veridical experience consists in the subject being acquainted with material entities and perceiving some of their properties. On this view, my veridical experience of the yellow, crescent-shaped banana on my desk simply consists in my being acquainted with the banana and perceiving some of its properties (yellowness and crescent-shapedness). But now consider an illusion of a yellow banana—an experience in which one sees a banana that looks yellow but really isn't. The Relationalist cannot say that this experience consists in the subject being acquainted with the banana *and perceiving its yellowness*, as the banana isn't really yellow. So what does this experience consist in?

One option for the Relationalist is to utilize his account of hallucinations in accounting for illusions.<sup>69</sup> The result is a hybrid of the accounts of veridical and hallucinatory experience. For example, consider Martin's account of hallucination (discussed in section 2): the mental nature of a hallucinatory experience as of a yellow banana is exhausted by the property of being subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience of a yellow banana. One could give an account of an illusory experience in which a green banana looks yellow along the following lines: it consists in being acquainted with the banana, *and* in the property of being subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience of a yellow banana.

This way of accounting for illusion stands or falls with the Relationalist's preferred account of hallucination.<sup>70</sup> We'll evaluate potential Relationalist accounts of hallucination in the next subsection; in this subsection, we'll pursue an option available for illusions but not hallucinations. Illusions, unlike total hallucinations, involve perceiving material entities in one's environment, and this fact can be exploited to give an account of illusion that is broadly analogous to the Relationalist's account of veridical experience. This option has been explored by Bill Brewer in two recent papers (2006, 2008).

The Relationalist says that veridical experience consists in the obtaining of the acquaintance relation between a subject, on the one hand, and some entities in her environment,

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<sup>69</sup> In the terminology of Byrne and Logue 2008, this is to adopt *V v I/H* disjunctivism (2008: 69, cf. fn. 65 above). This option appears to be the one favored by Martin (2006: 360) and Campbell (2002: 117), but it should be noted that they do not devote much discussion to the issue of how to account for illusion in particular.

<sup>70</sup> For criticisms of this way of accounting for illusion that *don't* derive from criticisms of Relationalist accounts of hallucination, see Smith forthcoming.

on the other. If we bear in mind the fact that we can appeal to features of *both* relata in accounting for experience, then we can see how the Relationalist's account of veridical experience might be extended to illusions. In particular, we might characterize illusion in terms of the ways *the subject's* perceptual system responds to certain environmental stimuli. For example, suppose that a green banana looks yellow to me. Instead of saying that the illusory experience consists in misrepresenting the banana as yellow (as the Representational View would have it), or in my acquaintance with a sensory profile including yellowness (as Mark Johnston would have it), we can maintain that it consists in my acquaintance with a *green* banana. *Yellowness* gets into the picture in virtue of the fact that the lighting conditions are such that (at some point) my visual system handles the information it is receiving about color in the same way as it would handle the information it would receive about color if I were looking at a yellow banana in "normal" lighting conditions (very roughly speaking). In Brewer's terminology, the green banana in non-standard lighting conditions has "visually relevant similarities" with a yellow banana in normal lighting conditions. According to Brewer,

...two objects have visually relevant similarities when they share sufficiently many common properties amongst those which evidently have a significant involvement in the external physical processes underlying vision. Thus, and very crudely, visually relevant similarities are identities in such things as, the way in which light is reflected and transmitted from the objects in question, and the way in which stimuli are handled by the visual system, given its evolutionary history and our shared training during development. (2008: 172, footnote omitted)

A natural way to develop this proposal is as follows: an illusory experience of an object as *F* consists in being acquainted with the object and perceiving some of its properties, *including the property of being visually relevantly similar to a paradigmatic F thing.*<sup>71</sup> On this proposal, an

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<sup>71</sup> See Travis 2004 for an account of illusion in the same spirit as Brewer's (although considerably less developed).

I should note that Brewer doesn't develop his account of illusion in quite the way I have characterized it above, as his account of perception in general doesn't explicitly mention the properties one perceives in the course of having an experience. On his account, both veridical and illusory perception "...should be conceived as [the obtaining of] a *three-place* perceptual [presumably acquaintance] relation, in which the third relatum is an index of

object  $o$  looks  $F$  to  $S$  iff either  $S$  sees  $o$ 's  $F$ -ness or  $S$  sees  $o$ 's property of being visually relevantly similar to a paradigmatic  $F$ -thing.

What exactly are these visually relevant similarities? Brewer doesn't elaborate, but it is fairly clear how the explication should go. Bearing in mind that visually relevant similarity properties have to do with subjects' visual systems and the conditions of perception, the following proposal is in the spirit of what Brewer is suggesting:

$o$  has the property of being visually relevantly similar to a paradigmatic  $F$  thing iff:

$\exists K \exists W \exists C$  ( $o$  is disposed to affect a being with a visual system of kind  $K$  in way  $W$  in conditions of perception  $C$ , and way  $W$  is the way that paradigmatic  $F$  things are disposed to affect a visual system of kind  $K$  in standard perceptual conditions).

The basic idea behind this rather complicated proposal is that when you see a green thing in certain non-standard lighting conditions, your visual system goes into the same state it would be in if you were seeing a *yellow* thing in *standard* lighting conditions. When something has the property of being visually relevantly similar to a paradigmatic yellow thing, it is disposed to put creatures with visual systems like yours into that state.

Of course, there's much more that needs to be done to clarify what visually relevant similarity properties are. We need to explain what it is to be a "paradigmatic"  $F$  thing, and we need to specify what "standard" conditions are. Also, we need proposals about how to

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the conditions of perception, which involve the subject's spatio-temporal point of view, and other relevant circumstances, such as lighting, and so on" (2008: 171-2, emphasis in original). It's not clear that this account is able to capture how the entities one perceives *appear to be*. Thus, it's best to formulate the Relational View's account of perception in terms of both the entities one is acquainted with as well as the properties one perceives. Translating Brewer's view into this framework, we end up with something along the lines of the account of illusion proposed in the main text.

Finally, note that visually relevant similarity properties are akin to Susanna Schellenberg's "situation dependent properties"—i.e., functions of the intrinsic properties of an object and the conditions of perception (2008: 60). The main difference is that situation dependent properties are not in any way perceiver relative. Although Schellenberg's point in introducing situation dependent properties isn't to account for illusion, her discussion on pp. 74-5 suggests that some illusions (namely, those that *aren't* the result of the biasing principles that govern the subject's perceptual system, such as a straight stick in water looking bent) could be accounted for in terms of situation dependent properties. But such an account could not be extended to other types of illusion (e.g., the Müller-Lyer illusion).

individuate visual systems, the ways in which they're affected, and conditions of perception. I won't take on these tasks here. But note that on any plausible way of individuating these types of entities, there will be quite a large number of each of them. Thus, it will turn out that each object has myriad visually relevant similarity properties. Which ones a subject perceives depends on the state of her visual system and the conditions of perception she's in. Suppose that I'm having an illusory experience of a green banana that looks yellow to me. The banana also has the property of being visually relevantly similar to a paradigmatic *blue* thing, but we don't want to say that I'm seeing *this* property (as the banana doesn't look blue to me). Plausibly, I count as perceiving the property of being visually relevantly similar to a paradigmatic yellow thing only if my perceptual situation is one in virtue of which the banana *has* that property. Specifically, I count as perceiving that property only if (i) my visual system is in the state that it would be in if I were veridically perceiving a paradigmatic yellow thing in standard conditions, and (ii) the perceptual conditions are such that the banana is disposed to put my visual system into this state.

This raises the following question: does the subject of a *veridical* experience perceive visually relevant similarity properties? For example, in veridically perceiving the yellow banana on my desk, am I perceiving the property of being visually relevantly similar to a paradigmatic *yellow* thing? Conditions (i) and (ii) above are satisfied, and there doesn't seem to be any relevant disanalogy between this experience and an illusion in which a green banana looks yellow. So it seems that we must answer the question in the affirmative.

But is that so bad? It's true that yellowness is perceived "alongside" the property of being visually relevantly similar to a paradigm yellow thing. But the explanatory power of perceiving the banana's visually relevant similarity property is "parasitic" on the explanatory power of perceiving the banana's yellowness. If my perceiving the banana's yellowness was an inadequate account of the banana's looking yellow to me, then my perceiving the banana's property of being visually relevantly similar to a paradigm yellow thing would be inadequate as well—but the converse isn't true. Thus, even though both properties are instantiated by the banana, it is plausible that the fact that I perceive the banana's yellowness is doing all the work in accounting



for the fact that the banana looks yellow to me.<sup>72</sup> In short, while there's still much work to do in spelling out this account of illusion (as Brewer is the first to admit), this is a promising start.

A. D. Smith disagrees; in a forthcoming paper, he offers several objections to a Brewer-style account of illusion. Smith correctly notes that, on such an account, the character of the objects perceived constitutes the phenomenal character of the experience. Smith's main objection is that while this might be true of the sorts of illusions Brewer focuses on (e.g., the Müller-Lyer illusion), it can't possibly be true of what he calls "non-cognitive" illusions, i.e., illusions "that are more physiologically or physically based" (forthcoming). Smith argues:

[Brewer's account does not] apply to the illusorily appearing colours that are due either to unusual lighting or to simultaneous or successive colour contrast. In such cases it is one's sensory experience itself, at the most basic level, that is affected, not just some response to the experience. Because of this, there are in such cases no visually relevant similarities of the sort that Brewer can point to in the Müller-Lyer illusion. A green square can look yellow to me because of the peculiar lighting. There is, however, no "relevant" similarity at all between green and yellow. They are simply two quite different colours.  
(forthcoming, endnote omitted)<sup>73</sup>

Smith's objection rests on an uncharitable interpretation of Brewer's account. Brewer is not claiming that green is visually relevantly similar to yellow. Rather, he is (or at least should be) claiming that the *object perceived* is visually relevantly similar to a paradigmatic yellow thing. In particular, the idea is that the subject doesn't perceive the object's color; instead, she perceives a complicated *relational* property specified in terms of the subject's visual system, the conditions of perception, and a paradigmatic yellow object.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Compare Martin's explanation of why the property of being subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience of a yellow banana—a property had trivially by a veridical experience of a yellow banana—doesn't "screen off" the obtaining of the acquaintance relation from doing any explanatory work (2004: 69-70).

<sup>73</sup> Alex Byrne gives an objection along these lines to Charles Travis' broadly similar account of illusion (see Byrne 2009: 446-7).

<sup>74</sup> In arguing against a different Relationalist account of illusion, Smith asserts that "only because an object's colour is seen is an object's shape seen" (forthcoming). Smith might employ this premise in arguing against my characterization of Brewer's view. On this characterization, the subject of an experience that is illusory with respect

Smith considers a similar suggestion in a footnote immediately following the passage just quoted: that the subject of an illusion in which a green thing looks yellow perceives the property of being “yellow-in-this-light”—which is ostensibly a visually relevant similarity property. Smith rejects this suggestion on the grounds that “it is incapable of recognising that, in the situations in question, we get anything wrong *at all* about our environment” (forthcoming, endnote 12, emphasis in original). However, here Smith is simply assuming without argument that a Brewer-style account of illusion doesn’t work. Brewer’s whole point is that we don’t need to think of illusory experiences as erroneous in order to properly account for them. On his view, the illuded subject doesn’t misperceive the object at all. She fails to perceive its color, but perceives another property that the object *really has*—viz., the property of being visually relevantly similar to a paradigmatic yellow thing. (A failure to perceive some of an object’s properties doesn’t count as misperceiving it; otherwise, we’d be misperceiving all the time.) As it happens, we cannot distinguish colors from these similarity properties, and we have a default tendency to assume that we’re perceiving the former rather than the latter. But this doesn’t mean that the experience itself is in error; rather, the error is in the *judgments* one is disposed to make about the experience and its objects.

However, Smith is skeptical about the claim that visually relevant similarities can play a role in explaining a subject’s dispositions to judge certain things:

It should be evident, however, that such similarities as these, wholly unknown to the experiencing subject as they typically are, can play no role in an account of illusion that locates error only in an “intelligible” response to a core experience that perfectly matches

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to color doesn’t see the object’s color; she only sees a visually relevant similarity property. In conjunction with Smith’s premise, we get the unwelcome consequence that the object’s *shape* isn’t perceived. However, Smith’s premise is not obviously non-negotiable. What’s to stop us from modifying Smith’s premise as follows: you can’t see an object’s shape without seeing its color *or* seeing a property that is somehow related to color (e.g., a visually relevant similarity to paradigmatic objects of a certain color)?

But more importantly, Smith’s premise seems too strong because it undermines even the *Representationalist* account of illusion—at least on the assumption that a necessary condition on perceiving a property is perceptually representing that property. A standard Representationalist account of an illusion of a green, crescent-shaped banana that looks *yellow* and crescent-shaped is that the subject perceptually represents the proposition that something is yellow and crescent-shaped. On this account, greenness isn’t represented, and therefore not perceived. So by Smith’s premise, it follows that the subject doesn’t perceive crescent-shapedness, either. But presumably the Representationalist would want to deny that; he would insist that crescent-shapedness is perceived partly in virtue of being perceptually represented.

the actual situation perceived. When I see the yellow-looking square, there is no sense at all in which I see the light travelling to my eyes. The light does not look any way at all to me. It is the square that I see and that looks a certain way...According to Brewer, illusion consists in the fact that visually relevant similarities “may intelligibly be taken for qualitative identities” (2008, 173). But nothing I am wholly unaware of can be “taken” by me in any way whatever. Are we really to suppose that a white object’s looking green to me after I have been staring at a red surface is a matter of the state of my retinal cells providing an “intelligible ground” for a response that brings green “to mind”? There is no intelligibility here at all. It is just a matter of psycho-physical causation. The “visually relevant similarities” in all such non-cognitive illusions simply concern the processes that give rise to experience. They are operative before any experience occurs, even at a “first” level, and they condition the phenomenal character of that experience. (forthcoming)

Smith’s worries miss the mark, however. First, the claim isn’t that the illuded subject sees the light traveling to her eyes. The claim is that she sees the property of being visually relevantly similar to a paradigmatic yellow thing. Second, since the account of illusion under consideration holds that the subject *is* aware of *this* property, it *can* be taken by her to be a property it isn’t. Of course, the property the subject is aware of doesn’t *seem* to be a complicated relational property, but colors don’t “display” their natures for us either (unless primitivism about colors is true). Third, an object’s being visually relevantly similar to a paradigmatic yellow thing *does* make intelligible the judgment that the object is yellow, simply because the subject cannot distinguish the property of being visually relevantly similar to a paradigmatic yellow thing from yellowness. Finally, Smith is right that visually relevant similarity properties are operative before any experience occurs. But that doesn’t mean that an illusory experience cannot consist in seeing them.

In this subsection, I have elaborated Brewer’s account of illusion and defended it from objections. Brewer’s account is an ingenious start on a Relationalist alternative to the standard Representationalist account of illusion—a start that’s certainly worth pursuing.

#### 4b. *The Relational View and hallucinations*

Even if an account along the lines of Brewer's works for illusion, it cannot be extended to hallucination, which doesn't involve acquaintance with any objects at all. The Relationalist must say something else about hallucination—but what?

One possibility is to give a *positive* account of hallucination; that is, an account in terms of *primitive* mental properties (e.g., in terms of representation of propositions about one's environment, or in terms of acquaintance with sense-data).<sup>75</sup> However, M.G.F. Martin has argued that this option is untenable on the basis of causal considerations. He suggests that there is a type of neural state that is the proximal cause of a banana-hallucination. If hallucination consists in perceptual representation of propositions, then this type of neural state is sufficient for perceptual representation of a certain proposition: say, the proposition that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped banana before one. Plausibly, such a neural state could be the proximal cause of a veridical experience of a yellow banana, and it is hard to deny that this neural state would be sufficient for perceptual representation of the relevant proposition in the veridical case as well.<sup>76</sup> In short, the idea is that if representational properties (or any other kind of primitive mental property) are allowed into the account of hallucination, then they can't be kept out of the account of veridical experience. Moreover, Martin holds that if representational properties are allowed into the account of veridical experience, then they will effectively “screen off” the obtaining of the acquaintance relation from doing the explanatory work the Relationalist claims that it does, thus undermining the motivations for the Relational View.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> In the terminology of Byrne and Logue 2008: 69, this proposal is a version of *positive* disjunctivism. Recall that we set aside the version of the Relational View that accounts for hallucination in terms of sense-data in the introduction (see fn. 8).

<sup>76</sup> For a detailed discussion of these causal considerations, see Martin 2004: 52-8.

<sup>77</sup> For the details of the “screening off” argument, see Martin 2004: 58-68; for discussion of this argument, see Byrne and Logue 2008: 83-7. Martin suggests that even if the sort of positive mental property had by hallucinations is also had by veridical experiences, the obtaining of the acquaintance relation could still do *some* explanatory work: it could help explain the fact that a subject believes certain singular propositions, and could also do a better job of explaining a subject's behavior (cf. the response to the objection that a classification of experiences by their objects has no explanatory relevance in section 2). However, Martin worries that the presence of such a positive mental property in a case of veridical experience would screen off the obtaining of the acquaintance relation from explaining the experience's phenomenal character: “It would be a severe limitation on the disjunctivist's commitment to [the Relational View], if the [Relationalist] aspects of perception [i.e., the obtaining of the acquaintance relation] could not themselves shape the contours of the subject's conscious experience” (2004: 64). This would undermine what we identified in Chapter 1 as the most promising motivation for the Relational View, viz., the elimination of the need to explain why it's like *this* to see yellow (demonstrating the phenomenal character

If Martin is right that a positive account of hallucination would undermine the Relational View's account of veridical experience, the Relationalist's only option is to give a *negative* account of hallucination—i.e., an account in terms of *non-primitive* mental properties. As I mentioned in section 2, Martin's proposal is that causally matching hallucinations (i.e., hallucinations with the same proximal neural causes as veridical experience) should be characterized only in relation to veridical experience. Specifically, on Martin's view, the mental nature of a causally matching hallucination is exhausted by the property of being *subjectively indistinguishable* from a veridical experience of a certain kind (Martin 2004: 71). For example, a hallucination as of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana simply consists in the property of being subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana. Martin argues that this indistinguishability property doesn't "screen off" the obtaining of the acquaintance relation from doing any explanatory work in the case of veridical experience, on the grounds that the explanatory power of the former is dependent on the explanatory power of the latter (2004: 70). Plausibly, being in a state that is *subjectively indistinguishable from* being acquainted with a yellow banana can play a role in explaining my belief that there is a yellow banana before me only if *actually being acquainted* with a yellow banana can play such an explanatory role.

Martin characterizes the notion of subjective indistinguishability in terms of *knowability*: an experience is subjectively indistinguishable from a certain kind of veridical experience iff it is not possible for the subject to *know* by introspection alone that her experience isn't of that kind. Given this characterization of the notion of subjective indistinguishability, the possibility of "cognitively unsophisticated" hallucinators is a serious problem for Martin's account of hallucination. A toad, say, can have a hallucination as of a yellow, crescent-shaped thing, but arguably it doesn't have beliefs (and therefore knowledge) about anything. Such a creature's hallucination as of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana is indistinguishable from *any other kind of mental state*—the toad is never able to know that the mental state it's in isn't of any given kind, simply because the toad isn't able to know *anything*.<sup>78</sup> On Martin's proposal, the mental nature

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of my veridical experience of the yellow banana on my desk), rather than like what it's like to see a green thing. For a critical discussion of Martin's "screening off" argument, see Hellie forthcoming.

<sup>78</sup> For a related objection, see Siegel 2008: 210-4.

of a hallucination as of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana is *exhausted* by the property of being subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana. But on what grounds can Martin claim that the mental nature of a toad's hallucination is exhausted by this *particular* indistinguishability property, when it has so many others (e.g., the property of being subjectively indistinguishable from veridical experience of a *red tomato*, or the property of being subjectively indistinguishable from a *desire* to eat more flies)?<sup>79</sup>

Martin responds to the objection from cognitively unsophisticated hallucinators by articulating a notion of *impersonal* (in)distinguishability (2004: 75-6, 2006: 379-96). The idea is that while a toad's hallucination as of a yellow, crescent shaped banana is subjectively indistinguishable from all kinds of mental states *for the toad given its cognitive capacities* (or lack thereof), there is still a perspective from which the toad's hallucination is subjectively distinguishable from, say, a veridical experience of a red, round tomato, and is non-trivially subjectively *indistinguishable* from a veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana.

However, Siegel (2008) argues that this appeal to impersonal (in)distinguishability runs into trouble once we try to specify what impersonal (in)distinguishability consists in. She suggests that the most natural explication of impersonal indistinguishability is in terms of a counterfactual about knowledge, such as the following: if an "ideal introspector" were in the toad's situation, she would not be able to know by introspection alone that she was not having a veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana. However, we must ask: what is it to be in the toad's "situation"? Plausibly, to be in the toad's situation is to be hallucinating a yellow, crescent-shaped banana, which, according to the account of hallucination under consideration, *just is* the property of being in a state that is indistinguishable by introspection alone from a veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana. But now the proposed explication of

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<sup>79</sup> An analogous objection could be raised concerning hasty or inattentive hallucinators (Martin 2004: 74). Suppose that John is incorrigibly hasty in his judgments about his experiences, and so when he has an experience as of a scarlet patch, he is quite likely to conclude that he's having an experience as of a vermilion patch. For John, a hallucination as of a scarlet patch is subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience of a vermilion one, even though *what it's like* to hallucinate a scarlet patch is different from what it's like to veridically experience a vermilion one. The problem posed by subjects like John isn't quite as dramatic as the problem posed by cognitively unsophisticated subjects, as John's hallucination isn't subjectively indistinguishable from *all* kinds of mental states; it's just subjectively indistinguishable from phenomenally different kinds of veridical experiences. The difference between this objection and the objection from cognitively unsophisticated hallucinators is a matter of degree, not kind, and so Martin's response to the latter is supposed to apply to the former as well.

impersonal indistinguishability is trivial: it says that if an “ideal introspector” were in a state such that she couldn’t know by introspection alone that it wasn’t a veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana, then she would not be able to know by introspection alone that she was not having a veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana. Any attempt to explicate impersonal indistinguishability in terms of a counterfactual about knowledge will result in a trivial claim, because any such counterfactual will make reference to the toad’s “situation” (which can then be specified only in terms of indistinguishability). Thus, it appears that there is no non-trivial explication of impersonal indistinguishability available to a disjunctivist of Martin’s stripe.<sup>80</sup>

An appeal to the notion of impersonal (in)distinguishability isn’t the only possible response to the problem posed by cognitively unsophisticated hallucinators. In order to establish that a frog can subjectively distinguish its banana-hallucination from, say, a desire to eat more flies, one might appeal to a less sophisticated cognitive notion in explicating subjective indistinguishability (e.g., Sosa’s “animal knowledge” as outlined in his 1991), or one might offer an alternative gloss on subjective indistinguishability, one not in terms of knowledge (e.g., Fish’s account of subjective indistinguishability in terms of experiences’ *effects* in his 2008 and 2009: Ch. 4). However, as Siegel argues, these strategies have their own problems.<sup>81</sup> The upshot is that any account of hallucination in terms of subjective indistinguishability faces an uphill battle.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> The dialectic is actually more complicated than I’ve let on. As Siegel notes, Martin recognizes the difficulties of giving a counterfactual account of impersonal indiscriminability (2006: 383). Martin’s alternative derives from his conception of introspection, which is basically that it is *not* a mode of accessing some bit of reality that exists independently of that access. Rather, one’s experience is *constituted* by one’s introspective awareness of it: “[i]t seeming to the subject that things seem a certain way to her can constitute things seeming that way to her” (Martin 2006: 395). Given this conception of introspection, “[t]hat which in us is simply a mode of self-awareness is what we attribute to other creatures even when we do not take them to be self-aware. So [the Relationalist can] attribute experience to the dog through attributing a *specific take on the world*, without thereby supposing that the dog is self-aware” (Martin 2006: 395, emphasis mine). The idea seems to be that we can explicate the notion of impersonal indiscriminability in terms of having a “specific take on the world”. But what is it to have a specific take on the world? Martin reminds us that this shouldn’t be explicated in terms of a counterfactual (2006: 396, fn. 44). In the absence of another explanation of what having a specific take on the world amounts to, however, this alternative is unconvincing.

<sup>81</sup> For Siegel’s response to the “animal knowledge” strategy, see her 2008: 213-4. For her criticism of Fish’s alternative account of subjective indistinguishability, see her 2008: 214-7; for Fish’s response, see his 2009: 99-100, 103-104.

<sup>82</sup> The hill is even steeper than I’ve let on. For considerations that can be marshaled in further objections to indistinguishability accounts of hallucination, see Siegel 2008: 218-23, 2004: 93-5, and Johnston 2004: 124-7.

The Relationalist might do best to revisit Martin's argument for the claim that a positive account of hallucination is untenable.

Fortunately for the Relationalist, there is room to resist Martin's argument. Recall that the argument goes roughly as follows: since a hallucination can have the same proximal cause as a veridical experience, any positive mental properties admitted to our account of hallucination must also be admitted to our account of veridical experience (by a version of the "same cause, same effect" principle). Further, since the properties shared by a veridical experience and a hallucination are best suited to explain what they have in common (e.g., a phenomenal character, certain cognitive and behavioral effects), a consequence of any positive account of hallucination is that the obtaining of the acquaintance relation in the case of the veridical experience is "screened off" from explaining what the experiences have in common.

This argument starts from the premise that a veridical experience and a hallucinatory one can have the same proximal neural cause. However, the Relationalist could follow Mark Johnston in rejecting this premise:

The relation between seeing an object and the long physical process involving first the light coming from the object and then the operation of the visual system is *not* the relation between a first mental effect and a prior physical process that causes it. Seeing the object is not the next event *after the visual system operates*. Seeing the object is an event materially constituted by *the long physical process* connecting the object seen to the final state of the visual system. Seeing the object is an event that is (as it actually turns out) constituted by a physical process that goes all the way out to the object seen... There is no such "last" brain state that then causes seeing. (2004: 138-9, emphasis in original)

Now, Johnston doesn't explicitly say that *veridical experiences* don't have proximal neural causes; he says this about *seeing* (and presumably, about *perceiving* in general). But, as a Relationalist, he thinks that veridical experience consists in the obtaining of the perceptual



relation. So the claim that veridical experiences have no proximal neural causes follows from what he says in the passage above along with his commitment to the Relational View.

Arguably, Johnston's "constitutive" conception of the connection between perceptual processing and experience is more congenial to the Relational View than the "causal" conception presupposed by Martin's argument. The Relational View and the Representational View place perceptual experiences in different ontological categories—for the Representationalist, it is natural to think of experiences as *states of subjects* (representational states), while for the Relationalist, it is natural to think of them as *events* (the perceptual relation coming to obtain between the subject and the objects of experience) or as *states of affairs* (the perceptual relation's so obtaining). If perceptual experiences are representational states of subjects, then it makes sense to suppose that experiences have proximal neural causes—the subject of an experience goes through a series of subpersonal states whose causal upshot is a conscious representational state. But if perceptual experiences are events or states of affairs, it's not so clear that experiences have proximal *neural* causes. Of course, there is *a* proximal cause of my being acquainted with the banana on my desk. A likely candidate is the event of light reflected off of the banana hitting my retina, which puts into motion a chain of brain processing events that constitute (rather than cause) my acquaintance with the banana.<sup>83</sup> In short, *if* the Relational View is true, then Martin's argument against positive characterizations of hallucination may well presuppose a false conception of perceptual experience.

However, the proponent of positive disjunctivism isn't out of the woods just yet—there is another reason for doubting that the Relationalist can consistently maintain that hallucinations have a positive mental property that veridical experiences lack. Unlike Martin's argument against positive disjunctivism, this argument doesn't rely upon claims about the *causes* of veridical and hallucinatory experiences; rather, it relies upon claims about what *constitutes* them. Suppose again that hallucinations have representational properties. A neural state in virtue of which a hallucinator consciously perceptually represents a proposition about her environment could be present in a case of veridical experience. Assuming (along with Johnston) that veridical

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<sup>83</sup> Given what Johnston says in the passage quoted above, he would insist that this event is both a cause *and* a constituent of my veridical experience: "Seeing the object is an event materially constituted by *the long physical process* connecting the object seen to the final state of the visual system" (2004: 138-9, emphasis in original).

experiences have such neural states as constituents, it appears to follow that that veridical experience can at least partially consist in conscious perceptual representation. It would be exceedingly difficult to maintain that the common neural state counts as a conscious perceptual representation in the case of *hallucination* but not in the case of *veridical experience*; it's doubtful that any plausible theory of intentionality would be compatible with this claim. So it seems that if the Relationalist wants to endorse a positive account of hallucination, he has to admit primitive mental properties into his account of veridical experience *in addition to* the obtaining of the perceptual relation—which is incompatible with the Relational View as stated.

However, instead of giving up on a positive account of hallucination altogether, perhaps the Relationalist should revise his account of veridical experience. The Relationalist could claim that although veridical experience isn't *exhausted* by the obtaining of the perceptual relation, the obtaining of this relation provides the most fundamental psychological explanation of cognition and behavior. While this is a departure from how the Relational View is commonly formulated, it's certainly in the right spirit. Nevertheless, this still isn't enough to ensure compatibility between the Relational View and a positive account of hallucination. For the revised Relationalist account of veridical experience faces Martin's "screening off" worry—i.e., the worry that any reasonably specific, primitive mental properties a veridical experience and a hallucination have in common will explain their common phenomenal character as well as their common behavioral and cognitive effects.

In response to the screening off worry, the Relationalist could deny something we have been assuming all along: namely, that a property of the form *perceptually representing that p* is a *primitive* mental property. Inspiration for this line of thought can be found in Campbell's attempt to motivate the Relational View. Recall that Campbell holds that the only way to explain our capacity to consciously perceptually represent objects in our environment is to claim that veridical experience consists in acquaintance with such objects (see Chapter 1, section 3b). I argued that this claim was dubious on the grounds that Campbell failed to rule out other candidate explanations of this capacity. However, suppose we have some *independent* motivation for the claim that veridical experience consists in the obtaining of the acquaintance relation. Once we have the acquaintance relation in the picture, then something in the vicinity of

Campbell's claim is plausible. In particular, the Relationalist might suggest that a veridically perceiving subject's perceptually representing, say, the proposition that there's a yellow banana before her is *explained* in part by the fact that the subject is acquainted with a yellow banana. If the property of perceptually representing that there is a yellow banana before oneself is explained partly in terms of the obtaining of the acquaintance relation, then it isn't a primitive mental property. (The antecedent of this conditional requires further elucidation and support, but let us just grant it for the sake of argument.)

On this proposal, the most fundamental psychological explanation of a *hallucination's* phenomenal character and cognitive and behavioral effects is in terms of representational properties. There is also *an* explanation of a *veridical experience's* phenomenal character and cognitive and behavioral effects in terms of representational properties, but it isn't the "deepest" psychological explanation that we can give. The most fundamental psychological explanation is in terms of the obtaining of the acquaintance relation.<sup>84</sup>

I should note an important disanalogy between the line of argument I am sketching here and Martin's argument for the claim that the subjective indistinguishability property doesn't screen off the acquaintance relation from doing any explanatory work. The reason why the subjective indistinguishability property doesn't screen off the acquaintance relation is that the former's explanatory power depends on that of the latter. This isn't the case for representational properties and the acquaintance relation; the former have explanatory power independently of the latter. The reason why there's no screening off in this case is the same reason why the *property of being a perceptual experience as of a yellow banana* doesn't screen off the acquaintance relation—they explain the same phenomena, but at *different levels* (the latter offers a more "fine-grained" explanation than the former). The idea is that representational properties and the acquaintance relation don't figure in *competing* explanations of the same phenomena; rather, they figure in explanations at different levels.

None of this means that the debate between the Relationalist and the Representationalist simply evaporates; rather, it just changes its shape. The debate shifts from being about what

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<sup>84</sup> A corollary of this line of thought is that veridical experiences have "deeper" psychological explanations than hallucinations do. It's not clear that this is an unwelcome result, however, given that veridical experiences involve perceiving the world while hallucinations do not.

experience *consists in* to being about the *division of explanatory labor* among the constituents of experience. The Relationalist thinks that the most fundamental explanations of the phenomenal character and cognitive and behavioral effects of veridical experiences should be in terms of the acquaintance relation, while the Representationalist thinks that the most fundamental explanations should be in terms of representational properties. A proponent of a hybrid Relational/Representational View thinks that representational properties and the acquaintance relation figure in competing explanations of the same phenomena after all, but that we need to appeal to both in order to explain everything that needs explaining.

This attempt to defend a positive Relationalist account of hallucination has provided us with an opportunity to reflect on what the debate between the Relationalist and the Representationalist is really about. In particular, if a positive account of hallucination turns out to be the only viable option for the Relationalist, then he has no choice but to “redraw the battle lines” in the way that I suggested. Arguably, if the Relationalist *would* redraw the battle lines in that way if he were *forced* to, we might as well redraw the battle lines in that way no matter what (assuming that doing so is consistent with the motivations for the Relational View, and that the Representationalist has no reason to object). I suspect that the debate between the Relationalist and the Representationalist is ultimately about what features of experience do the explanatory work, and not primarily about what the constituents of experience are. However, in what follows I will revert to the way I have been characterizing the debate since Chapter 1, given that it is closer to how most of the parties to the debate view the dialectical terrain. (In any case, nothing I have to say hangs on which way the debate is characterized.)

I grant that this positive Relationalist account of hallucination is extremely rough around the edges. However, it is worth pursuing, given that the obstacles to a negative Relationalist account of hallucination appear close to insurmountable. (Perhaps that’s only in virtue of their sheer number, but it’s best to fully explore all the available options anyway.)

This concludes our survey of the Relationalist options in accounting for hallucination. These options fall into two categories: *positive* accounts, in terms of primitive mental entities (e.g., conscious representation of propositions about one’s environment), and *negative* accounts, in terms of non-primitive mental entities (the property of being subjectively indistinguishable

from a veridical experience of a certain kind). Martin's negative account is fraught with problems. However, the possibility of a positive account is as yet under-explored, and it may be the Relationalist's best option (although as we saw, this option would require more than a little tweaking of the Relationalist's account of veridical experience). While the task of accounting for hallucination remains a vexing challenge for the Relationalist, it is too soon to conclude that the task is hopeless.<sup>85</sup>

### 5. Conclusion

In this chapter, we've considered various criticisms of the Relational View of perceptual experience. Some of them are ill-conceived (the objections from subjective indistinguishability, sameness of phenomenal character, and scientific work on perception). Others present genuine challenges for the Relational View (i.e., the demand for viable Relationalist accounts of illusion and hallucination). However, I hope to have shown that these challenges don't warrant tossing the Relational View on the philosophical scrap-heap just yet. Even if the Relational View turns out to be false, we can learn a lot from exploring it.

One issue we can learn more about from exploring the Relational View is that of *property perception*—what are the possible accounts of what it is to perceive a property (like yellowness or crescent-shapedness)? In the next chapter, I will argue that the Relational View's ability to explain perceptual belief hangs on its account of property perception. I will consider a number of Relationalist proposals about what it is to perceive a property in order to assess the viability of the view.

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<sup>85</sup> Before moving on, I should briefly mention an argument that could be marshaled against Relational View as I originally characterized it: the "argument from appearing" in Siegel forthcoming. The conclusion of this argument is that all visual perceptual experiences have contents, which contradicts the Relational View given the assumption an experience's having content amounts to the subject representing a proposition about her environment. (Note that this conclusion doesn't contradict the view that Siegel calls 'Naïve Realism'—a view in the vicinity of the Relational View, minus the claim that veridical experience is *exhausted* by the obtaining of a non-representational perceptual relation.) One way for the Relationalist to respond to this argument would be to employ the strategy used to defend a positive Relationalist account of hallucination—viz., to recast the debate as one about the explanatory division of labor. The Relationalist could accept Siegel's conclusion while insisting that the most fundamental psychological explanations of the phenomena associated with veridical experience are in terms of the acquaintance relation.

### Chapter 3

#### Perceptual Experience: Just Relational, or Representational Too?

I believe that the banana on my desk is yellow. I believe this because I *see* the banana, but this is only a partial explanation of my belief—I could see the banana but fail to see that it is yellow (as I might if the lighting conditions are unusual). A more illuminating explanation of my belief is that I am having a *perceptual experience* of the banana *as yellow*. There is a connection between my experience and the proposition that the banana is yellow; specifically, my experience quite naturally gives rise to belief in this proposition. But in virtue of what does this connection obtain? Theories of perceptual experience can be tested by their ability to answer this question.<sup>86</sup>

The Relational View is often alleged to pass this test with flying colors. According to the Relational View, my experience of the banana consists in the obtaining of the relation of *acquaintance* between myself and the banana. The Relational View may seem to have a plausible account of the fact that my experience naturally generates beliefs about the banana: the idea is that there's no "distance" between my experience and the banana, so to speak; the banana is just *given* to me in experience, thereby becoming a potential topic for thought and talk (Johnston 2004: 139). While the metaphor requires cashing out, this line of thought may seem to be a promising first step in providing an account of the connection between my experience and my belief about the banana.

The Relational View's main rival, the Representational View, holds that my experience of the banana consists in my representing my environment as being a certain way (i.e., as being such that the banana before me is yellow). On this view, the connection between my experience of the banana and my belief about it is (roughly) that the experience and the belief involve representing my environment as being the same way. Recall that one could in principle endorse a hybrid Relational/Representational View, on which my experience of the banana consists in both my representing my environment as a certain way *and* the obtaining of the relation of acquaintance between me and the banana. This hybrid view, of course, can explain the

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<sup>86</sup> The beliefs generated by perceptual experiences often count as *knowledge*. But here I am just concerned with them *qua* beliefs.

connection between my experience of the banana and my belief about it in just the same way as the Representational View does.

As the title of this chapter implies, I will just grant for the sake of argument that veridical experience involves the obtaining of the acquaintance relation. So nothing I will say will rule out the hybrid Relational/Representational View. For the record, though, the notion of acquaintance in play is more than a little mysterious, and it's not even obvious that we *need* to invoke it in accounting for veridical experience. I suspect (but will not argue here) that any reason there is to claim that veridical experience consists in the obtaining of the acquaintance relation can be accommodated by the claim that veridical experience involves the representation of object-dependent propositions (e.g., the proposition that *this very banana* is yellow).<sup>87</sup>

However, the aim of this chapter is to show that it is hard to get by without the claim that perceptual experience consists in representing the world as being a certain way. This in itself is not a novel point—as we discussed in the last chapter, some have argued that existing Relationalist accounts of non-veridical perceptual experiences are inadequate, which would mean that such experiences must consist in representation (assuming that other options, like acquaintance with sense-data, are off the table). And as we also saw in the last chapter, if we let representation into our accounts of non-veridical experiences, it's all but impossible to keep it out of our account of veridical experience.

The back and forth between the Relationalist and the Representationalist regarding the correct account of non-veridical experience has proceeded in ignorance of a more fundamental problem with the Relational View. One gets the impression from Relationalists that philosophy of perception has been held hostage to non-veridical experiences for far too long, and that the most important desideratum is giving the best account of veridical experience.<sup>88</sup> It is usually taken for granted that the Relational View offers an unproblematic account of veridical experience. But as I will argue in this chapter, this is not the case. The Relational View does not offer an entirely satisfactory account of our relationship to the *properties* of perceived objects—

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<sup>87</sup> A potential exception to this claim is Fish's motivation for the Relational View, discussed in Chapter 1. The idea was that if a subject looking at a yellow thing is *acquainted* with yellowness, we sidestep the need to explain why looking at a yellow thing is like *this* (demonstrating the phenomenal character of my experience of the banana) rather than, say, what it is like to look at a *green* thing.

<sup>88</sup> See, e.g., Brewer 2008: 170-1.

e.g., of the relationship I bear to *yellowness* in perceiving the banana on my desk. Thus, it does not have an entirely satisfactory account of the connection between my experience of the banana on my desk and my belief that the banana is *yellow*. As I said at the start, a condition of adequacy on any theory of perceptual experience is that it should provide a satisfactory account of the connection between a perceptual experience and the beliefs it naturally gives rise to. While the Representational View has a plausible and relatively unproblematic account of this connection at its disposal, I will argue that the Relational View does not.

In section 1, I will elaborate this condition of adequacy and explain how the Representational View meets it. In sections 2 through 5, I consider and reject four non-Representationalist attempts to meet the condition. I tentatively conclude that we should appeal to representation in order to meet the condition, and in section 6 I consider the implications the condition has for several intra-Representational View disputes.

### ***1. The condition of adequacy***

Proponents of the Relational View deny that veridical experience consists in the representation of propositions, or in other words, that perceptual experiences have *representational content*. Nevertheless, all parties to the debate ought to agree that a given perceptual experience involves a specific relation to certain propositions. For example, as a result of my perceptual experience of the banana on my desk, I believe that *this* (demonstrating the banana) is yellow. In general, everyone ought to agree that a given perceptual experience naturally generates beliefs in certain propositions about one's environment. To say that a given perceptual experience *E* *naturally generates* the belief that *p* means roughly this: as long as the subject of *E* doesn't suspect that anything is awry with the conditions in which *E* came about (e.g., that the lighting conditions are unusual, or that a mad scientist has been tinkering with his perceptual apparatus), he will be disposed to spontaneously form the belief that *p*.

Perceptual experiences play a central role in our cognitive lives, and a theory of perceptual experience should be able to account for this role—for instance, it should be able to explain why a given perceptual experience naturally gives rise to certain beliefs and not others. I will assume that a condition of adequacy on any theory of perceptual experience is that it should



be able to provide an account of the connection between a perceptual experience and the beliefs it naturally gives rise to.

One might question this assumption—one could insist that it is just a *brute fact* that a given experience naturally gives rise to a certain belief. If this is right, then the fact that perceptual experience naturally gives rise to certain beliefs places no constraints on its metaphysical structure. For no matter what a theory says perceptual experience consists in, we can't rule out the possibility that a certain experience so characterized could naturally give rise to a belief with a certain content.

This proposal deserves fuller consideration than I am prepared to give it at present. For the time being, I will just operate on the assumption that there is *some* account to be had of the fact that an experience of a certain type (e.g., an experience of a yellow banana) naturally gives rise to a belief with a certain content (e.g., that the banana is yellow), and ascertain what follows from this assumption. In any case, the idea that no such account is needed is not likely to be accepted by the *Relationalist*. For example, as I noted above, part of the attraction of the Relational View is that it is supposed to be able to *make intelligible* the connection between an experience of an object and beliefs about that very object (although, as I will argue below, the Relational View doesn't obviously succeed in doing this).<sup>89</sup>

A necessary condition on accounting for why an experience *E* naturally gives rise to the belief that *p* is accounting for *the connection between E and the proposition that p*. Call the propositions that an experience *E* naturally generates belief in *E*'s *doxastic content*. (This notion is not particularly precise, but it will do for our purposes.) A couple of caveats are in order. First, a subject who has *E* need not actually *believe* the propositions that constitute the doxastic content of her experience. For example, I might harbor a suspicion that the lighting in my office makes green things look yellow, and so refrain from believing that the banana on my desk is yellow.

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<sup>89</sup> In Chapter 2, I defended the Relational View from the objections from subjective indistinguishability and phenomenal sameness by claiming that it's not obvious that either subjective indistinguishability or phenomenal sameness requires explanation in terms of a theory of perceptual experience. In principle, the Relationalist could make the same move here, and deny that the connection between experience and belief requires an explanation in terms of a theory of perceptual experience. As I noted in the main text, the Relationalist is unlikely to make this move. Moreover, the Relationalist can't keep making this move forever—there has to be *something* that a theory of perceptual experience supposed to explain. Otherwise, there's not much point in arguing over which one is correct.

Nevertheless, in the absence of such suspicions, the belief that this is yellow would quite naturally emerge from my experience.

Second, the doxastic content of experience excludes propositions believed as the result of inference. For example, as a result of having an experience of the banana on my desk, I might come to believe that the banana thief who has been roaming the department in recent months hasn't yet been to my office today. Granted, there is a sense in which the belief that the banana thief hasn't yet been to my office is naturally generated by my experience (especially if I have been dwelling on the wanton acts of banana-thievery that have been occurring of late). Nevertheless, my experience is much more intimately related to the proposition that the banana on my desk is yellow than to the proposition that the banana-thief hasn't yet been to my office.

Some caveats about this caveat. First, there are some cases in which it is not immediately obvious whether a belief is the result of experience *and* inference. For example, does my belief that this is a *banana* naturally emerge from my experience alone, or from my experience *and* the background belief that yellow, crescent-shaped things are bananas? I don't need to take a stand on this question here—what's important in this context is that there seem to be many clear instances of beliefs that are the result of experience alone: e.g., the belief that *this* (demonstrating the banana on my desk) is yellow.

However, one might insist that *any* perceptual belief is the result of inference. For example, one might suggest that my belief that *this* is yellow is the result of my experience *and* the background belief that things in my environment are as they perceptually appear to be. If this is right, then the account of doxastic content given above must be modified—perhaps we could say the doxastic content of experience includes only those propositions one naturally comes to believe as the result of one's experience together with this basic background belief. The notion of doxastic content is supposed to reflect the intuitive idea that some beliefs are more closely connected with experience than others, and we can delineate this notion even if all perceptual beliefs are the result of inference.

While all sorts of perceptual experiences have doxastic content (veridical, illusory, and hallucinatory experiences alike) in what follows I will focus on just veridical experiences. For if

the Relational View can offer an adequate account of any sort of perceptual experience, it can offer an adequate account of veridical experience.

Note that the Representational View can give a straightforward account of the connection between a veridical experience and its doxastic content. On the simplest account available, the doxastic content of a veridical experience *just is* its representational content. The connection between my veridical experience of the banana and the propositions it naturally generates belief in is that my experience consists in my *representing* those propositions—among them may be the proposition that *this* (demonstrating the banana) is yellow.<sup>90</sup>

Of course, the claim that my veridical experience consists in my representing the proposition that this is yellow is not a *complete* account of why my experience naturally generates the belief that this is yellow. For this claim does not explain why experiences naturally generate beliefs *in general*. But a necessary component of an account of why my experience naturally generates the belief that this is yellow is an account of the connection between my experience and the proposition that this is yellow. To put the point picturesquely: we want to understand why the information that this is yellow ended up in my “belief box” as a result of my experience. The Representational View says, in effect, that the information that this is yellow was *transmitted* from my “experience box” to my “belief box.” This is not an account of *why* the information was transmitted; but it is an account of what the information has to do with my experience in the first place.

It is worth pausing at this point to clarify the question with which I am concerned. One might suspect that my condition of adequacy boils down to a demand for a theory of intentionality for belief—i.e., a story about the facts in virtue of which one believes that *p*. If this suspicion is well-founded, then meeting the condition of adequacy requires nothing less than a theory of intentionality for belief, which the Representationalist response to the condition I’ve proposed fails to supply. However, the suspicion is the result of conflating two questions:

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<sup>90</sup> Of course, the notion of mental representation is not entirely unproblematic, especially in light of the fact that there’s no universally accepted solution to the problem of intentionality (roughly, in virtue of what does a mental state count as representing that *p*?). But arguably, the problem of intentionality is *everyone’s* problem. As we saw in the last chapter, Relationalists typically accept that perceptual experience involves *subpersonal* representational states. We need a theory of intentionality for these states, and whatever it turns out to be, it is plausible that it could be extended to conscious perceptual experience.

(a) In virtue of what do I believe that *p*?

(b) What role does *my perceptual experience* play in my believing that *p*?

(a) is essentially a demand for a theory of intentionality for belief. (b) is a much less demanding question, and it is the one I am concerned with here. It seems that we can answer (b) without having answered (a). For no matter which facts fix the representational content of a belief, we can ask how a perceptual experience that causes a certain belief is related to its content.

So much for the Representational View's response to the condition of adequacy. Can the *Relational View* give an account of the connection between an experience and its doxastic content? Clearly, the Relational View has something to say about the fact that a veridical experience naturally gives rise to beliefs about material objects—my veridical experience of the banana on my desk naturally gives rise to beliefs about the banana in virtue of the fact that it consists in my being acquainted with *this very banana*.

But why does my veridical experience naturally generate the belief that the banana on my desk *is yellow*? Since the doxastic content of a veridical experience predicates certain *properties* of the objects perceived, any theory must offer a plausible account of the relation the subject bears to those properties in order to explain the connection between that experience and its doxastic content. In short, a theory of perceptual experience must be able to account for the following three phenomena:

- (i) The fact that a veridical experience naturally gives rise to certain beliefs;
- (ii) The relationship between a veridical experience and its doxastic content (i.e., the *contents* of the beliefs the experience naturally gives rise to); and
- (iii) The relationship between the subject of a veridical experience and the *properties* that figure in the experience's doxastic content.

A necessary condition on accounting for (i) is accounting for (ii), and a necessary condition on accounting for (ii) is accounting for (iii). The Relational View offers an adequate account of veridical experience only if it can account for (iii).

The challenge I am posing to the Relational View is similar in starting point to an argument offered by McDowell (in his 1994). In brief, McDowell argues that the fact that experiences have doxastic content (to put his point in my terminology) entails not only that they have representational content, but also that perceptual representational content is entirely “conceptual” in nature—roughly, that it consists only of propositions that the subject could entertain in thought. (McDowell would delineate the notion of doxastic content in terms of the beliefs an experience *justifies*, rather than the beliefs it naturally gives rise to.) It’s not clear that we can get quite this much mileage out of the fact that experiences have doxastic content. It seems sufficient that one provide an appropriate function from one’s preferred characterization of a given perceptual experience to its doxastic content. In effect, this is what I am challenging the Relationalist to do with the resources she has available.

Before turning to Relationalist attempts to account for (iii), I should note how (iii) bears on non-visual veridical experience. As I noted in the introduction, it is not immediately obvious what the objects of non-visual experiences are, especially in the cases of sound, smell, and taste (see fn. 2). However, it seems at least *prima facie* plausible that all sorts of experiences have properties among their objects. When I picked up the banana on my desk, it felt *smooth*. When I dropped the banana, I heard a thud, and I heard this thud *as quiet*. I taste a slight *sweetness* as I bite into the banana, and it smells a certain way (a way we don’t really have a name for) as it nears my nose. If this is right, then the Relationalist must also account for (iii) in cases of non-visual experience. For simplicity’s sake, however, I will restrict my attention to *visual* experience.

I now turn to four Relationalist attempts to account for (iii), beginning with the view known as the *theory of appearing*.

## 2. *The theory of appearing*

Two people can veridically perceive the same banana and yet have different kinds of experience. For example, my friend may be viewing the banana from a different perspective, such that he can see a splotch of brown on the banana that isn't visible from where I'm sitting. The Relational View acknowledges this fact by noting that my friend and I both perceive the banana, but it looks to each of us to have different properties—specifically, to say that the banana *looks to me* to be yellow, while it *looks to my friend* to be yellow with a splotch of brown. In general, veridical experience consists in the subject being acquainted with material objects, where the obtaining of the acquaintance relation involves the objects appearing (or looking, in the visual case) to the subject to have *certain properties*.

If we stop here, we're left with the *theory of appearing* (recently defended in Langsam 1997 and Alston 1999). The theory of appearing has a straightforward account of (iii) above. Specifically, the relationship between the subject of a veridical experience and the *properties* attributed to perceived objects in the experience's doxastic content is that the objects *appear* to the subject to have those properties.

While the theory of appearing has an account of (iii), it's not clear that it is a satisfactory *Relationalist* account. We can see why by considering *illusory* perceptual experiences—experiences in which an object appears to have a property that it doesn't really have. The theory of appearing gives the same account of illusory and veridical experiences—in terms of an object *o* appearing *F* to a subject *S*. But this brings out the fact that the notion of *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* lends itself all too naturally to a Representationalist gloss. Something can appear *F* whether or not it really is *F*, just as one can represent propositions whether or not they're true. So why doesn't *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* just amount to *S* perceptually representing the proposition that *o* is *F*?

The theorist of appearing must allay the suspicion that he is appealing to perceptual representation in all but name, and he can do this in one of three ways. First, he could offer a *non-representational elaboration* of *o*'s appearing *F* to *S*. Second, he could argue that there are important differences between *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* and *S* perceptually representing the proposition that *o* is *F*, differences which show that an appeal to the former isn't *ipso facto* an

appeal to the latter. Third, he could insist that *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* is a *primitive* mental state, not to be analyzed in terms of representation—or any other mental state, for that matter. I will discuss these responses in reverse order (leaving the first to the ensuing sections).

The third strategy seems to shirk an explanatory burden. We want an answer to the question, *in virtue of what* does *o* appear *F* to *S*? For example, does *o* appear *F* to *S* because *S* *perceptually represents* the proposition that *o* is *F*, or because she is *acquainted* with certain entities (perhaps *o* and *F*-ness—see section 4 below)? It seems that this is a perfectly sensible question to ask (at least in a philosophical context). But if the notion of *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* really is primitive, then the question is really a bit of nonsense. Of course, the fact that the question doesn't *seem* confused doesn't mean that it isn't. But the proponent of this “primitivism” about appearing owes us at least a *diagnosis* of the confusion.

The primitivist about appearing might balk at the idea of explaining what seems to be a well-known, ordinary phenomenon (that of something's appearing to have a certain property) in terms of problematic and/or mysterious philosophical posits (e.g., the obtaining of the acquaintance relation, or representation of a proposition). However, this worry over-generates—it's an argument against trying to get a deeper understanding of *anything*. Our theoretical posits are almost always going to be less familiar than our explananda.<sup>91</sup>

Notice that primitivism about appearing is analogous to the criticism of my claim that a condition of adequacy on a theory of perceptual experience is that it can explain the connection between an experience and its doxastic content (see section 1 above). The criticism of this claim was basically that no such explanation is needed—it's just a brute fact that a perceptual experience naturally gives rise to certain beliefs and not others. Similarly, the primitivist insists that no “deeper” account of *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* is required; *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* is just a brute fact (at least with respect to explanations at the level of consciousness).<sup>92</sup> As I did with the criticism discussed above, I will assume that there is *some* explanation in terms of conscious mental states to be had here. I am not alone in making this assumption—in going beyond the theory of appearing to give non-Representationalist accounts of *o*'s appearing *F* to *S*, all the

<sup>91</sup> Moreover, Alex Byrne (2009: 447-8) argues that what the theorist of appearing picks out with '*o*'s appearing *F* to *S*' isn't an ordinary phenomenon well-known to the folk after all.

<sup>92</sup> Of course, *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* will have an explanation in terms of subpersonal perceptual processing.

Relationalists besides Langsam and Alston are tacitly expressing their agreement that this phenomenon is an explanandum, not a primitive. In light of the near-consensus on this matter, I will set aside the view that *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* is a primitive mental property.

The second strategy for addressing the worry that the theory of appearing collapses into the Representational View is to differentiate *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* from *S* perceptually representing the proposition that *o* is *F*, with the aim of showing that the former need not consist in the latter. However, the candidate “differentiations” don't seem very promising for this purpose. For example, one might suggest that while something's appearing to have a certain property is an ordinary phenomenon well-known to the folk, perceptual representation isn't. But this doesn't get us very far—after all, the fact that water isn't known to the pre-chemistry folk as H<sub>2</sub>O certainly doesn't “differentiate” water from H<sub>2</sub>O.<sup>93</sup> Alternatively, one might suggest that while *S* must possess the concept of *F*-ness in order to perceptually represent the proposition that *o* is *F*, *S* need not possess that concept in order for *o* to appear *F* to *S* (Alston 1999: 187). However, many Representationalists deny that concept possession is a necessary condition on perceptual (as opposed to doxastic) representation of propositions. In short, it's not clear that there is any feature of *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* that differentiates it from perceptually representing the proposition that *o* is *F* (at least not in a way that establishes that the former need not consist in the latter).

Finally, the third strategy for responding to the worry at hand is to give an account of what *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* *consists in*, if not perceptual representation—i.e., a distinctively Relationalist explication of *o*'s appearing *F* to *S*. On this strategy, the theory of appearing as stated is supplemented with such an account; the theory of appearing *on its own* isn't enough to establish that we can make do without the notion of perceptual representation in our account of veridical experience. In the next three sections, I will consider various non-representational accounts of what *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* consists in.

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<sup>93</sup> Also see fn. 91 above.



### 3. *Subpersonal representation of properties*

The Relationalist might suggest that, in the explanation of *o*'s appearing *F* to *S*, *F*-ness enters the story only at the subpersonal level. As an example, consider again the banana's looking yellow to me. According to the proposal under consideration, all that's going on at the level of *consciousness* as far as my veridical experience is concerned is that I am acquainted with the banana. Of course, this is not enough to explain why the banana appears *yellow* to me (as opposed to, say, green). Moreover, it doesn't explain why the banana appears to have color, shape, and location properties, but not the property of belonging to Heather. The Relationalist account I'm envisaging explains these facts by saying that the banana's appearing yellow to me is a matter of my visual system's being sensitive to the fact that the banana is yellow. The banana isn't green, and so there's no *fact* of the banana's being green for my visual system to be sensitive to; and my visual system is not sensitive to properties like *belonging to Heather*.<sup>94</sup>

This talk of perceptual sensitivity is supposed to be understood as picking out something going on at the *subpersonal* level (i.e., in certain states of the areas of the brain involved in perceptual processing). So, plausibly, perceptual sensitivity is a matter of representation—that is, what it is for my visual system to be sensitive to, say, yellowness is for my visual system to have the capacity to perceptually represent propositions of the form *that x is yellow*. (As discussed in Chapter 2, this proposal isn't in tension with the Relational View's claim that veridical experience doesn't involve conscious representation of propositions, since the Relationalist can hold that representation is confined to the subpersonal level.) After all, vision scientists characterize the subpersonal aspects of perceptual experience in terms of representation, and Relationalists typically agree that such claims are empirically well-supported. Moreover, while there's room for the idea that subjects of veridical and hallucinatory experiences have fundamentally different states of *consciousness*, it would be quite difficult to maintain that the *subpersonal* state of a veridically perceiving subject is a kind of subpersonal state that the subject of an illusion or hallucination couldn't possibly be in.

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<sup>94</sup> This is not to say that my visual system is *infallibly* sensitive to color facts—after all, I am susceptible to color illusions. Suppose the banana on my desk looks yellow, but is really green. The Relationalist would say that, given certain features of my visual system and the lighting conditions, in this context my visual system is not sensitive to the fact that the banana is green.

The essence of the proposal under consideration is this: *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* is a matter of (i) *S*'s being acquainted with *o* and (ii) *S*'s visual system subpersonally representing a proposition attributing *F*-ness to *o*. The problem with this proposal is that it doesn't do justice to the fact that we are perceptually *conscious* of properties. Plausibly, if we are perceptually conscious of some sort of entity, this fact should be reflected in our account of conscious perceptual experience; in other words, the entities of which we are conscious should figure in our theoretical explications of conscious phenomena. Since this is not so on the proposal under consideration, it is a poor model of the phenomenon of *consciousness* we pick out with phrases like '*o*'s appearing *F* to *S*'.

A related problem for this proposal is that it implies that the sole contribution of a perceptual experience to its doxastic content is the object, while the properties are contributed by subpersonal states of the subject. However, we're looking for an account of *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* that can serve the purpose of explaining the connection between a *conscious* perceptual experience and the belief that *o* is *F*. Another way of framing the question we're pursuing is this: what sort of structure must conscious experience have if we are to explain the fact that a given conscious experience naturally generates certain beliefs and not others? The proposal under consideration seems to presuppose that we cannot explain this fact in terms of conscious perception alone. But this presupposition seems in tension with an idea that underlies much philosophical theorizing about perceptual experience, namely, that conscious experience plays a distinctive, autonomous explanatory role with respect to cognition and behavior.

Finally, the proposal under consideration seems somewhat unstable. If the properties that figure in the doxastic content of a veridical experience are contributed solely by subpersonal states of a subject, why shouldn't we suppose that such states are the sole contributors of the *objects* as well? If we accept the possibility that some aspects of doxastic content are contributed solely by the subpersonal level, there's no obvious barrier to the conclusion that *all* aspects of doxastic content are contributed by the subpersonal level. Arguably, our perceptual systems have the capacity to represent particular objects (see Pylyshyn 2003 and 2007), so it's not as if there is any obvious barrier to be gleaned from empirical work on perception. And to simply insist that there is or must be such a barrier is *ad hoc*. If we follow the proposal under consideration to its

apparent logical conclusion, conscious perceptual experience drops out of the explanation of its doxastic content altogether. That is, there isn't an explanatory connection between a conscious perception and its doxastic content after all; experience turns out to be epiphenomenal with respect to perceptual belief. We all might as well be total "super-duper-blindsighters" (Block 1995)—creatures that lack conscious perceptual experiences altogether, but nevertheless have all the behavioral and cognitive capacities we typically suppose to derive from such experiences.

The problems I just raised rest on the following assumption: that we should be able to give an account of the connection between an experience and its doxastic content without invoking anything beyond our theory of the metaphysical structure of perceptual experience. As with the other assumptions I have made, one might reject this assumption, and I don't have much to say to one who is inclined to reject it. However, as is also the case with the other assumptions I've made, I think my opponents would embrace it. For it's not clear that there's any *point* in giving a psychological account of veridical experience (in terms of either conscious representation *or* acquaintance) if such an account doesn't have any explanatory power of its own. An analogous point can be made about explanations offered by the social sciences. In principle, we could give explanations of the phenomena studied by, say, sociologists in terms of atoms knocking around in the void. The reason that we don't is that we find explanations of these phenomena in *sociological* terms to be more illuminating or useful than those of the "atoms knocking around in the void" variety. Similarly, the point of giving a personal-level psychological account of perceptual experience is that it makes possible illuminating or useful explanations of certain phenomena. (If it *doesn't* make such explanations possible, then we should seriously question whether arguing over which personal-level psychological account is correct is an endeavor worthy of our efforts.)<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> This isn't to say that *all* psychological connections can be explained in personal-level terms. For example, consider haptodysphoria—a condition in which there's a connection between a perceptual experience of some kind (e.g., a tactile experience of velvet) and a strong feeling of revulsion. Presumably, the only explanation of this connection to be had is at the subpersonal level. My point isn't that *all* psychological connections have a personal-level explanation. It's just that *some* do—including paradigmatic cases of experience/belief connections. (Note that there does seem to be a personal-level explanation of the connection between one's feeling of revulsion upon touching velvet and a *fear* of velvet: one comes to fear things that cause feelings of revulsion in one out of a *desire* to avoid such feelings.)

#### 4. *Perceptual acquaintance with properties*

What does the banana's looking *yellow* to me consist in, if not in my perceptually representing the proposition that the banana is yellow at either the personal or subpersonal level? A natural suggestion is that it consists in my seeing the banana and *also* my *seeing yellowness*. In general, *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* amounts to *S* bearing the perceptual relation to *o* and *F*-ness (at least in the case of veridical experience).

However, appeal to the mere fact that the subject of a veridical experience perceives properties is insufficient to establish that the Relationalist can account for veridical experience without appeal to representation. For the Representational View *also* holds that I see yellowness—it's just that, on this view, seeing yellowness involves perceptually representing a proposition to the effect that something is yellow. If the fact that we perceive properties is to help the Relationalist account for veridical experience *without appeal to perceptual representation*, the Relationalist must give an account of what perception of properties consists in, if not perceptual representation.

A natural suggestion is that perception of properties is exactly analogous to perception of objects. As I explained in Chapter 1, the Relationalist holds that one is acquainted (in something like a weakened version of Russell's sense) with material objects in veridical experience—that is, material objects are "given" or "presented" to the subject. *Prima facie*, this need not involve *representing* the object. Similarly, the Relationalist might suggest that the subject of a veridical experience is acquainted with some of the properties of material objects, where this need not involve consciously representing propositions that attribute properties to those objects.

What does *S*'s being acquainted with *F*-ness amount to? Well, one thing is certain: either we explain something's appearing *F* to *S* in terms of *S*'s being acquainted with *F*-ness, or the other way around. On the latter option, *S*'s being acquainted with *F*-ness simply consists in something's appearing *F* to *S*. While this seems like a plausible account of *S*'s being acquainted with *F*-ness, recall that the task at hand for the Relationalist is to give a non-representational account of what *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* consists in. If *S*'s acquaintance with *F*-ness is explained in terms of something's appearing *F* to *S*, then something's appearing *F* to *S* cannot be explained in terms of acquaintance with *F*-ness.

Thus, if the appeal to acquaintance with properties is to be of any help to the Relationalist in this dialectical context, *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* must be explained in terms of *S*'s being acquainted with *F*-ness.<sup>96</sup> Note that it's not sufficient to say just that *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* consists in *S*'s being acquainted with *o* and with *F*-ness. *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* involves the obtaining of a certain *relation* between *o* and *F*-ness, but *S*'s being acquainted with *o* and with *F*-ness does not determine the right relation. This point is made vivid by considering a veridical experience of more than one object. Suppose that I see a yellow banana and a red tomato. On the proposal under consideration, I am acquainted with the banana, the tomato, yellowness, and redness (in addition to shape and location properties, but let's ignore those for simplicity's sake). However, if I were having an experience of a *yellow tomato* and a *red banana*, I would be acquainted with exactly the same sorts of objects and properties. In other words, we may ask: why does the doxastic content of my experience include the proposition that the banana is yellow and the tomato is red, rather than the proposition that *the banana* is red and *the tomato* is yellow?<sup>97</sup> To answer this question, the Relationalist must say more than just that I am acquainted with each object and property: perhaps that my acquaintance with the banana obtains in virtue of my acquaintance with the banana, or vice versa, and spelling out exactly what these claims come to may be no easy task.

In any case, a dilemma arises when we try to specify what it would be to be acquainted with a property. In veridically perceiving the yellow banana on my desk, either I am acquainted with an *abstract* entity (the property of yellowness), or with something *particular* (a particular instance of yellowness, a "trope").<sup>98</sup> As for the first explication of acquaintance with yellowness: it's far from clear that we can be perceptually acquainted with abstract entities, since it's far from clear that we can causally interact with them. Whatever the Relationalist's acquaintance relation amounts to, it's not supposed to *supplant* the causal relations that obtain between a subject and the objects of her experience—the obtaining of certain causal relations between the objects of

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<sup>96</sup> At least in the case of veridical experience. Johnston is the only Relationalist who thinks that this account can be extended to illusions—he holds the subject of an illusion is acquainted with uninstantiated properties and relations (see Chapter 1). Disjunctivist Relationalists will explain *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* in terms of their preferred account of illusion (see Chapter 2, section 4a).

<sup>97</sup> This point is analogous to Jackson's "many properties" objection to adverbialism (1977: 64).

<sup>98</sup> For an analogous dilemma for the claim that a hallucinating subject perceives properties, see Pautz 2007: 515-9.

experience and the subject is what makes the obtaining of the acquaintance relation possible in the first place. So for this explication of the notion of acquaintance with yellowness to work, it would have to be possible for us to causally interact with abstracta.

Johnston argues that the impossibility of causal interaction with abstracta is actually an embarrassment for the *Representationalist*, on the grounds that causal interaction with abstracta is required for the typical Representationalist explanation of how we *represent* abstracta (2007: 242). But it's not clear that this is so. It could be that the ability to represent certain properties is something we inherit from our evolutionary history. The rough idea is that upon one's first perceptual encounter with, say, a red thing, one's capacity to represent color is activated, thus immediately enabling one to perceptually represent redness. But, one might wonder, how did our species acquire this capacity in the first place? Wouldn't the initial acquisition of this capacity require causal interaction with what is represented (e.g., redness?). Not necessarily. It could be the case that our ancestors acquired the ability to represent redness by repeated encounters with particular red things—by “abstracting away” from the particulars encountered to representations of redness in general. Somewhere along the way, the ability to represent redness became innate. Of course, this is all half-baked armchair speculation about an empirical matter. But my point is just that if something broadly along these lines is *possible*, then our capacity to *represent* abstracta doesn't require causal interaction with abstracta.<sup>99</sup>

In any case, the impossibility of causal interaction with abstracta may be an embarrassment for *Johnston's* view, in light of his account of hallucination. Recall that Johnston holds that the subject of a hallucination is acquainted with an uninstantiated sensible profile, i.e., a complex of properties and relations. Since the sensible profile with which the hallucinating subject is acquainted is *uninstantiated*, it isn't a complex of property *instances*. Thus, it must be

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<sup>99</sup> A related point can be made about Johnston's claim that our ability to acquire knowledge of novel properties by hallucination can be explained only on the assumption that hallucination involves acquaintance with *something*. To take one of Johnston's examples, one can come to know what *supersaturated red* is like only by hallucinating or after-imaging. (Supersaturated red is a shade of red that cannot be instantiated by anything, which is why it cannot be perceived.) Assuming that coming to know what a property is like requires acquaintance with it, it follows that one must be acquainted with something when one hallucinates or afterimages supersaturated red (Johnston 2004: 146). However, we could reject the assumption that coming to know what a property is like requires acquaintance with it. Perhaps the ability to represent supersaturated red just comes along with the general ability to represent colors, and so I can come to know what supersaturated red is like if circumstances conspire to get my visual system into a state that counts as representing that property.

a complex of abstracta, in which case Johnston owes an explanation of how one could be acquainted with something one cannot stand in causal relations with.<sup>100</sup>

But I digress. What about the second explication of acquaintance with properties, in terms of tropes? To assess this proposal, we need to have a clearer sense of what tropes are supposed to be. They are supposed to be "...particulars, not universals, distinct from the concrete particulars they characterize...[they] have been variously called 'property (and relation) instances', 'abstract particulars', 'concrete properties', 'unit properties (and relations)', 'quality (and relation) bits', [and] 'individual accidents'" (Bacon 2008). Take, for example, the yellow banana on my desk. The basic idea of trope theory is that the metaphysical structure of the thing on my desk includes an instance or a particular bit of yellowness, which *isn't* to be identified with the banana. This idea can be elaborated in a number of ways. One elaboration worth noting in this context is the idea that that the particular bit of yellowness I'm acquainted with could not have been had by anything but this banana, i.e., that tropes are necessarily associated with the objects that have them. This development of trope theory is especially congenial to the Relational View, since it provides for a natural story about what it is to perceive *o* in virtue of perceiving *F*-ness. If a trope can be had only by the object that actually has it, then it's plausible that acquaintance with that trope makes for intimate contact with that object—in being acquainted with that trope, one is acquainted with a feature of the object that distinguishes it from all other objects.<sup>101</sup>

Of course, the viability of the explication of *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* in terms of acquaintance with tropes requires that there are such entities as tropes in the first place. There are grounds for skepticism about whether there are any such entities—it's not unreasonable to suspect that the notion of an "abstract particular" is at bottom incoherent. But this isn't the place to validate such skepticism with an argument. My point is that if the Relationalist chooses to account for property perception in terms of tropes, she incurs the burden of giving some compelling reason to believe

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<sup>100</sup> For the seeds of Johnston's response to this challenge, see his 2007: 256.

<sup>101</sup> Johnston insists on distinguishing *qualities* (e.g. vermillion) from *properties* (e.g., being vermillion) (2007: 262). As best I can tell, this distinction is basically between *what is instantiated* and *the property of instantiating it*. In any event, Johnston's qualities don't seem to be tropes: tropes aren't what's instantiated, they're instantiations. This distinction doesn't matter for our purposes, so I will continue to use the word 'property' in such a way that it is ambiguous between 'property' and 'quality' in Johnston's senses of the words.

in them. The Relationalist would have to explain what exactly is gained by characterizing the world in terms of tropes, instead of in terms of objects and the (abstract) properties they instantiate. Given the other pressing tasks on the Relationalist's docket (in particular, giving viable accounts of illusion and hallucination), this is not a desirable commitment.

In short, the Relationalist cannot explain  $o$ 's appearing  $F$  to  $S$  in terms of acquaintance with  $F$ -ness unless she can give an acceptable explanation of what acquaintance with  $F$ -ness amounts to. Given the difficulty of this task, the Relationalist would do best to look elsewhere for a non-representational account of  $o$ 's appearing  $F$  to  $S$ .

### **5. *Perceptual acquaintance with truthmakers***

Instead of claiming that I am acquainted with two entities, the banana and yellowness, the Relationalist might try to circumvent the problems raised in the previous section by claiming that I am acquainted with just *one* entity—some sort of “unity” of the banana and yellowness. However, what sort of entity must this “unity” be, if being acquainted with it is to account for the connection between my experience and its doxastic content?

One proposal is that I am perceptually acquainted with the *proposition* that the banana is yellow—in general, that one literally perceives the propositions that one's experience naturally generates belief in. This proposal has a straightforward account of my relationship to yellowness; specifically, that I perceive a proposition attributing yellowness to the banana. However, as we noted earlier (Chapter 1), the claim that we perceive propositions is implausible.

Instead of taking the objects of experience to be bearers of truth and falsity (i.e. propositions), the Relationalist could follow Johnston in taking the objects of veridical experience to be entities *in virtue of which* propositions are true or false—namely, *truthmakers*. According to Johnston, truthmakers are composed of “objects, stuffs, states, and events” (2006: 280). For example, the truthmaker for the proposition that the banana on my desk is yellow is just *this banana's being yellow* (an object's being in a certain state).

Whether the appeal to truthmakers is of any use to the Relationalist depends on how the subjects of veridical experiences are supposed to be related to them. One possibility is that we are acquainted with truthmakers in virtue of being acquainted with the objects and properties that



constitute them. This seems to be Johnston's view: as we saw in Chapter 1, he thinks that veridical and illusory experiences involve relations to the same sorts of entities, namely, objects and complexes of properties and relations (sensible profiles). The subject of an illusory experience of, say, a green banana that looks yellow is not acquainted with a *truthmaker* for the proposition that the banana is yellow—after all, it is *false* that the banana is yellow. Rather, the subject is acquainted with the banana and a sensible profile including yellowness. If the primary objects of a *veridical experience* are objects and sensible profiles, then the subject of a veridical experience is acquainted with truthmakers in only a derivative sense (i.e., in virtue of being acquainted with objects and sensible profiles). But now the following question arises: what exactly does acquaintance with sensible profiles consist in? This version of the appeal to truthmakers quickly collapses into the proposal discussed in the previous subsection.

So if the appeal to truthmakers is to be of any help, the Relationalist must hold that truthmakers are the *primary* objects of veridical experience, i.e., that we are acquainted with objects and properties *in virtue of perceiving truthmakers*. This proposal offers a non-representational construal of *o*'s appearing *F* to *S*—specifically, in the case of veridical experience, *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* consists in *S*'s acquaintance with a truthmaker, viz., *o*'s being *F*. Acquaintance with truthmakers is fundamental; acquaintance with objects and properties is to be explained in terms of acquaintance with truthmakers.

The next step is to specify the function from the Relationalist's characterization of veridical experience (e.g., the subject's being acquainted with *o*'s being *F*) to the experience's doxastic content (e.g., the proposition that *o* is *F*). Why does being acquainted with *o*'s being *F* naturally generate the belief that *o* is *F*? The natural Relationalist answer is this: because *what one is acquainted with makes the proposition true*. This answer suggests that the doxastic content of a veridical experience consists of the propositions made true by the truthmakers with which one is acquainted.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Of course, the Relationalist will have to give some other account of the doxastic content of non-veridical perceptual experiences (since in those cases one isn't acquainted with truthmakers that correspond to the experience's doxastic content). This account will draw on the Relationalist's preferred account of non-veridical perceptual experiences. For example, on Martin's view, the mental nature of hallucination is exhausted by the property of being subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience of a certain kind. The doxastic content of a hallucination would presumably be the *object-independent* propositions that the truthmakers perceived in a subjectively indistinguishable veridical experience would make true. (The restriction to object-independent

This won't quite do as it stands, though. According to the proposal under consideration, the truthmaker I'm currently acquainted with (the banana's being yellow) is a truthmaker for the proposition that Heather's banana is yellow. But this proposition isn't part of the doxastic content of my experience (although this proposition can be inferred from the doxastic content plus the proposition that I own this banana). Also, the banana's being yellow is a truthmaker for the proposition that either this banana is yellow or  $2 + 2 = 4$ . But this proposition isn't part of the doxastic content of my experience, either. But these counterexamples can be easily avoided by modifying the proposal as follows: the doxastic content of a veridical experience consists of the propositions such that the truthmakers perceived are *necessary and sufficient* for their truth. The banana's being yellow isn't sufficient for the truth of the proposition that Heather's banana is yellow—the truth of this proposition also requires the obtaining of a certain “ownership fact” (the fact that Heather owns this banana). And of course, the banana's being yellow isn't necessary for the truth of the proposition that either this banana is yellow or  $2 + 2 = 4$ —this proposition will be true long after the banana turns brown. So it seems that the Relationalist account of *o*'s appearing *F* to *S* in terms of truthmakers can specify a plausible function from its characterization of a veridical experience to its doxastic content.

However, the problem with proposal that we are acquainted with truthmakers is that it's far from clear whether there are any such entities as truthmakers, and *a fortiori*, whether there are any such entities to be acquainted with. First, we cannot read the existence of truthmakers off of our ordinary talk—in particular, we need not take the locution ‘the banana's being yellow’ to refer to a truthmaker. ‘The banana's being yellow’ plausibly refers to the fact that the banana is yellow, and the fact that the banana is yellow appears to be nothing more than the *true proposition* that the banana is yellow. (*That the banana is yellow* is both a fact *and* something I believe, and the things I believe are propositions.) And of course, if ‘the banana's being yellow’ refers to the proposition that the banana is yellow, then it does not refer to a distinct entity in

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propositions is required because those truthmakers make true certain *object-dependent* propositions that aren't part of the doxastic content of a hallucination.) The account of the doxastic content of illusion will be more complicated, and it will be *especially* complicated for Brewer's account of illusion (discussed in Chapter 2). For on Brewer's view, the subject of an illusion is acquainted with a truthmaker (e.g., *o*'s being relevantly visually similar to a paradigmatic yellow object), but the truthmaker perceived doesn't make for the truth of the experience's doxastic content (that *o* is yellow).

virtue of which that proposition is true. In short, truthmakers are not entities introduced by semanticists to account for our talk about the world; they are *metaphysical posits*—a point which proponents of truthmakers usually concede.

Second, there does not appear to be any good argument for these metaphysical posits. The claim that there are truthmakers is usually supported by something along the lines of the following platitude: if a proposition is true, there is something that makes it true. But this platitude counts as an argument for truthmakers only if we must take the ‘something’ as quantifying into name position, i.e., only if we must interpret the platitude as saying that there is *an entity* that makes the proposition true. This interpretation is not so easy to cash out—for example, as has been much discussed, it is not obvious what entities make for the truth of propositions expressed by negative existential statements.<sup>103</sup> In any case, Williamson proposes a plausible alternative interpretation of the platitude which takes the ‘something’ as quantifying into *sentence* position (for details, see his 1999: 258). So it is far from clear whether the platitude provides any support for the claim that there are truthmakers.<sup>104</sup>

In his paper “Better than Mere Knowledge? The Function of Sensory Awareness”, Johnston presents what can be construed as an argument for truthmakers from considerations having to do with perceptual experience. Johnston suggests that a certain sort of illusory experience can be adequately explained only if we can be acquainted with truthmakers. The sort of experience Johnston has in mind is a “veridical illusion”—roughly, an experience in which everything perceived is as it appears to be, but there is still some sense in which the experience is defective. His main example of veridical illusion takes place in the context of the following case:

Suppose two twins [I’ll call them ‘Mary-Kate’ and ‘Ashley’] are of the same height. Still, the first looks taller than the second because the second is wearing a football jumper with horizontal blue and white stripes. It so happens that the two twins are walking around in an Ames room, a room whose height is artificially compressed in one corner, so that people as they approach that corner look increasingly taller than they are. The subject is

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<sup>103</sup> For discussion of this challenge, see, e.g., Merricks 2007 and Soames forthcoming.

<sup>104</sup> Of course, there are responses to the challenges I have alluded to. But this is not the place to engage with the intricacies of the debate about truthmakers. My point is just that the burden is on the Relationalist to offer compelling responses to these challenges, and it is not clear that this burden can be successfully discharged.

looking at the twins walking around the Ames room...there are some pairs of positions in the room where the illusory effects of the horizontal stripes exactly offset the illusory effects of the Ames room. Call these pairs of positions “sweet spots.” (Johnston 2006: 272-3)

When a subject looks at the twins while they are standing in “sweet spots”, he is the subject of a veridical illusion—the twins look to be the same height, and they are in fact the same height. But intuitively, there’s something defective about this experience. An adequate account of this veridical illusion must explain the sense in which this experience is defective.

According to Johnston, the Representational View fails at this task. On the Representational View, both the veridical illusion and a *non-defective* veridical experience of the twins consist in representing the twins as being the same height. Thus, we cannot explain what’s defective about the veridical illusion in terms of the experience’s representational content. Johnston concludes that the only adequate explanation that remains is in terms of acquaintance with truthmakers: the experience is defective because the subject isn’t acquainted with the truthmaker *Mary-Kate’s and Ashley’s sameness in height*.

However, it’s not clear that the lack of acquaintance with such a truthmaker is the only possible explanation of the experience’s defectiveness. We can see this by asking *why* the subject of the veridical illusion isn’t acquainted with the truthmaker. Presumably, the answer to this question is that certain facts about the subject’s environment (e.g., the Ames room setup) and certain facts about his perceptual system (e.g., how it is disposed to interpret input having to do with horizontal lines) interfere with the subject’s ability to perceive his environment. But now the following question arises: why can’t we just account for the defectiveness of the veridical illusion by appealing to the fact that the subject’s ability to perceive his environment is being interfered with in a certain way? Why must we take the further step of appealing to a lack of acquaintance with a truthmaker?

One possible answer (which, given what I’ve said above, I’m not in a good position to object to) is that we should have some sort of *psychological* explanation of the experience’s defectiveness—an explanation not merely in terms of the conditions in which one has the

experience, but in terms of the structure of the experience itself. I proposed above that a condition of adequacy on theories of perceptual experience is that it should be able to provide a psychological explanation of the connection between experience and perceptual belief. I noted that it is possible to deny that any such explanation is needed, but that as things stand no party to the debate would be amenable to doing so. Similarly, one might suggest that a condition of adequacy on theories of perceptual experience is that it should be able to provide a psychological explanation of the defectiveness of veridical illusion. Again, it is possible to deny that such explanation is needed, but it seems rather *ad hoc* to do so while insisting on a psychological explanation for the connection between experience and belief.

However, it seems that the Representationalist does have a psychological explanation of the defectiveness of veridical illusion at her disposal after all. Specifically, she can say that what's defective about the Ames room veridical illusion is that the subject doesn't *perceive* the relation of sameness in height that obtains between Mary-Kate and Ashley. According to the Representationalist, a necessary condition on perceiving a property is representing it. But this isn't sufficient for perceiving a property. One might propose that a further condition that must obtain is that the representation of the property is caused in a "non-deviant" way. Now, it's a non-trivial project to spell out exactly what it is for a representation of a property to be caused in a non-deviant way. But whichever way we choose to spell it out, a representation of a property brought about in conditions of perception that interfere with a subject's ability to perceive the world will count as deviantly caused. Moreover, note that the Relationalist's explanation of why the subject isn't acquainted with the truthmaker is similarly incomplete. For we don't yet have an answer to the following question: how exactly do the interfering factors (the Ames room, the horizontal striped shirt, the principles governing the subject's perceptual system) block the relation of acquaintance from obtaining? If the Representationalist owes us necessary and sufficient conditions for property perception, then the Relationalist owes us necessary and sufficient conditions for acquaintance with truthmakers. The Relationalist and the Representationalist are in the same boat with respect to their psychological explanations of the defectiveness of the veridical illusion; thus, veridical illusion doesn't give us a reason to believe in truthmakers.

In short, the attempt to give a non-representational account of  $o$ 's appearing  $F$  to  $S$  in terms of acquaintance with truthmakers stands or falls with truthmaker theory, and for all any Relationalist has said, the truthmaker theory may well fall.

### **6. *The doxastic content of experience and the Representational View***

Suppose that we aren't comfortable admitting tropes or truthmakers into our ontology, and on that basis we reject the Relational View in favor of the Representational View (or perhaps the hybrid Relational/Representational View). As I mentioned in Chapter 1, there are many intra-Representational View disputes. An appeal to the fact that perceptual experience has doxastic content may help resolve some (but certainly not all) of them.

The most straightforward Representationalist account of the connection between an experience and its doxastic content is that the latter *just is* (at least part of) the experience's representational content; i.e., that the experience's doxastic content consists of (at least some of) the propositions represented in experience. So in the absence of compelling reasons to the contrary, this is the account we should give of the connection between an experience and its doxastic content. This stance has ramifications for several intra-Representational View disputes.

First, if the doxastic content of an experience includes an object-dependent proposition (e.g., that *this very banana* is yellow), then we should say that the experience consists in the subject representing that object-dependent proposition. Similarly, if the doxastic content of experience includes propositions attributing natural kind properties to objects, then all other things being equal, we should say that experience involves representation of natural kind properties.<sup>105</sup> And if the sorts of propositions we believe and think are Russellian (say), then we should hold that experience consists in representation of Russellian propositions too. It's certainly not impossible for a version of the Representational View that posits entirely different cognitive and perceptual contents to explain the connection between the experience and its doxastic content—such a view might be able to specify an appropriate function from the experience's representational content to its doxastic content. But all other things being equal, the

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<sup>105</sup> One might reject the antecedent, however: perhaps my belief that this is a yellow banana, while naturally generated by my veridical experience of the banana, is not strictly speaking *non-inferential*. Instead, it might be the result of inference from the representational content of my experience (e.g. that this is yellow, crescent-shaped, and so on) and a background belief to the effect that yellow, crescent-shaped things are bananas (see section 1 above).

simpler view that identifies an experience's doxastic content with (at least some portion of) its representational content is to be preferred.

However, there are other intra-Representational View disputes that don't seem resolvable by appeal to the fact that experiences have doxastic content. For example, we may still ask whether the representational content of an experience outstrips its doxastic content—as it would if perceptual experience has “nonconceptual” representational content. (The view that the content of perceptual experience is *entirely* nonconceptual is undermined by the considerations of the previous paragraph. If the representational content of experience consists entirely of propositions the subject cannot entertain in thought, then the doxastic content of an experience obviously cannot be identified with any subset of the experience's representational content.) Also, the fact that perceptual experience has doxastic content does not obviously bear on longstanding disputes about the relationship between representational content and phenomenal character. The appeal to doxastic content can only get us so far in determining the nature of perceptual experience.

## **7. Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have explored the challenge faced by the Relationalist of giving an account of property perception without invoking conscious representation. We considered four accounts. Two of them (the theory of appearing and the appeal to subpersonal representation) failed to offer a complete account of the perceptual phenomena under investigation. The other two accounted for property perception in terms of acquaintance with certain entities (tropes or truthmakers). These accounts are promising only if there really are such entities out there for us to be acquainted with.

Since I haven't argued that there are no such things as tropes or truthmakers, I haven't established that the Relational View is inadequate. However, our exploration of the challenge the Relationalist faces in accounting for property perception has revealed something important: the Relationalist cannot *just* be a metaphysician of the mind. She must also justify the controversial metaphysical claims about the rest of the world that her metaphysics of the mind presupposes. The Representational View, by contrast, is much more “metaphysically innocent.” It is neutral on whether there are tropes or universals, or on whether or not there are truthmakers. All the

Representational View really requires to get off the ground is a theory of intentionality and the existence of propositions. Of course, these aren't entirely unproblematic requirements—but they are considerably less controversial than the requirements of the Relational View.

Another way of putting the moral of this chapter is as follows. Many of the beliefs naturally generated by a given perceptual experience are beliefs to the effect that a certain object has such-and-such properties. The core issue between the Relationalist and the Representationalist is whether this “object/property structure” is to be found in the perceptual experience (in virtue of consisting in representation of a proposition to the effect that a certain object has such-and-such properties) or whether it is only to be found in *what is perceived*. The moral of this chapter is that for the latter to be the case, some rather controversial metaphysical claims must be established—controversial enough to warrant skepticism about the Relational View.



## Conclusion

It's time to take stock of what has been accomplished in the preceding pages, and what has yet to be done in order to settle the debate between the Relationalist and the Representationalist.

As for what this dissertation has accomplished: In Chapter 1, the Relational View was clarified. We started with the suspiciously trivial-sounding idea that veridical perceptual experience is a matter of perceiving things in one's environment, and we refined it into the claim that veridical experience *solely* consists in the obtaining of the relation of *acquaintance* between the subject and certain material entities, and the obtaining of a (perhaps distinct) perceptual relation between the subject and some of the properties of those entities. Also, we made some headway in delineating and evaluating the motivations offered for the Relational View by its proponents. The motivations from introspection and Campbell's motivation (from the alleged role experience plays in explaining our capacity to represent propositions about particular objects) were found to be on shaky ground. However, Fish's motivation (from circumventing a hard question about phenomenal character) may be sound, pending further elucidation and refinement.

In Chapter 2, we considered a number of objections to the Relational View. We found that the objections from subjective indistinguishability, phenomenal sameness, and scientific work on perception carry little to no force. However, we also saw that the Relationalist faces a substantial challenge in accounting for non-veridical perceptual experience. Nevertheless, some progress was made in articulating the Relationalist options. As for illusions, I elaborated and defended an account of illusion along the lines of Bill Brewer's (in terms of perception of "visually relevant similarity" properties instantiated by the objects perceived). As for hallucinations, I argued that contrary to what most Relationalists seem to think, they need not endorse the counterintuitive claim that what it's like to have a veridical experience must be different from what it's like to hallucinate. Also, while "negative" accounts of hallucination (e.g., in terms of the property of being subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience of a certain kind) face an uphill battle, I sketched a tentative argument for a "positive" account of hallucination (e.g., in terms of representational properties).

In Chapter 3, I proposed a condition of adequacy on theories of perceptual experience, viz., that such a theory should be able to accommodate the explanatory roles perceptual experiences play. (This is especially significant if it turns out that the Relationalist can give adequate accounts of non-veridical experiences—in that case, we may be able to break the impasse by invoking this condition of adequacy.) I argued that the Relational View cannot easily meet this condition—in particular, that it can explain the connection between a veridical experience and the beliefs to which it naturally gives rise only given certain rather controversial metaphysical commitments.

Although much has been accomplished, much still remains to be done. I will characterize this “to do” list in terms of what each side of the debate about experience’s metaphysical structure must do in order to claim victory.

The Relationalist must complete several “defensive” and “offensive” tasks. The defensive tasks involve articulating the view and defending it from objections that have yet to be fully addressed. This first defensive task is to clarify its motivations, given that the ones currently on offer are either problematic or underdeveloped. Second, the Relationalist must give an adequate account of non-veridical perceptual experiences—in light of the exploration of the options in Chapter 2, I recommend that the Relationalist pursue something along the lines of Brewer’s account of illusion and a “positive” account of hallucination. (As I argued in Chapter 2, the pursuit of a positive account of hallucination would radically alter the dialectical terrain, and so this option would require further clarification of the resulting revised version of the Relational View.) Third, the Relationalist must defend the metaphysical commitments required to explain the connection between an experience and the beliefs it naturally gives rise to.

The offensive tasks involve undermining the opposing views—the Representational View, as well as the hybrid Relational/Representational View (i.e., the view on which veridical experience involves both acquaintance with material entities *and* the subject’s perceptually representing a proposition). In particular, the Relationalist must establish that we have no need to appeal to representation of propositions in our theory of perceptual experience. This would show only that the Representational View and the hybrid view are unmotivated; it would be better still to show that there’s some phenomenon that they should be able to account for but can’t, or that

they cannot be coherently articulated, or that they depend on indefensible assumptions. (Attempts to carry out the latter two sorts of tasks can be found in Brewer 2006 and Johnston 2007, respectively, but I will leave evaluation of these attempts to another time.)

A proponent of the Representational View must also carry out several defensive and offensive tasks. As for the defensive tasks, the Representationalist should also clarify his view's motivations—the claim that the Representational View is an improvement on the Sense-Datum View isn't sufficient motivation if it turns out that the Relationalist can succeed in her defensive tasks. Second, the Representationalist must deal with the objections to the view that I haven't discussed here (e.g., those found in Brewer 2006 and Johnston 2007).

As for the offensive tasks, the Representationalist must undermine the opposition—the Relational View and the hybrid view. First, he must show that there is no need to appeal to the obtaining of the acquaintance relation in our account of veridical experience by defusing the motivations offered for the Relational View (some progress was made on this task in Chapter 1). But again, it would be better to show not only that the opposing views are unmotivated, but also that they *fail* as theories of perceptual experience. With respect to the Relational View, there are at least two options here. One is to argue that the Relational View cannot provide an adequate account of illusion and/or hallucination. The other is to argue that the metaphysical commitments the Relational View must make in order to accommodate the role experience plays in explaining perceptual belief are false: i.e., that there are no such entities as tropes or truthmakers. I suspect that the second option is the path of least resistance, and so it's the one I plan to pursue.

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