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# Defending the Content View of Perceptual Experience

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### ***Declaration***

Pursuant to the University of Edinburgh's Postgraduate Research Assessment Regulations (section 2.5), I hereby declare that the thesis has been composed by me, that the work is my own, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Diego Zucca, 15/07/2013

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This work is dedicated to my love, who made it possible, Carolina Ozan.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a defense of the Content View on perceptual experience, of the idea that our perceptual experiences represent the world as being a certain way and so have representational content. Three main issues are addressed in this work.

Firstly, I try to show that the Content View fits very well both with the logical behaviour of ordinary ascriptions of seeing-episodes and related experiential episodes, and with our pre-theoretical intuitions about what perceiving and experiencing ultimately are: that preliminary analysis speaks for the *prima facie* plausibility of such a view.

Secondly, I put forward a detailed account of perceptual episodes in semantic terms, by articulating and arguing for a specific version of the Content View. I provide arguments for the following theses: Perceptual content is two-layered so it involves an iconic level and a discrete or proto-propositional level (which roughly maps the *seeing-as* ascriptions in ordinary practices). Perceptual content is singular and object-dependent or *de re*, so it includes environmental objects as its semantic constituents. The phenomenal character of perceptual experience is co-determined by the represented properties together with the Mode (ex. Visual Mode), but not by the perceived objects: that is what I call an impure representationalism. Perceptual content is 'Russellian': it consists of worldly objects, properties and relations. Both perceptual content and phenomenal character are 'wide' or determined by environmental factors, thus there is no Fregean, narrow perceptual content.

Thirdly, I show that such a version of the Content View can cope with the objections which are typically moved against the Content View as such by the advocates of (anti-intentionalist versions of) disjunctivism. I myself put forward a moderately disjunctivist version of the Content View, according to which perceptual relations (illusory or veridical) must be told apart from hallucinations as mental states of a different kind. Such a disjunctivism is 'moderate' insofar as it allows genuinely relational perceptual experiences and hallucinations to share a positive phenomenal character, contrary to what Radical Disjunctivism *cum* Naïve Realism holds.

Showing that the Content View vindicates our pre-theoretical intuitions and does justice of our ordinary ascriptive practices, articulating a detailed and argued version of the Content View, and showing that such a version is not vulnerable to the standard objections recently moved to the Content View by the disjunctive part, all that can be considered as a big, multifaceted Argument for the Content View.

# DEENDING THE CONTENT VIEW OF PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE

Diego Zucca

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## Introduction

This is a dissertation about the Content View on perceptual experience – in particular, on visual experience – about the idea that perceptual experiences have representational content. Its global aim is that of arguing for a certain version of the Content View which can meet the *desiderata* of a satisfactory theory of perceptual experience, on the one hand, and which can be defended from the main criticisms that have been moved against it, specially from the disjunctivist part, on the other. This global aim is articulated in many different arguments, discussions and specific proposals, which develop into three big lines of inquiry.

Firstly, I will show that the Content View fits well with ordinary ascriptions of visual episodes and visual experiences. Ordinary ways of talking about seeing and experiencing embed deep and pre-theoretical intuitions about what the ascribed episodes and states are, or at least seem to be. Capturing the commonsensical intuitions about the matter and making sense of the ordinary ways of talking about the matter, is a relevant virtue for a philosophical theory, even if it may well be that our pre-theoretical intuitions are wrong and our ordinary ways of talking are confused. From a methodological point of view, showing that the Content View respects and vindicates such pre-theoretical intuitions and ways of talking, is not an arbitrary celebration of vulgarity. Having such virtues does not amount to being true, of course, but still, a theory which has such virtues is, *ceteris paribus*, to be preferred to a theory which lacks them. So, showing that the Content View has these virtues counts as an argument to its plausibility, at least *prima facie*.

Secondly, I will argue for a certain detailed version of the Content View, by discussing the main issues raised within the debate on the Content View, and I will take a stand toward each of these issues so to produce a systematic picture involving arguments and commitments concerning: the many types and layers of perceptual content, the semantic structure of perceptual content, the way objects and properties feature in perceptual content, the relation between phenomenal character and representational content, the externalism/internalism debate on perceptual content

and character, the issue about whether perceptual content is Fregean or Russellian.

Thirdly, I will try to defend the Content View – after having spelled out a specific and detailed version of it – from the principal criticisms moved to it by the advocates of the recently revived Naïve Realism, based on a new form of radical disjunctivism about the relation between successful perceptions and deceptive perceptions. I will show that *some* of these criticism can be, so to speak, embedded into the Content View, far from defeating it. Indeed the version of the Content View I articulate is a form of moderate disjunctivism. But I will argue that some other criticisms, according to which the Content View should just be abandoned, can be addressed and coped with by the Content View. As a result, my specific version of the Content View is vindicated and is shown to be the most promising view in avoiding the problems that are pointed to by their opponents and wrongly considered by them as if they were problems weighing on the Content View *as such*.

To organically develop these three lines of inquiry I will proceed as follows.

The Chapter I is introductory. I systematically analyze the logically and semantically relevant features of ordinary ascriptions and self-ascriptions of visual episodes and experiences. Firstly, I propose a list of necessary and sufficient conditions for a subject to be said to be *seeing* something, then I argue that such conditions are highly plausible. The logical behavior of seeing-ascriptions is analyzed, like 'S sees O', 'S sees an F'. Secondly, I move on to consider how *seeing-that* ascriptions behave and what seeing-that involve, in cases like 'S sees that P', 'S sees that *a* is F'. I individuate certain features of that ascriptive contexts (opacity, concept-involvement, propositionality, factivity) and argue that seeing-that is a fully fledged propositional attitude which amounts to *coming to know by visual means*. Then I consider *seeing-as* ascriptions and their behaviour, expressed by a three-places relation as 'S sees *a* as an F'. Seeing-as is intermediate between object seeing and seeing-that, it presupposes the first and is presupposed by the second. I show that ascribing a *seeing-as* episode amount to ascribing a positive, recursive, vision-based recognitional disposition, and I discuss the relation between such ascriptions and the evaluability of such episodes as mistaken or accurate.

After having treated object-seeing (seeing *X*), propositional seeing (seeing that *P*) and recognitional seeing (seeing *a* as an *F*), I move on to consider the ascription of experiential predicates like 'looking', 'seeming' and 'appearing' in their different uses, roles, applications in ordinary sentences. In discussing specially look-ascriptions – helped by the relative literature – I make explicit the relations between the different senses in which a 'looking' may be ascribed, an epistemic sense (it looks to *S* as if *a* is *F*), a comparative sense (*A* looks like *B*), a phenomenological sense (“the penny looks elliptical to me from here”). I question the independence of a phenomenological use of 'looks'. Then I argue, by re-articulating a point already hold by Sellars, that 'looks *F*' conceptually and logically depends on 'is *F*'.

Such a taxonomical survey is a way of getting into the matter of perception with a clearer grip on certain fundamental distinctions, both conceptual and terminological. As Austin opportunely suggested, for sure ordinary language is not the last word; yet, it is the first.

In Chapter II I introduce the Belief-Theory of perception, and point out to some of its basic virtues. I start with introducing the Belief-Theory itself and locating it in the classical debate on perception between Sense-Data theorists, Direct Realists, and Adverbialists. By showing its advantages in treating perception in representational terms – beliefs are representations – I consider its difficulties, the philosophical ones, on the one hand, and the problems it encounters before some experimental evidences, on the other. The philosophical problems are related to its phenomenological inaptness, and to the different behaviour of perceiving something to be *F* from believing that something is *F* (the second being concepts-involving, entailing inferential sensitivity and demanding constraints on rationality). The experimental evidences I have focused on (Inattentional- and Change Blindness, Sperling Experiment, Visual Associative Agnosia, Optic Ataxia, Blindsight) variously suggest that there is seeing without noticing, seeing without believing and also belief-acquiring through perception without perceptual experience, so perceptual experience cannot be reduced to belief-acquiring.

In Chapter III, I will go on to introduce the Content View as a view that can embed

the virtues of the Belief-Theory – as a semantic, representational account of perception – without falling onto the philosophical and experimental weaknesses focused on above. The first crucial move is that of introducing the notion of non-conceptual content and substituting it to the doxastic account involved in the Belief-Theory. I argue that if perceptions are considered as non-conceptual representations, the Content View can avoid all the difficulties encountered by the Belief-Theory. A non-conceptual content is phenomenologically apt, does justice of the difference from O's visually looking F to S and S's believing that *a* is F (the last being concept-involving, entailing inference-sensitivity and rational capacities on the part of S), and has no special problems before the experimental data (a nonconceptual representation is pre-doxastic, can occur without its content being believed, can outstrip conscious attention, and so on). Then, I take into consideration the relation between phenomenal character and representational content, to suggest that fineness of grain and unstructuredness of non-conceptual content can well do justice of perceptual phenomenology, which is profuse and rich of details in a way a doxastic state cannot be. I introduce the Peacocke's notion of *Scenario Content* as a very promising way of semantically characterize perceptual contents in a way which does justice of the distinctiveness of perceptual phenomenology.

Afterward, I enucleate and briefly discuss some general reasons for favoring the Content View, namely, some of its fundamental explanatory virtues with respect to certain apparent features of perceptual experiences: *Aspect*, *Absence*, *Accuracy*, *Aboutness*. Since the Content View is in a position to account for such apparent properties – representations typically exhibit such features – it is a highly promising view worth taking very seriously. That is not a trivial point because, surprisingly enough, the Content View is very seldom argued for as such. Rather, it is presupposed and one or the other version of it is defended or attacked.

Finally, I consider some interesting analogies with the Content View and the ordinary ways of ascribing seeing-episodes. The difference between 'seeing something' and 'seeing that' maps the difference between perceptually-nonconceptually representing and coming to believe by visual means that things are a certain way. I will also argue that looking-ascriptions are consistent with the representational conception of perceptual experience, and that the Content View

vindicates our pre-theoretical intuition that our perceptual experiences can be veridical, partially illusory or totally illusory. No non-representational account of that intuitive matching/mismatching relation is available.

Chapters IV and V are the core of the *pars construens* of that dissertation, where I get into the matter and positively articulate a certain version of the Content View (basing myself on the options made available in the current debate, of course).

In Chapter IV, I firstly (Section 1) argue for a *two-layered* view of visual content. Beyond the Scenario Content, which is specified by ways of filling out the space around the perceiver and it is made out of spatial-chromatic-morphological properties, another semantic layer is to be introduced, the proto-propositional content. With Peacocke, I argue that the Scenario Content cannot capture all there is in perceptual representation, in particular certain acts of property-recognition which can be present or absent without that the Scenario Content changes. I show that the necessity of introducing a perceptual proto-propositional content between the Scenario Content and the doxastic content of perceptual beliefs maps the pre-theoretical necessity, testified in ordinary ascriptive practices, to distinguish *object-seeing* from *seeing-as* and both of them from *seeing-that*. Indeed, *seeing-as* ascriptions basically ascribe visual episodes with proto-propositional content. With respect to that, I criticize Dretske's theory of seeing, which distinguishes simple seeing and epistemic seeing and does fatally overlook the intermediate level of *seeing-as*, or recognitional seeing. Without the position of that level, the semantic and epistemological transition from object-seeing to visually-based propositional knowledge remains an unaccountable mystery.

Secondly (Section 2) I argue for the object-dependency and singularity of visual content, so against the Generality Thesis hold by Searle, McGinn and others. On my view, a visual experience is individuated by a *Subject*, a *Content* (upper case) composed by a perceived *Object* and by a set of represented properties (the *content*, lower case), a perceptual *Mode*. I show that the Generality Thesis must be false, so the Singularity thesis must be true. Visual perception involves particulars into its Content, so visual Contents are *de re*, demonstrative Contents. Then I profile the big

puzzle that the Singularity Thesis opens with respect to hallucinatory contents, since hallucinations does not have worldly particulars as constituents of their putative contents: I have labeled it the Semantic Gap Problem, but I treat it systematically only in the last Chapter (Chapter VI, Section 2.5).

In Chapter V I firstly (Section 1) argue for an *impure representationalism* about phenomenal character. On this view, the phenomenal character of a conscious perception is made out of represented properties, but represented under a *Mode* (ex. the Visual Mode). So on my view there is a dependence-without-reduction, rather than an identity, between the phenomenal and the intentional, between character and content. In particular, the Object does not determine the phenomenal character (that is why a hallucination can share its character with a veridical perception), which is instead determined by the *content* (lower case) plus the Mode.

To argue for such an impure representationalist account of phenomenal character, I start by considering the phenomenon of perceptual constancy. That phenomenon seem to show that there can be a change in 'look' without a change in represented properties, for example if you tilt a coin it will 'look' elliptical but it will keep looking *to be* round. I reply that perceptual constancy does not speak against representationalism, because the orientation of the penny is represented in vision, so something *does* change in the represented properties. No phenomenal change without representational change. Although, I suggest that the phenomenology involved in perceptual constancy does show that perceptual experiences are *egocentric*, perspectival representations of the world. It may be thought that the fact that in perception egocentric contents are represented explains the perspectival phenomenology of visual experience. But egocentric *contents* (representations of very relations between the world and the perceiver) can only partially account for the egocentric *character* of visual experience. I argue that in order to exhaustively account for the egocentric character of visual experience we need to appeal also to the Mode, besides the egocentric content. The world is represented under a Mode, and it is the Mode, that which makes the experience able to represent egocentric contents. Visual representation is perspectival in a way which goes beyond it's representing our perspective on the world. Rather, both the world, and our contingent perspective on it are perspectivally represented. Thanks to the Mode, perceptions

represent the world 'from here'.

Following on from this, I consider the Inverted Spectrum Hypothesis and the Inverted Earth Thought Experiment as potential objections to representationalism. I show that the Inverted Spectrum scenario, at a closer inspection on how our color-experience holistically involves interwoven relations between color-properties (brightness, hue, saturation), is less conceivable than it *prima facie* appears. Since each color has a place into a virtual three-dimensional space with brightness, saturation and hue as coordinates, inverting two colors would ruin all the other representable relations between colors. I also analyze Block's Inverted Earth thought experiment and argue that it does not show that representationalism is false, unless you already take it that representationalism is false: in other words, it is an interesting argument to make our intuitions explicit, but it is circular at the end. I accept that the conjunction of representationalism about phenomenal character and externalism about perceptual content entails phenomenal externalism. Since I hold both representationalism (though impure) and content-externalism, I must accept phenomenal externalism, even though it is counter-intuitive (once, also content-externalism sounded outrageous). So I commit to phenomenal externalism.

In Section 2 I examine a very important issue for the Content View, so to complete my global picture of the semantic characterization of perceptual episodes, the issue of whether perceptual content is Fregean or Russellian in nature. I discuss Chalmers's *Double Content View*, the proposal that perceptual experience has two kinds of content, one Russellian and the other Fregean. Chalmers aims at saving phenomenal internalism and content-externalism by distinguishing a Fregean narrow content, on which phenomenal character supervenes, and a Russellian, wide content. The Fregean content would be specified, for example, as [the property which normally causes the phenomenal property F], the Russellian content would be what normally causes that phenomenal property in the subject's environment. I provide many arguments against that proposal. Firstly, that 'normal causation' enters into the perceptual content is implausible. Perceptual contents are not so sophisticated; moreover, it does not seem at all that visual phenomenology includes the representation of properties like 'being normally caused by' something. Perceptual content should be ascribed in a way that respects perceptual phenomenology.



Secondly, Chalmers assumes that a phenomenal property can be picked out independently on any worldly represented property, but that possibility is far from pacific. In addition, I show that such a possibility would entail a separation (a totally contingent relation) between phenomenal character and representational content, so that view inherits the same problems typical of the *qualia*-realism. Such a separation does not do justice of the transparency of visual phenomenology either, which attributes to things the properties we are aware of, not their normal causes.

In addition, reference to 'normality' and/or appropriateness of causation is highly problematic. Any normality-clause on causation implicitly refers to an environment, but then the Fregean content is not narrow anymore. I show that there is no normality which is not environment-indexed, so that there is no narrow normality. If there was a Fregean content of perception, it would be wide, so we better get rid of it and hold on a wide, external, Russellian content. Chalmer's third way is flawed.

I conclude that perceptual content is Russellian and Wide, (impure) representationalism about phenomenal character is true, so phenomenal character is wide and phenomenal externalism is true.

In Chapter VI I will take at face value the objections to the Content View typically made by those disjunctivists who advocate Naïve Realism.

Firstly (Section 1) I take into consideration the core-idea of Disjunctivism, and the principles it rejects. Then I present the reasons disjunctivists provide against the Content View: I hold that these reasons (phenomenological, epistemological, semantical, metaphysical) are all amenable to what I call the Detachment Problem. It seems that, on the Content View, a veridical perceptual experience must be conceived of as separated from the world, characterizable and type-individuated independently on its being a genuine relation to the world. Indeed if perceptual experiences are individuated by their semantic properties or contents, and the content they possess is possessed independently on being exemplified or not, then veridical experiences and hallucinations should be states of the same kind, and not even the first can be thought of as an essentially world-involving state. Here are the basic facets of the Detachment Problem. Perceptual phenomenology is presentational (phenomenological facet), perceptual knowledge entails that veridical experiences

make available to us not just that which also hallucinations make available to us, on pain of skeptic consequences (epistemological facet), perceptual beliefs and judgments can be *de re* and anchored to the world only if perceptual experience is a direct presentation of worldly particulars (semantic facet), if veridical experiences are genuine manifestations of the world they cannot be mental states of the same fundamental kind as hallucinations (metaphysical facet).

Secondly (Section 2), I argue for a moderately disjunctive version of the Content View, a version which should embed the demand of Cognitive Contact raised by the disjunctivists and so avoid the Detachment Problem in all its facets. I argue that there is a conceptual, explanatory and metaphysical asymmetrical dependence between the Bad case and the Good case: disjunctivists are right in taking the Good case as basic and in characterizing the Bad case in terms of the Good case.

I argue that, from a naturalistic point of view, mental states are to be type-individuated according to their natural functions. I suppose that a teleo-semantic version of the Content View is true. Rather than arguing for its truth (I would have needed another dissertation), I show that such a view could meet the demands and the worries raised by disjunctivists, especially with respect to the Good/Bad asymmetrical dependence. Moreover, such a view would provide a naturalistic explanation of that asymmetry. A wired-in teleo-function is acquired through evolutionary selection thanks to its success, and is thus defined by reference to its successful exercises, so that its failed exercises are essentially a failure of the function they are exercises of. Although, if perceptual states are teleo-functional states, a veridical experience and a deceptive experience will share their function of representing the environment a certain way, even if one is a successful exercise and the other is not. So, a teleo-functional type-individuation of mental states rules out radical disjunctivism, insofar as it predicts that veridical and non-veridical perceptions have relevant properties in common.

Nonetheless, I argue that we should buy a disjunctive treatment having hallucinations and perceptual experiences (veridical or illusory) as disjuncts, rather than contrasting veridical and deceptive experiences. Veridical perceptions and illusions are genuine relations to the world, they are world-involving states with *de re*, object-dependent Contents, whilst hallucinations are not relational states but states which

introspectively seem to be what they are not, namely, relational states. Disjunctivists are right in thinking that subjective indiscriminability is not sufficient for sameness in kind – it is not sufficient for sameness in Content either – they are right in thinking that for two mental states to have the same proximate causes is not sufficient for these states to be of the same mental kind. Indeed hallucinations are objectless states even if they could have the same proximate causes as perceptions (veridical or illusory), whereas perceptual experiences (accurate or not) are essentially relational states involving a worldly object as a target.

Successively (Section 3) I treat two related apparent problems for the Content View, which I call Item Awareness Problem and Semantic Gap problem. The first addresses the question of what we are aware of when hallucinating, the second addresses the question of how hallucinations can be inaccurate states as they intuitively seem to be, if they lack an object the represented properties could match or mismatch. About the first problem, I rule out the Meinongian proposal according to which hallucinations have non-existent particulars as genuine objects. I argue that, besides the ontological extravagance of the idea of objects having the bizarre property of not existing, if it was so, then hallucinations would be a priori true. Indeed, the hallucinated pink rat *is* pink, although it does lack existence, but in this way not only is the inaccuracy of hallucination not vindicated, it even becomes impossible. Then I consider a more promising option, on which in hallucination we are aware of structured complexes of uninstantiated properties (Property-View), even if we wrongly seem to be confronted with particulars. After raising some perplexities about that proposal, I consider a more radical alternative to it, namely, the idea that in hallucinating we are not aware of *anything*, neither of particular nor of properties (No Item View). For that view, the conscious character of our state depends on the Mode and on represented properties, but a conscious state's representing certain properties does not entail that state's involving the awareness of these properties. I do not adjudicate between the Property-View and the No Item View, rather I point to virtues and weaknesses of both but I conclude that one of them must be true. I also point that the Item Awareness problem is not a special problem of the Content View but it is shared by any other views on perception, so it cannot be adduced against the Content View. Anyway, the second issue of the Semantic Gap of hallucinatory contents is

independent on the option we prefer between the Property-View and the No Item View. In both cases we would not be aware of particulars, so no worldly object can work as a truth-maker or as an accuracy-maker for hallucinatory states. My treatment of the problem consists of dropping the intuition of inaccuracy of hallucinations and at the same time trying to explain its origin and its apparent force on us. Hallucinations are not inaccurate states, rather they are only states which seem to be about worldly particular and seem to have accuracy-conditions, but they are neither accurate nor inaccurate. The intuition to the contrary depends on hallucinations' having immediate cognitive effects which are inaccurate, so that we tend to project their inaccuracy (of beliefs or belief-like states) onto the hallucinations which normally produce them.

After this, I go back to the original Detachment Problem and show that the Content View can avoid it. The presentational phenomenology, the justificatory power of the veridical perceptions, the possibility of having demonstrative thoughts about the surrounding world, and the relational metaphysics of veridical perceptions, all that can be vindicated by my version of the Content View.

Let us begin our adventure into the Content View then!

## CHAPTER I - The Folk Semantics Of *Seeing* and Related “Experiential” Predicates

### Introduction

This chapter is divided into five sections.

Section 1 is introductory and presents the general aim of the chapter, which is that of producing a taxonomical survey of the ordinary ascriptions of episodes of “seeing” as well as of episodes of seeing-experiences like “seeming”, “appearing”, “looking”. In Section 1 the methodological sense of such a survey on ordinary language is also made clear. Although my central concern is the perceptual phenomenon as such rather than the typical ways it is ordinarily characterized in everyday language, nevertheless an analysis of the logical behaviour of ordinary ascriptions of perceptual experiences seems to be a privileged starting-point to make explicit at least our basic intuitions concerning the phenomenon itself. Maybe a substantial theory of seeing and perceptual experiencing will correct or even eliminate the intuitions underlying those ascriptive uses, but there is no other way to start shaping a positive theory than previously articulating its putative objects as they are *prima facie* manifest. To recall an Austinian saying, although ordinary language is not the last word, still it has to be the first<sup>1</sup>. Addressing the preliminary question: “What do we ascribe, when we ascribe an episode of seeing (or  $\psi$ -ing)?” at least *can* shed light on the much more relevant question: “What does seeing (or  $\psi$ -ing) *consist of*?”.

In Section 2 a list is drawn up of necessary and sufficient conditions for an ordinary seeing-ascription to be true in non-abnormal contexts. Secondly, the logical behavior of basic *seeing-X*-ascriptions is analyzed, when the verb is used as an objectual attitude without clauses, according to the simple two-places scheme “S sees (an) O” like “Fido sees a tree”, “Diego sees a table”, and the like.

Section 3 concerns the ascriptions of *seeing-that* cases, which behave like propositional attitudes, according to the scheme “S sees that P”, “Diego sees that the table is brown” and the like. I argue that such ascriptions are factive and logically opaque just like propositional attitudes are, but they are not just ascriptions of perceptual episodes. Rather they are ascriptions of a certain empirical propositional

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<sup>1</sup> See Austin 1961.

knowledge acquired as a consequence of a perceptual episode.

Section 4 takes into account *seeing-as* ascriptions, i.e. ascriptions of a *sui generis* three-places relation – S sees O as (an) F – whose logical behaviour is irreducible to either the objectual seeing-O or the propositional seeing-that-P. Such ascriptions are neither factive nor logically transparent, and presuppose the ascription of a certain “cognitive stand” by the perceiver, like a recognition or a categorization of some sort. I will argue that that is the only ascriptive context where the perceptual *mistake* can come into play. Neither seeing-O episodes *as such* – unless it is a constituent of a *seeing-as* episode – nor *seeing-that* episodes can be uncorrect, false, mistaken and the like. Either you see an O or you don't, you just cannot falsely see an O (given *ex hypothesi* that we are not talking about seeing the O *as* something). Likewise, you cannot falsely see that P, because that is a factive ascription just like “knowing”. The reciprocal relations between such three distinctive ascriptions (seeing O, seeing O as an F, seeing that O is F) will be carefully articulated.

Section 5 will change the focus from the seeing-predicate to some basic experiential predicates such as “seeming”, “appearing”, “looking”. They will be considered as they behave in paradigmatic ascriptive constructions like “seeming-that”, “looking-like”, “looking-as-if”, “looking-as-though”, “appearing-that”, and the like. Such verbs do not just ascribe perceptions (as “sees”, “hears”, “smells” do), they ascribe conscious perceptual experiences. As in the previous cases, I will critically discuss the relative literature on the matter.

At the end of the chapter, I will provide a summary of the results of each section and I will state such results into concise points.

### **Section 1 – A Methodological Remark**

What do we ordinarily ascribe when we ascribe or self-ascribe an episode of seeing something, a case of seeing that something is such-and-such, an episode of seeing something *as* something? What do we ascribe to S or to us when we say that it *seems* to S (or to us) that such-and-such is the case, when we say that an O *looks* F to me, that this O *appears* F to her, or when we say that this *looks* like that, and so on?

Some could find it plausible to think that visual perceptions and visual experiences are to be typed under natural kinds. Aren't those phenomena distinctive byproducts

of the biological evolution of certain animal species? So that it may well be that the rough and intuitive individuation-criteria applied by those ascribing them, actually pick out a cluster of different phenomena whose ordinary grouping do not genuinely “track” the objective division into natural kinds. Maybe the superficial properties exhibited by the ordinary referents of “seeing”-episodes' ascriptions are not shared by other genuine cases of seeing. Maybe very different natural kinds occasionally happen to be the referent of people's ascription of seeing. If that was the case, only scientists of vision (for example) would know the real reference and the genuine extension of the term “seeing”, whilst ordinary people would just be able to vaguely fix the reference through attaching the meaning of the term to a cluster of manifest, superficial and non-essential properties<sup>2</sup>. Just as a speaker can successfully refer to water without knowing at all the nature of water (be it H<sub>2</sub>O), so a speaker can successfully master and apply terms like “seeing”, “visually experiencing” and the like, without having to know the nature of the phenomena she ascribes. Be it the case or not, even that view would not *per se* entail the uselessness of a systematic consideration of the ordinary uses as well as of the related shared intuitions underlying these uses. Generally speaking, any explanation must have the individuation of an *explanandum* as its inevitable starting-point. In order to meaningfully ask, for example, “what is seeing?”, the very question must make sense before the answer (the *explanans*) has been obtained, before coming to know what seeing is. What are we asking “what is it” about, if not about the manifest phenomenon we can intuitively pick out as folk speakers in the first place? Even if discovery of the nature of X can feedback on the starting characterization and reveal it as flawed (confusing, naïve, illegitimate, to be abandoned), nonetheless its status as a starting-point of the inquiry was still a precondition of the final cognitive success. So a reconstructive taxonomy of the basic ways of ascribing visual perceptions and experiences, a survey on the related vocabulary, are methodologically useful at least in order to make explicit our unreflected intuitions on the matter. Although the ways certain paradigmatic expressions behave in ordinary language should not be considered as normative to establish the way things are<sup>3</sup>, still a reflective analysis of

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2 That is, at least, the Kripke-Putnam theory about the reference of natural kind terms. See Putnam 1975.

3 That was the “quietist” way the some Oxford linguistic philosophers seemed to consider their

those ways could successfully orient and prepare the substantial inquiry as its preliminary rough material.

## Section 2 – Seeing something

### 2.1 – Basic Conditions

We consider cases of seeing as perceptual episodes occurring to a subject in an environment. “Seeing” is a determinate of the determinable “perceiving” (as “hearing”, “tasting” and so on). Are there necessary and sufficient conditions for truly ascribing to S an episode of seeing something? Which contexts and circumstances are ordinarily, implicitly *taken* to entitle a speaker to say her or someone else is seeing something? First of all, seeing-something is a certain sort of real dyadic relation involving a perceiver and an environment as *relata*. Here is a list of trivial conditions for seeing-X:

*S sees X iff* a) S is a perceiver with a visual apparatus b) X is there in the S's surrounding environment c) Through the very episode S discriminates X in some way from the environment d) X causes the very episode of S's seeing X e) Such a discrimination must involve a presentation with a phenomenological salience, it must give rise to a “looking” or a “seeming”.

You cannot see X if you are blind or do not possess a perceptual visual apparatus. You cannot see X unless X is not there. You cannot see X if you do not discriminate it in *any* way from its surrounding environment. You cannot see X if X does not provide any causal contribution to your seeing it, and you cannot see X unless X looks some way to you. On the other hand, if you have a working visual apparatus, and X's impact on it causes your discrimination of X in such a way that X looks some way to you, all this is intuitively sufficient for you to be seeing X. In short: Seeing (X) is a certain *episode* consisting of a *discrimination*-relation between a *perceiver* and an *environmental object*, where the object is *causally* responsible of its being discriminated through appropriately impacting on the subject's *visual apparatus*, in such a way that the object *looks* to S a certain way. a) captures the trivial reference to eyes implicitly involved in the very mastery of the folk *seeing*-concept. b) captures the so-called *implicativity* of *seeing*: “S sees O” presupposes that

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language-analyses. For example, see Malcolm 1942, Moore 1962.



O is there to be seen (differently from “S wants O”, for example) c) depends on that *seeing* is a *success verb*<sup>4</sup>, as other perceptual verbs are. Perceiving something is certainly a kind of cognitive achievement, the occurrent exercise of a dispositional capacity to achieve a certain positive state. d) is meant to capture what has been notoriously emphasized by the causal theories of perception<sup>5</sup>: Perceptions are episodes appropriately caused by the perceived environment itself. Perception can provide a form of contact with the world insofar as it consists of a certain sort of world-to-subject causal impact. e) involves that object-seeing has some minimal phenomenological constraints, to the effect that in understanding “S is seeing X” uttered in non-abnormal contexts, a speaker is entitled to take it that there is a way X looks to S.

## 2.2 Some Objections

Now I will consider some possible objections to those proposed conditions for S to be seeing something, and I will briefly reply to them.

A way of raising doubts on the *a*-condition could be to appeal to the well-known experiments of prosthetic vision which realizes cases of “vision-through-touch” (Bach-y-Rita 1972), reported and discussed by Dennett<sup>6</sup> among others. A device involving a small low-resolution video-camera is mounted on eye-glass frames, so that the signal from the camera – an array of black-and white pixels – is spread over the back or the belly of the subject in a grid of vibrating tinglers. Surprisingly, the subject becomes able to interpret the patterns of these tingles on her skin after a few hours of training, for example she recognizes a face, identifies objects, and so on. Is she *seeing* those objects despite no eye is involved? Let us assume that it is a case of vision. First of all, we should consider that a part of the prosthetic device – the camera – may be taken as an artificial visual apparatus. After all, it is causally sensitive to light-waves and carries a signal consisting of a certain distribution of gradients of light-energy, just like biological retinas and animal eyes. Therefore, the “no eyes-no vision” principle embodied in condition *a* is respected. Secondly, the

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4 Ryle 1949, Austin 1962, Armstrong 1968.

5 See Grice 1961, Strawson 1974, Lewis 1980.

6 See Dennett 1991, 337-344. On tactile-vision substitution systems (TVSS) see also Back-y-Rita/Kercel 2003.

capacity of seeing-with-touch comes with a training that necessarily involves the exercise of canonical vision in order to match a certain tactile information with a certain visible scene. So, such a capacity is parasitic on proper vision and can be ascribed only to subjects endowed with a working visual apparatus. Thirdly, it is no surprise that such an artificial integration of our natural, biological capacities could constitute a borderline case (both of vision and of touch), but the existence of borderline cases does not undermine canonical demarcations. Finally and most importantly, at this stage of our inquiry we are talking about the *ordinary* concept of seeing and its folk-application in normal contexts. We do not learn to master the concept *seeing* and to ascribe cases of *seeing-something* by being shown such abnormal contexts like prosthetic tactuo-vision. If a speaker would not know that seeing something presupposes using one's eyes, we just would not ascribe to that speaker the mastery of the concept *seeing* as well as of the respective word “seeing”<sup>7</sup>. Maybe there can be dark samples of H<sub>2</sub>O, maybe that unusual circumstance should be known by a scientist who claims to know the nature of water – the real reference of “water” – nonetheless the *ordinary* concept of water involves transparency as a superficial, reference-fixing property.

Condition *b* could raise perplexities insofar as some ascriptions of seeing-*X* cases. For instance, where *X* is known to be not there, like “Mary sees phantoms”, “Even if he's in front of his wife, Mister P. keeps seeing a hat”. To address this objection, we should consider that apparently simple *seeing-X* ascriptions can be elliptic ascriptions of more complex cases, like cases of *seeing-as* or *seeing-that*, which we will carefully treat below. Mister P does not just sees a hat, rather he does not see a hat at all. He sees *his wife as* a hat, he mistakes his wife for a hat actually. So, the above case is a case of *seeing-as*, not a basic case of seeing something *simpliciter*. Likewise, Mary cannot see any phantom unless there is a phantom there to be seen. Rather, Mary sees something that look to her as if it was a phantom, or she hallucinates a phantom and falsely takes her subjectively seeing-like experience as an episode of seeing. In both cases, Mary just *believes* she sees phantoms but she

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<sup>7</sup> I am making the plausible assumption that ascribing the mastery of a certain word in ordinary-language contexts is sufficient for the mastery of the relative concept. A subject's using, understanding and correctly applying the word “water”, is a sufficient evidence for crediting the subject with the concept of *water*.

doesn't. Harman distinguishes "seeing" (implicative) and "seeing\*" (intentional)<sup>8</sup>: Whilst *seeing* is implicative and presupposes the existence of the seen object, *seeing\** can have non-existents as complements, like "Jack sees a unicorn". As we have noticed, though, what Harman stipulates to call *seeing\** is a use of "seeing" which is not the simple one we are talking about here. The very fact that he needs to introduce a special stipulation (\*) entails that he is not talking about the ordinary application of seeing-something ascriptions. Furthermore, the fact that sentences like the above one can sound fine and in order, should not mislead us. The superficial grammatical form of "seeing-X" can hide the contraction of more complex ascriptions. By nominalizing the complement I can treat *any* form of *seeing* as a case of object-seeing: "S sees the train's stopping at the station at 8 o' clock", "S sees the difference between a phantom on his right and a unicorn on her left", and so on. But now we are treating object-seeing in a more specific sense, where "object" is not meant either in such an abstract way or in a superficially grammatical sense<sup>9</sup>. As Heil remarks<sup>10</sup>, when an episode of seeing-X is ascribed, the X-complement can be meant to express either the *object* or the *content* of the ascribed perceptual episode. Up to now we are considering the object rather than the content, so we are interested in the direct complement of *seeing* on the objectual interpretation. For example, one can ask: "Can you see the boat there in the distance?" meaning by that: "Can you recognize a boat in *that*, which you are seeing?" That would be a case of seeing-as, not just a case of seeing-X. Likewise, we are not concerned with cases where "X" is a propositional clause, be it nominalized or not: "I saw the cat running away from a dog" is not just an example of object-seeing, at least under the most natural interpretation of it, because it is a case of seeing a fact having one or more objects as its constituents (see below). Some think that perceptions have certain objects *in virtue* of having certain contents. Be it the case or not, perceptual object and perceptual content should not be confused<sup>11</sup>, not even in analyzing ordinary

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<sup>8</sup> Harman 1990, 36ff. On the intentionality of seeing, see Anscombe 1965, Travis 2011.

<sup>9</sup> Dretske 2000a, 117, refers to that as to the difference between "concrete" and "abstract" objects of seeing abstract objects of seeing are grammatical objects as abstract noun phrases (seeing the bus arriving, seeing the difference, the number, the answer), interrogative nominal clauses, and so forth.

<sup>10</sup> See Heil 1991, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> As we will see, even though all take it that perceptions have objects, many philosophers think that perceptions do not have content at all, namely, that the very notion of content is misleading as

ascriptions. As we will see, the typical basic scheme for perceptual content ascriptions is: S perceives: [O's being F], namely, *an object' having a property*<sup>12</sup>. But now it is object-seeing, that is our focus, not the content of seeing. So far so good.

Condition *c* – call it discrimination-condition – could sound very ambiguous at the first sight. What does (visually) discriminating consist of? An objection to *c*, for example, could be that one can well see X without noticing it, so without consciously discriminating it from the environment. That could happen because of tiredness, lack of attention, rapid disappearance of the stimulus<sup>13</sup>, bad conditions of visibility and so on. “He saw it, but he did not discriminate it” is a quite common and intelligible sentence. As a first reply to that, we should point out that seeing an F does not involve discriminating it *as* an F, recognizing it, noticing it, taking it that there is an F there, and the like. Nonetheless, seeing X is meaningfully ascribed if the subject is taken to discriminate X from the environment in *some* way. For example, in order to be seeing a boat in the distance, it is not necessary to see it *as* a boat, or as anything else, but the object must be for the subject a *potential* object of individuation and characterization (even if extremely vague). It must be possible for the subject, *if* she focus her thematic attention on such a seen object, to ask: “What is *that*”?<sup>14</sup> Such a condition – discriminating in *some* way O from the surrounding environment – does not even require any belief or explicit “taking it” that there is something there. What is required, it that the allegedly seen object must make a *potential difference* for the subject, be that difference doxastic or just behavioral. If the presence of O does not make *any* difference – not even a potential one<sup>15</sup> – for the perceiver, she just does not see it<sup>16</sup>.

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applied to perceptual phenomena. See Chapter VI.

12 Fish 2009, p. 52.

13 That is the case raised by the Sperling experiments (Sperling 1960). I will discuss such experiments later on (Chapter II, Section 1.2.2). In such experiments, a subject is exposed for a short lapse of time to a visual stimulus she cannot notice and report. Nonetheless, thanks to an acoustic marker, she can access to such visual information after the very stimulus has disappeared, so that she *must have seen* that stimulus.

14 See Dretske 2006, Siegel 2006b.

15 I can be seeing something that is completely uninteresting for my behavior and my belief-updating, so that there is nothing actually changing in my behavior and in my system of beliefs. Although, if I see O, then it must be true at least that *if* O was behaviorally, pragmatically or doxastically relevant for me, it *would* make a difference for me now.

16 If seeing an object is to make a difference, even a slight one, for the subject, then such an episode must enable certain discriminations, which are *potentially* manifest in behavior or in reasoning as difference-makers in the subject's treating the surrounding environment. Otherwise, the subject has

Condition *e* could be resisted by pointing out that X's causing X's vision by S is an empirical rather than a conceptual condition of S's seeing X. In other words, the ordinary concept of seeing an O does not involve O's causation of O's vision, even though it is true that S sees O iff O causes the very episode. A straightforward test to make explicit the cluster of intuitions underlying the ordinary mastery of a concept, is that of constructing a counterfactual situation in which one of those allegedly primitive intuitions are not satisfied. Imagine someone who understands the expression "S sees an O" and can successfully apply it to normal contexts. Could she really ignore that the episode involves a causal impact between the object and the perceiver? Of course she does not have to know *which* kind of causal interaction is going on – we do not need to be scientists of vision to master the ordinary concept of seeing and to successfully ascribe episodes of object-seeing – but at least she needs to intuitively type the episode as an interaction between the subject and its environment. No interaction without causation, so no vision without causation<sup>17</sup>.

Condition *e* can be seen as a way to specify the nature of discrimination introduced in condition *c*.

As poor as that discrimination can be, it must be conscious and involve a *phenomenological* difference. No matter how S sees O, how S looks to S, it matters that O must look *some* way to S, be that way as vague and indeterminate as: A dark point in the distance, a rough shape, something having a certain color, something moving, and so on. Seeing an object involves having phenomenological consciousness of at least of one of its properties, that can also be a perspectival, relational property like its distant location from me. The way O looks to S in S's seeing O can well be wrong. O can look F to S even though O is not F. Still, S would be seeing O insofar as, among other conditions, S looks some way to O (though it looks wrongly so). What matters, is that the phenomenology associated to O's looking F to S is sufficient for S to consciously discriminate O from the surrounding

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not seen the object.

17 According to some ancient theory of vision – for example, the Democritus' view – the eyes are the active causal part of the visual phenomenon, they "launch" a certain quantity of rapid atoms toward the object, acting as a sort of "illuminating factor" of it, namely, making it visible. That empirically false and rudimentary theory, though, does not undermine the causal factor as embedded into the concept of seeing. On the contrary, the theory presupposes a the idea of a causal interaction between the perceiver and the perceived environment, even though it is wrong in specifying the type, mode and direction of this causal interaction.

environment. Suppose you see a green landscape where an unmoving chameleon is perfectly disguised through a perfect mimicry. Suppose you even focus your attention on that point of the objective scene, which globally looks to you just as a uniform greenish vegetable tract. Do you see the chameleon? Intuitively not, because your visual phenomenology does not *differentiate* it from the immediate surroundings. There is no phenomenologically salient discrimination from the scene, even if the object is there. You are in visual contact with the surface of the chameleon, you focus on the portion of the scene corresponding to its skin, you receive information about its color, your well-working visual apparatus is in appropriate causal contact with it, and so on<sup>18</sup>. Such a thought-experiment shows by subtraction, so to speak, the necessity of the phenomenal discrimination-condition (*e*) for object-seeing. If visual discrimination of O from its immediate surroundings is missing, then S is not seeing O, according to the ordinary concept and ascription-conditions of *seeing something*. Object-seeing has phenomenological constraints, although minimal.

A natural objection to condition *e* could appeal to counterexamples, namely, to cases of object-seeing which lack phenomenology and *a fortiori* lack differentiation-phenomenology. For example, the so-called Blindsight is a case of vision lacking visual phenomenology. The subjects having blindsight report a lack of any visual experience, despite showing a certain ability at guessing what is there and at detecting visually perceivable properties. So, blind-sighters form conscious empirical (true) beliefs grounded on unconscious episodes of vision<sup>19</sup>. Well, if such patients do see objects, then seeing cannot have phenomenological constraints. Another case against *e* could be Inattentional Blindness<sup>20</sup>. According to an interpretation of that phenomenon, you do *see* objects falling under a scene within your visual field, but

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18 Siegel 2006b constructs a thought-experiment on the same lines: Franco loves doing stunts in the sky, dresses red and uses invisible fibers to keep suspended in the air. But today Franco has dressed a blue uniform which perfectly matches the actual color of the sky, so that you cannot individuate him, you just see a homogeneous blue scene (which includes Franco's surface despite you do not know that). Siegel argues that you do not see Franco, because you are not in a position to form any *de re* mental state about Franco. Seeing O should put you in a position to have *de re* mental states about O, given other conditions that we do not need to specify. See also Dretske 1969, 18-33.

19 See Weiskrantz 1997, Clark 2001, Hilbert 1994.

20 See Chapter II, Section 1.2.1.

you fail to *notice* them<sup>21</sup>. So, there are also non-pathological cases of object-seeing which do not involve conscious and phenomenologically salient discrimination of O from its immediate surroundings. Another counterexample alleged by Siegel<sup>22</sup>, is that of *zombies*. A zombie-twin of mine is a cognitive system functionally and physically identical to mine but lacking any conscious phenomenology at all.<sup>23</sup> Such zombies would behave like me, form my empirical beliefs, perform the same actions, make the same verbal reports, and so on. So, one could plausibly think that it would be arbitrary to deny to zombies any object-seeing, and she could consistently refuse a notion of object-seeing involving that . That would therefore count as an objection for phenomenological constraints on object-seeing. We could address the three objections together by reminding ourselves what we are doing up to now in the first place: We are making explicit the *intuitive* conditions for *ordinary* object-seeing' ascriptions. Again, appealing to borderline cases of object-seeing in such methodological context does not do, it is just premature and misleading. Making explicit the intuitions underlying the ordinary concept of seeing is not absolutely normative for what we should take object-seeing *to be*. On the contrary, experimental evidence can well be incompatible with ordinary intuitions and lead us to amend, change or even abandon the ordinary concept. About blindsight, it is a pathology, so it is an abnormal behavior which even puzzled the scientists who discovered it in the first place. In addition, one could legitimately doubt that it is opportune to describe blindsight as an example of genuine cases of vision. About inattentional blindness, the very fact that there is a vivid debate on its interpretation – Is it not seeing but only potentially seeing? Is it unconscious seeing? Is it conscious seeing without noticing?<sup>24</sup> – shows that it is a non-ordinary case of object-seeing, so it is a borderline case. Spelling out the conditions for ordinary ascription of X well tolerates *borderline* cases not perfectly meeting those conditions, or even lacking one of them. About *zombies*, it is *ex hypothesi* a (doubtful) thought experiment which depicts a possible world quite different from the one in which our ordinary concepts are

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21 See Mack and Rock 1998, Dretske 2000a, Block 2007.

22 Siegel 2006b.

23 See Chalmers 1996.

24 As Siegel 2006b points out, the question whether there can be phenomenology outside attention does not undermine *per se* the differentiation-phenomenology constraint. *If* there can be phenomenology outside attention, then cases of inattentional blindness would count as cases of object-seeing.

socially established, individually formed, acquired and applied in everyday contexts. Probably, in a world inhabited by zombies the ordinary perceptual concepts would be different and presuppose a different cluster of basic intuitions for their application. Another objection can accept the discrimination-condition *c* but deny that it must involve phenomenological constraints, along the following lines: The discrimination of O from its surroundings could be behavioral, consisting of sensory-motor dispositions, of potential influence on belief-formation and intention-formation, or otherwise, without necessarily involving a *phenomenological* difference. Again, apart from pathological and other borderline cases, such an objection would entail that S can see O. Remember: According to the *intuitive* meaning of object-seeing – without O's visually looking to S in a way sufficient for S's discriminating O from its immediate surroundings. But if you see O, O must look some way to you. So, a certain visual phenomenology is constitutive of intuitive object-seeing, such that a certain causal contact of S's visual apparatuses with an object O counts as an episode of S's seeing O insofar as O looks some way to S, where such a “looking” relation consists of a certain distinctive visual phenomenology. To sum up again our list of object-seeing conditions:

**S sees O iff**

- a) S is endowed with a working visual apparatus
- b) O is there in S's surrounding environment
- c) S discriminates O in some way from the immediate surroundings
- d) O causes the very episode of S's seeing X
- e) O's being discriminated by S is enabled by S's visual phenomenology to the effect that O looks some way to S

### 2.3 Transparency

An important property characterizing the logical behavior of *seeing-X* ascriptions is transparency<sup>25</sup>:

$$(S \text{ sees } X) \text{ and } (X=Y) \rightarrow S \text{ sees } Y$$

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25 Transparency of object-seeing is rightly emphasized by Dretske 1969, 1990.



Object-seeing is extensional, its truth-conditions are indifferent to the descriptions through which the seen object is referred to. The seen object is a particular which the subject is causally related to. *That* particular, no matter how you describe or characterize it in the ascription, is the seen object when *a-e* conditions are satisfied. Transparency and extensionality of object-seeing depend on that the truth-conditions of “S sees O” do not depend on the way O is cognitively appreciated or categorized by S, nor does it depend on the way O looks to S. The description used by the ascriber does not matter for the truth-conditions of the ascription, just because the way O is cognized by S does not matter for it to be the case or not that S sees that particular, O. Either S sees *that*, or she doesn't. In that sense, as Dretske points out, object-seeing is “non-cognitive”<sup>26</sup>.

It is worth noticing that conditions *d* and *e* – discrimination and phenomenological constraints – are not incompatible with the transparency and extensionality of object-seeing ascriptions. If an object can be seen by S only if it visually looks some way to S and is discriminated from the surroundings in virtue of that way it looks, nonetheless such a condition does not turn object-seeing ascriptions into intensional contexts. It is irrelevant for the truth-conditions of the ascription *which* way the object looks to S, what matters is that the way it looks determines the subject's visual phenomenology in such a way to put her in a position to individuate O and differentiate it from its immediate surroundings. So, seeing O is compatible with mistaken acts of categorization – mistaking one's wife for a hat is still seeing one's wife – and more generally with false and illusory perceptions. Actually, as we will see later, illusions and other deceptive perceptions are possible only insofar as they are successful acts of object-seeing. What I believe I am seeing, what I take it to be, does not have any relevance for what I am actually seeing. Seeing-O *as such* is neither correct nor incorrect, neither true nor false, neither right nor wrong. Either it is the case, or it is not.

What determines what S is seeing, is the causal context connecting S and its surroundings: The particular object which is causing the very visual episode, is the object S is seeing, even though only the phenomenological conditions – among the other conditions spelled out above – makes that causal contact into a proper case of

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<sup>26</sup> See Dretske 1969, 1981, 1990, 1995.

seeing. To sum up, in order for S to see O, O must look some way to S, where that “way” is salient in visual phenomenology, but it is not the way O looks that determines what S is seeing, rather, it is the fact that S's visual apparatus is in a certain appropriate causal contact with O, even though such a causal contact counts as a seeing-episode only if it gives rise to a phenomenological difference involving at least a way O looks to S.

In this section, I have spelled out the conditions for *object-seeing*' ascriptions in ordinary contexts, I have then addressed some possible objections to them' being necessary conditions. I have argued that object-seeing is non-cognitive and causally-contextually determined, but has some minimal phenomenological constraints basically consisting of putting S in a position to visually discriminate O from its immediate surroundings. I have also noticed that the logical behavior of *seeing-X* ascriptions is characterized by transparency: Substitution of O's description with co-referential expressions does not affect the truth-conditions of “S sees O”. Seeing-O is an extensional context.

### **Section 3 – Seeing that P, seeing that *a* is F**

#### ***3.1 - Propositionality***

We ordinarily claim to see objects like tables, chairs, people, trees, and so on. But object-seeing in that sense (for O = a physical particular) is not the only kind of “seeing-X” ascriptions in ordinary discourse. We see events, like the sunrise or the fall of a glass on the ground. We see properties, like the yellow of the car and the rectangular shape of the sofa. We see relations, like the difference between the scarlet of your bicycle and the scarlet of my pullover. We also take ourselves and others to see facts or states of affairs, like the fact that just now in my garden a cat is running after a mouse. So, the grammatical object of “seeing-X” ascriptions does not always consist of a “mundane” object like an apple, a chair, a table and the like. That last kind of object-seeing is the one we have analyzed at length until now. Now we will turn to *seeing-that* ascriptions. Later on, we will consider the relations between object-seeing in the basic sense and other less basic “object”-ascriptions (like property-seeing, relations-seeing, events-seeing) on the one side, as well as the relations between basic object-seeing ascriptions and seeing-that ascriptions. Let us

consider the ascriptive scheme:

S sees *that*: [a is F]

Such ascriptions are ascriptions of a propositional attitude. Indeed the *that*-clause is filled by a proposition, just as it happens for thinking-*that*, hoping-*that*, knowing-*that* and the like<sup>27</sup>. Without entering into the logical debate about the nature of propositions, let us assume that a proposition is an abstract entity consisting of a certain structured semantic content, in such a way that an entity – a thought, a sentence, an utterance – expressing a certain proposition is semantically evaluable as true or false in virtue of expressing that proposition, where expressing a certain proposition amounts to possessing a certain (propositional) content. Whilst propositions are either truth-conditions or bearers of truth-conditions for the entities expressing them, propositional contents *are* truth-conditions. The sentence “the vase of flowers in front of me is red” expresses a proposition that makes the sentence true if the vase of flowers in front of me is red, and false if that is not the case. Therefore, a proposition *is* or *bears*<sup>28</sup> a content consisting of a possible fact or state of affairs. Thoughts or sentences (or other content-bearing entities) possessing a certain propositional content, are true or false according to whether such a content is satisfied by a corresponding state of affairs or not.

### 3.2 - *Factivity*

What does it take to be true that S is seeing that P, for example, for P = (*a* is F)?

What logical behaviour characterizes ordinary *seeing-that* ascriptions?

The first relevant property of seeing-*that* ascriptions is their *factivity*:

*Factivity* - S sees that P  $\rightarrow$  P

It is a very strong intuition that if S sees that P, P is the case. If P was not the case, no one could ever see that P. So, *seeing-that* ascriptions behave like *knowing-that*

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<sup>27</sup> See Searle 1983.

<sup>28</sup> For example, Stalnaker 1984 takes it that propositions *are* contents, rather than being content-bearers. Although, such an abstract difference is not relevant at all for our actual concerns.

ascriptions, at least from the point of view of their factivity<sup>29</sup>. Just as you cannot know that P unless P is the case, you cannot see that P unless P is the case. Just as you cannot know something false<sup>30</sup>, you cannot see something false either. This is why ascribing a *seeing-that*-P episode to S involves *endorsing* the truth of P<sup>31</sup> besides making a statement about S or S's occurrent mental episode<sup>32</sup>.

Let us note for the sake of clarity that ascribing to S an episode of seeing that P, obviously is not to say that S sees a proposition. Rather, it is to claim that S sees that actual fact or occurring state of affairs which makes true the proposition P. We will soon explain what “seeing a fact” can mean.

### 3.3 Opacity

The second interesting property of *seeing-that*, shared by propositional attitudes in general, is *referential opacity*:

*Referential opacity* – From (S sees that [a is F]) and (a=b), you cannot infer (S sees that [b is F])

Referential opacity characterizes intensional contexts, where you cannot substitute *salva veritate* co-referential expressions within the proposition towards which the S' attitude is ascribed to be. Opacity is the contrary of transparency, so this is a first important difference between *seeing* and *seeing-that*. Just as you cannot infer that S believes that the morning star is such-and-such from the circumstance that S believes that evening star is such-and-such even if the morning star = the evening star,

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29 Some philosophers coin “seeing”-like expressions as non-factive corresponding counterparts for *seeing-that*. Millikan 2000 introduces the technical notion “to visage”, which is meant to stand to “to see” as believing stands to knowing, such that S can falsely visage that P. Likewise, Johnston 2004 proposes to accept a non-factive reading of *seeing-that* and defines it as “visually entertaining a content”. Byrne 2011 also characterizes visual perception as a *sui generis* attitude he calls “*exing*” (non-factively experiencing that P). As interesting as those proposals could appear from a theoretical point of view, they just confirm what we are arguing for here: The *ordinary* logical behavior of *seeing-that* ascriptions does involve factivity.

30 Of course, you can know that a certain proposition is false. But the proposition that a certain proposition is false, can be known by you just insofar as it is a true proposition. Although some deny it – for example, Hazlett 2010 – factivity of knowledge is mainly accepted by epistemologists.

31 See Sellars 1953, 223: “To characterize S's experience as a *seeing* is, in a suitably broad sense, to apply the semantical concept of truth to that experience”.

32 That is what Armstrong calls “success-grammar” of the determinable *perceive-that* and its determinates. See Armstrong 1968, 212.

likewise you cannot infer that S sees that *b* is F from the fact that S sees that *a* is F even if *a* = *b*. On the contrary, if you sees *a*, and *a* = *b*, you see *b*. So the conditions for ascriptions of *seeing-that* to be true are not the same as the conditions for ascriptions of *seeing-O* to be true. As we will see, the *a-e* conditions spelled out above are not enough for seeing-that.

Provided that it is factive and opaque, what does *seeing-that P* amount to? According to Dretske<sup>33</sup>, *seeing-that* does not consists of a purely *visual* episode, rather it consists of an episode of *coming to know by visual means*. If S sees that P, S comes to know that P is the case through the contribution of one or more visual episodes. The epistemic result of S's seeing-that P is S's knowing that P. In order for such coming-to-know that P to be a case of seeing-that-P, some perceptual-visual episode must be at least *among* the ways in which S has gained that knowledge. Given that Dretske's proposal seems very plausible – it seems to be intuitive and it well explains both opacity and factivity – we can ask what the strictly *visual* conditions are for an episode of coming-to-know that P (where P is piece of empirical knowledge) to count as an episode of *seeing-that-P*.

### 3.4 - Literal/Metaphorical

To address that question, it is opportune to preliminarily make clear that we are exclusively talking about *literal* cases of *seeing-that*. Even though the literal/metaphorical distinction may be blurry and involve borderline cases, we should leave aside the *seeing-that* ascriptions that have nothing to do with the visual way of gaining the respective knowledge, cases where “seeing” just generically means “becoming aware”, “coming-to-know (through whatever means)”, “realizing” and the like. For example, cases like “S sees that the government is in trouble” do *not* concern us, provided that S could see that even if she was completely blind<sup>34</sup>. So,

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33 Cfr. Dretske 1969, 1990, 2000. Also Williamson 2000 and Crane (talk in Manchester, 2008) agree on that.

34 Of course, it can be the case that S sees that the government is in trouble by visual means. For example, S can read that on a newspaper. Cases like that will be analyzed below: They consist of coming-to-know a certain fact through directly coming-to-know *other* facts by visual means, for example facts about what is written on the newspaper. Suppose the news you read are false: you acquire a false belief, but you do not visually misperceive: the mistake does not rest on the seen facts, but on other matters (like trusting the journalist). Knowing that P by visual means is forming

even though *seeing-that* not always means “coming-to-know by visual means” in ordinary discourse, we are exclusively interested in a sub-set of those ascriptions for which the visual involvement is taken by the ascriber to be essential<sup>35</sup>. Just in those cases, “seeing” is not ascribed metaphorically but literally, namely it entails the reference to a perceptual activity involving the eyes, not just a generic way of obtaining knowledge<sup>36</sup>.

With that in mind, we can distinguish at least three kinds of *seeing-that* episodes, according to the nature of visual involvement, into the process of knowledge-acquisition the seeing-that is a result of:

- 1) Literally and directly seen facts: S sees that P when P is made true by a fact whose *constituents* are seen by S. I see that the cat is on the sofa. I see the cat, I see the sofa, I visually appreciate the on-ness spatial relation.
- 2) Facts I come to know as holding on the basis of literally seeing other facts. As soon as I see that the mailbox is empty – through seeing the constituents of that fact: The mailbox, its being empty – I come to know that the postman hasn't arrived yet. I do not see that last fact, rather I come to know it as holding by actually seeing another fact (where seeing that last fact does involve seeing their constituents)<sup>37</sup>. So,

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a perceptual belief that P that is justified on the basis of how things look to one. A belief is perceptual when it is the output of one of one's perceptual system, without being the result of inferential combination of that output with other collateral information. On the difference between perceptual and non-perceptual beliefs, see Lyons 2005.

- 35 In order to realize that *seeing-that* is not just a perceptual episode but an epistemic result of it, consider ascriptions of other non-visual perceptual episodes: We do not ordinarily say that S *touches* that P, S *smells* that P, S *tastes* that P, just because we cannot perceive facts, even though we can well come to know facts in virtue of perceiving those objects, properties and relations which are their constituents. Instead, *hearing-that* ascriptions are also quite in order, because they ascribe episodes of *coming-to-know by auditory means*. Indeed, a paradigmatic case of hearing-that is testimonial knowledge, namely, understanding a spoken sentence and become aware of its content as true. You hear sounds, maybe words, you do not literally hear the propositional content, rather you understand it virtue of hearing sounds and words.
- 36 Also for object-seeing holds the same literal/metaphorical distinction. Our analysis of ordinary object-seeing ascriptions in section 2 does not concern ascriptions like “S sees the Nothingness”, “S sees the Uselessness of Existence” and the like. Those cases do not concern philosophy of perception because do not have to do with perception. Any episode of seeing which could be truly ascribed to a blind subject, does not concern our inquiry.
- 37 It is in this second sense that sometimes we claim to see *past* facts, facts whose holding in the environment is not current anymore: I see that someone came in with muddy boots last night. As Armstrong remarks (see Armstrong 1968, 211) in such cases we can only speak of *seeing-that* P, never of seeing the objects and properties which constitute the fact which makes P true. We wouldn't appropriately claim that we saw the muddy boots or the person, for example. Rather, what we see is the bookmarks on the ground, so the only literally and directly seen fact is that

case 2) involves case 1). I cannot indirectly see that Q unless I literally see that P.

3) Facts I “see” only metaphorically. I come to know that Q, but neither do I literally see constituents of Q, nor do I literally see constituents of the facts which are the proximate sources, or epistemic basis, for coming-to-know that Q.

In both cases 1) and 2), my seeing-that P rests on being in a certain visual contact with the constituents of a fact (objects, properties, relations). Only 1) counts as literally and properly seeing-that, whilst 2) is a derivative ascription, where the visual means are only indirect. They concern knowledge of *another* fact Q, on which knowledge of the P involved in seeing-that-P is epistemically based. 2) involves an inference or another kind of cognitive transition from a proposition to another. While cases of type 3) do not concern us at all, cases of type 2) concern us, although they do only insofar as they involve instantiations of cases of type 1). So, our focus now is on type 1).

What does it take then to see that P – or: that *a* is F – in the sense 1)?

Dretske calls *seeing-that* “epistemic seeing”<sup>38</sup>, to differentiate it from “simple seeing” or object-seeing. Not only is epistemic seeing a propositional state – an attitude toward a proposition – but being in such a state involves *conceptualizing* the constituents of such a proposition. So, seeing-that the vase is on the table amounts to coming-to-know that [the vase is on the table] and that entails that S possesses and exercises the concepts [vase] and [table]. No cognitive system not possessing the concepts *a* and F could ever *see-that* [*a* is F]. So, seeing-that is propositional, cognitive, conceptual, and its ascription generates intensional and opaque contexts, whilst seeing-X ascriptions are neither necessarily cognitive, nor conceptual. Instead they generate extensional and transparent contexts.

Now, under that interpretation of the ordinary ascription of seeing-that P, such an ascribed episode is not *just* a perceptual episode, although it involves at least a perceptual episode as (one of) the means to obtain the perceptual knowledge that

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there are boot-marks on the ground. A negative test for a case being of the kind 1 or 2, is that of asking: Do I also see the constituents of the fact I claim to see? If it is not the case, then I am self-ascribing a case of kind 2, namely, coming to know a fact in virtue of seeing another fact (= in virtue of coming to directly know that fact just by visual means). Kind 2 can even concern the past, as in the case above.

38 Dretske 1969, 1990, 2000.

seeing-that P entails. At that point of the inquiry, we can ask: Which relation does hold between such a visual episode and the propositional-conceptual state of perceptual knowledge resulting from it?

### 3.5 – *Object-seeing and Fact-seeing*

To begin with, we could notice that, even though seeing something it is not a *sufficient* condition to see that something is something, nonetheless seeing something seems to be a *necessary* condition for an episode of seeing-that to occur. So:

$$S \text{ sees that } [a \text{ is } F] \rightarrow S \text{ sees } a$$

Let us consider what I will call the object-property scheme  $[a \text{ is } F]$  for P. Of course, a proposition can also have relations as its constituents. In addition, it is quite normal to come-to-know by visual means that something has a certain relation with something else, for example, that the table is bigger than the chair. I can gain that elemental piece of perceptual knowledge just by looking at the table and at the chair at once. Nonetheless, the object-property scheme is a more primitive way to start with. Actually, coming to know that  $a$  and  $b$  entertain a certain relation, entails coming-to-know that  $a$  has a certain property and  $b$  has a certain property in the first place. So it seems legitimate to begin with the more simple cases. Two objects can entertain a relation only in virtue of having certain properties, so that perceiving a relation entails perceiving properties of the *relata*.

As Jackson points out<sup>39</sup>, *seeing-objects* is even conceptually more primitive than *seeing-facts*. An argument for that is that seeing an object  $a$  can be immediate, namely, not mediated by seeing some other object  $b$  in virtue of whose vision S can be taken to see  $a$ . On the contrary, Jackson successfully argues, S's seeing a fact (i.e. seeing that  $[a \text{ is } F]$ ) must be mediated by S's seeing objects and properties, the constituents of the allegedly seen fact. However, I prefer to leave aside the “mediated/immediate” distinction, because it can capture different notions so its

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39 See Jackson 1977, Chapter I.



meaning is potentially ambiguous (just like the direct/indirect couple)<sup>40</sup>. In any case, if seeing that [*a* is *F*] entails seeing *a*, therefore the *a-e* conditions spelled out in Section 2 for seeing-*X*, are necessary though not sufficient conditions for seeing-that [*a* is *F*]. For any seeing-that ascription, there is an entitlement to ascribe a respective episode of seeing-*O*, but such an entitlement does not hold the other way round. We can see an object *a* in virtue of it looking *F* to us, without seeing *that a* is *F*.

Until now, we have not directly considered the role of seeing *properties* besides the cases of seeing objects and seeing facts. But we have pointed out that when *S* sees an *O*, there must be a way *O* looks to *S*. Actually that “way” is a property, the one through which the seen object is given to *S* in her visual perception. So, we basically see particular objects, but we can see objects just insofar as they are given in perception in some way. They look some way to us, where that “way” is a property.

As we have already said, no matter which way the particular object is given in perception, in order for the particular to be seen, some property of it must be given to *S* and determine the way *O* looks to *S*. Be it the color, a contour, the shape, the property of being moving in a certain way or direction, the size, or anything else. So, object-seeing requires a perceptual relation to a property which enables the subject to discriminate the object and to be visually-phenomenologically conscious of it (“under” that property, so to say). In other terms, we see objects (also) in virtue of becoming visually conscious of some of their properties.

### 3.6 - Conceptuality

But if *S*' seeing an object entails this object's visually looking some way to *S*, that condition is far from being sufficient for seeing *that* the object is that way (the way it looks). To repeat the point, in order for *S* to see that *a* is *F*, *a* looking *F* to *S* is a necessary but not sufficient condition. What else is needed?

Firstly, *S* must possess and exercise the *concepts* involved in the proposition which expresses the seen fact. If *S* is to see that *a* is *F*, *S* must conceptualize *a* and *F*. Without possessing the concepts of [dog], [tree], [running-toward], *S* just cannot see that the dog is running toward the tree, even if *S* could well see the dog, the tree, as

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40 For a criticism of the direct/indirect distinction, see Austin 1962, Martin 2008, cap. 4; Also Travis 2004, 66, argues that such a distinction is occasion-sensitive.

well as the movement of the running dog<sup>41</sup>. Seeing-that amounts to coming-to-know. Knowledge is true belief, beliefs involve concepts, so seeing-that involves concepts. Secondly, S must cognitively grasp the *structure* of the fact. Seeing-that is a propositional attitude, propositions are structured entities, such that attitudes toward those structured contents are structured states in the same way. Suppose I am seeing a red cube under a blue triangle, such that I am visually conscious not only of the [red] and [blue] properties, but also of the [being-under] spatial relation. Moreover, suppose I also possess the respective concepts and also deploy them when perceiving the scene. If seeing the cube and the triangle and being visually conscious both of the [red]-[blue] properties as well as of the [being-under] relation was a *sufficient* condition for seeing that the red cube is under the blue triangle – given also the subject's relevant concept-possession – then such a condition would always entail such a seeing-that. But that is patently false: Such a condition holds also when I see a blue triangle under a red cube, when I see a red triangle under a blue cube, when I see a blue cube under a red triangle, and so on. Given the same visual awareness of the same objects, properties and relations, what makes the difference is exactly the (grasp of the) *structure* of the seen fact. Given a certain scene including a certain structured fact – certain objects having certain properties and standing in certain relations – the visual awareness of its constituents is necessary but not sufficient for seeing that fact, for example for seeing that  $aRb$  ( $bRa$  is another fact despite being made out of the same constituents indeed).

If S possesses the relevant concepts and  $a$  looks F to her, then S is *in a position* to see that [ $a$  is F]. It usually happens, but it is not necessary. Indeed, usually possessing the relevant concepts and seeing an O which visually looks F to one, causes her to come to believe that  $a$  is F, which is her coming to know that  $a$  is F if  $a$  is F and the perceptual relation to that circumstance is appropriate<sup>42</sup>. As we will see in the second

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41 Of course there can well be *de re* attitudes, like demonstrative thoughts and beliefs. I can see that dog, and *of/about that* particular I see, I can see that *it* is running toward a tree. In any case, even if I can see-that  $a$  is F where  $a$  is to be interpreted extensionally and demonstratively – I see that *that* is F, no matter how you ascriber fix the reference of that particular – still I must at least possess the concept of F in order to see that *that* is F.

42 There can well be “veridical illusions”. For example, suppose S's perceptual system is not working properly, O looks F to S and it happens that O is actually F. If S comes to believe that O is F on the basis of a wrongly-caused perception, she would not come to know that O is F thereby, because the visual means grounding her perceptual belief would be not appropriate for justify her belief and would not be able to turn it into knowledge. Such cases are a sub-class of Gettier-cases

part of this work, perception is not to be identified either to belief or to belief-acquiring, even if perceptions usually lead to doxastic states. Provided that seeing-that is acquiring a certain knowledge and knowledge involves belief, it is clear that neither seeing O nor O's looking F to S entail *as such* S's seeing-that O is F.

Let us sum up the points we have established so far:

*Seeing-that* is the ascription of a propositional attitude. It is the ascription of a *factive* state, so that seeing that P entails P. Such ascriptions generate referentially opaque or intensional contexts. Both factivity and opacity are well explained by interpreting the ordinary meaning of *seeing that* as amounting to *coming-to-know by visual means*. So *seeing-that* ascriptions not only ascribe a perceptual episode, rather they ascribe – when used not metaphorically – the acquiring of a piece of empirical knowledge on the basis of a perceptual episode. When that acquiring is not inferential, *seeing-that* (coming to know facts by visual means) not only entails seeing the objects, properties and relations which are the constituent of those known facts, but also involves possession of the relevant concepts on the one side, as well as a cognitive grasp of the structure of the perceptually known fact, on the other side. If having propositional attitudes is a privilege of rational and conceptual beings<sup>43</sup>, then only rational and conceptual beings can see that something is the case.

### 3.7 - Definition

We could embody all those relevant acquisitions into a working definition:

#### **S sees that P iff**

*Thanks to becoming visually aware of those objects, properties and relations which are the constituent of the environmental fact which makes P true, by conceptualizing those constituents and by grasping the structure of that very fact, S comes to know that P is the case.*

## **Section 4 – Seeing-as, seeing something as something**

### *4.1 – Implicativity and Normative Evaluability*

Besides objectual seeing (seeing O) and propositional seeing (seeing-that P), there is another important kind of seeing-ascriptions to be carefully considered, namely, the

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concerning perceptual knowledge. On veridical illusions, see Chapter III, Section 2.4.

<sup>43</sup> See Davidson 1982.

*seeing-as* ascriptions<sup>44</sup>. The basic scheme for that kind of ascriptions is:

S sees *a* as (an) F

Differently from seeing-that, seeing-as is *not* factive. The implication: [S sees *a* as (an) F]  $\rightarrow$  [*a* is F] is false indeed. S can see a particular as F even if that particular is not F. I can see a dark moving object on the street as a mouse, even if it is actually a piece of paper moved by the wind in the dark.

Like seeing-O, seeing-as is *implicative*. In order to see a particular as a mouse or as a piece of paper, I must see it in the first place<sup>45</sup>. Implicativity of *seeing-as* depends on that for each *seeing-as* episode a respective object-seeing episode is involved as its constituent:

[S sees *a* as (an) F]  $\rightarrow$  [S sees *a*]

Maybe what I see as an F is not an F, still I must be successful in seeing it, to wrongly see it as an F. That entails that the *a-e* conditions spelled out in Section 2 for *seeing-O* are at least necessary conditions for *seeing-as* as well. In order to see my wife as a hat<sup>46</sup> I must see my wife in the first place, so the conditions for seeing my wife as a hat include those for seeing my wife *simpliciter*.

So, in order to see *a* as F, I *must* see *a* on the one hand, but I *do not need* to see that *a* is F, on the other. Indeed seeing-that *a* is F is incompatible with *a* not being F (factivity), whilst seeing *a* as F is well compatible with *a* not being F insofar as it is not factive.

Therefore, a very important property of that kind of ascription is that they can be *correct* or *incorrect*, in other words there are *correctness-conditions* associated with

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44 Surprisingly enough, Dretske does not consider at all that kind of seeing. As we will see later, that omission has fatal consequences not only for his semantics of “see”, but also for his substantive, philosophical theory of perception. As far as I know, *all* he has to say about is in a small note (see Dretske 1990, 133, footnote 1), where he recognizes seeing-as as a hybrid way of seeing between object-seeing and fact-seeing.

45 Again, we should keep in mind that we are considering only literal ascriptions of seeing-as, those essentially involving an ascription of a visual perception. Just as S can see the taxation as a state-robbery, S can even see unicorns as nice animals. We are not interested on such non perceptual uses of seeing-as, so we will not talk about them. When literally ascribed, seeing-as is implicative, so that S cannot see *a* as an F unless she sees *a*.

46 See Sacks 1985.

them. Seeing-O *as such* cannot be correct or incorrect. Rather, either you see O or you don't. Likewise, seeing-that P cannot be correct or incorrect either. Rather, either you see that P, or you don't. You cannot *incorrectly* see that P, nor can you correctly see that P for the same reason. *Seeing-that* is an epistemic achievement, it is factive indeed, *seeing-O* is also an achievement insofar as it is implicative and therefore presupposes a real seen object. *Seeing-O* and *seeing-that-P* are essentially *success-expressions*, as we have already noticed.

Only *seeing-as*, then, exhibits the peculiar capacity of being normatively evaluable, it can be right or wrong. With *seeing-as* ascriptions, the *possibility of error* concerning seeing-episodes definitely comes into play. Indeed, until now *seeing-as* episodes are the only seeing-episodes that can be mistaken. Let us go on by steps, let us analyze the ordinary contexts in which *seeing-as* is truly ascribed to a perceiving subject.

What do we ascribe when we claim that S sees *a* as (an) F? Is it a *cognitive* and *epistemic* achievement based on a perceptual episode (like *seeing-that*), or is it rather a thoroughly *perceptual* episode (like *seeing-O*)? To address these questions, let us start from the paradigmatic case of *seeing-as* made famous by Wittgenstein<sup>47</sup>, that of the duck-rabbit ambiguous figure. Ambiguous figures are a very specific subset of *seeing-as* episodes, so, that is just a way to start our analysis. Now we are interested in ambiguous figures only insofar as they are a well-known case of *seeing-as*. In the case mentioned, a figure is presented – a group of sign and lines – which can be “interpreted” as depicting a rabbit (be it F) or as depicting a duck (be it G). So, the same seen O can alternatively be seen *as* an F or *as* a G. As it is well known, the *Gestalt-shift* from a visual interpretation to another is discrete and can be prompted by a voluntary act. Whenever I want to, provided that I am able to visually “see” both the figures in the same drawings, I can suddenly “shift” from a figure to the other. So, *seeing-as* ascriptions seem to be ascriptions of *acts of recognition*. If S sees *a* as an F, S recognizes an (example of) F in the seen object *a*. Seeing-as is recognizing-as.

#### 4.2 – Recognition

But here is a caveat to be done. Although useful, the example of ambiguous figures

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47 See Wittgenstein 1953, Part II, Section xi; Wittgenstein 1991, §§ 1-29. On that, see Bozzi 1998.

can also be misleading for our concerns, for the following reasons: Firstly, it is a case of a cognitively sophisticated visual interpretation of stylized and two-dimensional drawings, which presupposes a fine-grained competence. The idea of abstract figurative representations, the capacity of suspending the judgment about what the seen object really *is*. Perceivers sensitive to that visual flip-flopping obviously know that what they actually see is neither a rabbit nor a duck – and possess many other high-level cognitive skills. *Seeing-as* can be far more primitive than that. For example, it can be meaningfully ascribed to an animal. Secondly and most importantly, considering what you “can see” in a stylized drawing could fatally conceal the fundamental property of *seeing-as*, namely, the circumstance that it can be mistaken. Whatever you see in a drawing, instead, is something you recognize insofar as you are playing a sort of game in which you tell “what you see”. It is not the ordinary situation where someone would tell you: ‘You are wrong, there isn’t anything like what you claim to see!’ Recognition is factive. If you recognize an F, what you have so recognized *is* an F. For example, you cannot visually recognize a real rabbit unless what you are seeing is a rabbit. If that is not the case, at least you can believe, think, take it that you have recognized *a* as a rabbit (or: a rabbit in *a*), but you are wrong in so taking. You have not recognized anything. So, *seeing-as* can consist of an episode of recognition *when* it is correct and successful, but it does not have to consist of that. It can happen to be a failure as well.

Therefore, in successful cases *seeing-as* is perceptual recognition, the exercise of a positive recognitional disposition or capacity. But on closer inspection, also in unsuccessful cases, *seeing-as* is still the (failed) exercise of a *positive* recognitional capacity. That means that by ascribing to S an episode of seeing *a* as an F, you credit S with the general, positive capacity of recognizing examples of F even in case you are consciously ascribing a mistaken occurrent exercise of that general recognitional capacity. I can wrongly see a bat as a bird only if I have a general capacity to see a bird as a bird, even though my actual exercise of such a recognitional capacity is a failed occurrence of my positive cognitive disposition.

So, ascribing to a subject an episode of *seeing-as*, be it ascribed as being a right or wrong *token*, entails ascribing a positive recognitional capacity which can be recursively exercised, whose actual occurrence is the essentially repeatable token of

that type. If S sees *a* as an F, then F is something S has cognitive familiarity with, something S can generally recognize. *Seeing-as* entails general sensitivity to a type. What kind of recognitional capacity is involved in *seeing-as*? *Seeing-as* can be taken as a three-place relation whose constituents are a subject, an object, and a property satisfying the *as*-complement. So we can put the question as follows: *Which* type of properties can stand in the F-place within such a three-place relation [S sees *a* as (an) F?], in *literal* cases of *seeing-as*?

To begin with, *seeing-as* involves a *cognitive stand* toward the perceived object. “Seeing *a* as an F” means *taking* something as an (example) of F. If I see *a* as an F, I see an *a*, and I take what I see as an F. I can be wrong in *seeing-as* just because *seeing-as* is a cognitive 'taking', an exposure to error.

Secondly, according to the kind of property which stands in the F-place, *seeing-as* can consist of different kinds of cognitive acts. Let us carefully make that point more explicit.

We have already ruled out all ordinary uses of the scheme [S sees *a* as an F] where *a* is not the kind of thing which can be literally seen. Seeing an apple as an F, seeing a table, seeing a rabbit as an F, can be cases that concern us, whilst seeing the government, seeing the life, seeing the justice as F are cases we are not interested in, insofar as “seeing” has just a metaphorical, non-perceptual meaning. What about F instead? Provided that *seeing-as* involves a *taking-as* directed at the (literally) seen object, which kind of properties can be the right complement of such a *taking-as* for a given *seeing-as* episode to be of interest for a theory of perception? In other words, which arguments for F are such that *seeing-as* is a *perceptual* episode, though with cognitive significance? For sure, seeing a rabbit as the meaning of my life, seeing a tree as a God's gift and the like, are not perceptual episodes of *seeing-as*, even if they remotely do involve respective cases of object-seeing because the argument for *a* in the ascriptive scheme is filled by typically perceivable particulars.

#### 4.3 – ‘Thick’ categories and sensible profiles

Often the place of F is filled by sortal terms, as “rabbit” and “duck” in the example above. Let us take the example of seeing an object as a real rabbit. Now, is [being a rabbit] a property that can be perceptually detected? [Rabbit] is a natural kind. What

determines whether an animal belongs to a given natural kind, are certain genetic-evolutionary features whose discovery can be the object of a long-lasting scientific inquiry. So, such a natural kind-property does not seem to be the property a subject can *perceptually* see-as. *Seeing-as* amounts to taking a certain cognitive stand toward the seen object, and that stand is specified just by the F-property the object is taken to be. But when we ordinarily ascribe to a subject her seeing something as a rabbit, we ascribe her the exercise of the ordinary [rabbit] *concept* or *category*, namely, sensitivity to a stereotypical intuitive class of particulars, whose exercise is activated by the recognition of a certain *sensible profile* in the seen object. When seeing-as episodes are perceptual, the 'as-an-F taking' act must depend on certain visible traits that are *typically* and *evidently* associated with examples of F's. To be a perceptual episode *seeing-as* must be a recognition of something as an F “just by sight”, without inferences grounded in collateral knowledge or other cognitive transitions involving guessing, reasoning, hypothesizing and the like. For example, I see something as a rabbit only if: 1) I possess the concept [rabbit] or at least the category {rabbit}, on which a positive recognitional capacity of examples of rabbits is grounded 2) I am able to exercise that recognitional capacity of *a* as an F just by looking and visually appreciating a certain *sensible profile* which immediately prompts in my previously established perceptual scheme the activation of a category or a concept [F]. I say “a concept or a category” because *seeing-as* needs not to be conceptual, even if it is essentially cognitive and involves the subsumption of a particular seen object under a *general type*. It is true that when an adult human being is ascribed an episode of seeing something as a rabbit, she is ascribed the possession and exercise of the (ordinary and stereotypical) [rabbit]-concept thereby. Nonetheless, seeing-as-F ascriptions as such not only do not necessarily entail S' possession of the [F]-concept, they do not even entail any concept-possession either. We can legitimately ascribe to a dog an episode of seeing his master as his leader of the pack, without ascribing it either the possession of the [leader of the pack]-concept, or any concept-possession at all. We can claim that a lion sees a running gazelle as a prey without committing ourselves to ascribe the lion concept-possession (possession of the [prey]-concept or of any other concept). Although, we could not ascribe to the dog an episode of seeing his master as the leader of the pack, nor could we ascribe to the lion an episode of



seeing a gazelle as a prey, unless the dog and the lion possess the respective recognitional categories in their “cognitive spaces”, so to say. For sure the general and recursive recognitional disposition concerning Fs is a more rough and inarticulate dispositional state than the possession of *concept* F. Possessing the concept of [leader of the pack] involves being able to do a lot of inferences, being able to understand propositions containing the concept, and so on<sup>48</sup>. Instead, in order for a dog to have the “category” of {leader of the pack}, it needs to manifest a recursive recognitional capacity on the basis of which its behavior is generally interpretable. The dog's {leader of the pack} category has a vaguely similar content to our [leader of the pack] concept, and such a similarity is sufficient to ascribe to a cognitive system a certain seeing-as-F state using a concept in the ascription without committing oneself to attribute possession of that concept to the subject. To sum up that last fundamental point: *Seeing-as* is cognitive but it is not necessarily *conceptual* nor is it *epistemic*, but it presupposes a general recognitional capacity we have provisionally called “category”. Category-possession is much less demanding than concept-possession and can be ascribed just on a behavioral basis. It does not entail inferential and rational capacities, for example<sup>49</sup>.

Let us now consider an example of *seeing-as* made by Crane<sup>50</sup>. An infant and a scientist both look at a cathode ray tube. Even though both see it, the difference between them is that the scientist see it as a cathode ray tube, because he possesses the concept of cathode ray tube and exercises it perceiving it, whilst the infant cannot

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48 See Chapter II, Section 1.6. Differently from concept-possession, category-possession does not require the Generality Constraint to hold: in order S to possess the categories F and G, F does not have to grasp what it is to see *a* as a G and *b* as an F just because S sees *a* as an F and *b* as a G. Likewise, *seeing-as* or recognitional categorization does not require what I have called the Rationality Constraint to hold: in order to see *a* as (an) F you do not need to be able to draw a set of relevant inferences, you do not need to have inferential abilities at all, insofar as perceptual *seeing-as* is proto-propositional rather than being a fully-fledged propositional attitude, like *seeing-that*.

49 So “seeing-as” denotes the occurrent episodic exercise of a recognitional *pre-doxastic* capacity/disposition, *pace* Tye 2000, 215, who writes: “Object or shape recognition in vision [...] is a matter of seeing that such and such a type of object is present. Seeing that something is the case, in turn, is a matter of forming an appropriate belief or judgment on the basis of visual experiences or sensations [...] there are two components in visual recognition, a belief component and a looking component”. There are indeed a recognitional, cognitive component (thick categorization) and a looking-, strictly visual component (sensible profile), but the recognitional component is not necessarily a belief nor does it involve a *seeing-that* episode. If it was the case, it would sound inappropriate to ascribe a *seeing-as* episode to animals we do not normally credit with beliefs, concepts and propositional attitudes. Unless we do accept a very little demanding notion of belief, then, Tye seems to me plainly wrong in assimilating *seeing-as* to *seeing-that*.

50 Crane 1992, 3ff.

see it as a cathode ray tube just because she lack the respective concept.

Well, it is true that seeing something as a cathode ray tube entails possessing the [cathode ray tube] concept, which in turn entails having a certain net of beliefs and a certain inferential capacity concerning reasoning and propositional knowledge about cathode ray tubes, their functions, and so on. In the same vein, we cannot see an object as a toaster without possessing the [toaster]-concept. However, that condition does not depend on *seeing-as* as such, it rather depends on the specific properties under which the *seeing-as* subsumes the seen objects. The properties of [being a cathode ray tube] and [being a toaster] are not the kind of properties which can be grasped by a non-conceptual being – nor can they be grasped by a conceptual being lacking those respective concepts, unless in case grasping them is the very acquisition of the respective concepts – but that does not mean that any general recognitional capacity or categorical object-typing needs be conceptual thereby. On the contrary, there is a non-conceptual *seeing-as*, even though it cannot concern the visual recognition of those properties which only conceptual beings can be cognitively sensitive to. By *seeing-as*, I just recognize something – known or familiar to me – *in* an object in virtue of visually appreciating its sensible profile, and not every recognition involves a conceptualization. *Some* recognitions do (i.e. of a cathode ray tube, of a toaster), some don't.

#### 4.4 - Definition

Let us try to provide a definition of ordinary *seeing-as* now:

##### **S sees a as an F iff**

*S sees an F in a thanks to the exercise of a general recognitional capacity for Fs prompted by the visual appreciation of a's objective sensible profile.*

For all we have said, it is clear that an important feature of *seeing-as* ascriptions is their *referential opacity*. Such an opacity depends on the fact that they are ascriptions of a certain cognitive stand of the subject toward an object, of a certain *taking-as*. Even if such a taking-as may be non-conceptual but “categorical” or recognitional, nonetheless in “S sees *a* as (an) F” you cannot *salva veritate* substitute the “F” with

co-referential expressions. Of course, you can substitute *a* with a co-referential expression *b*, because seeing-*a* is transparent and extensional. What is not transparent and extensional, is not the specification of what you see (*a*), rather it is the specification of the way you cognize or categorize what you see (of the “F” you take *a* as being). So *seeing-as* ascriptions are referentially opaque, even if they entail transparent *seeing-O* ascriptions as their constituents (as it was the case of *seeing-that* ascriptions as well).

#### 4.5 – What is a Sensible Profile? The SCM-properties

A last remark is worth examining. Even if the arguments for F in [S sees *a* as (an) F] are usually sortal terms – a prey, a rabbit, a cathode ray tube, a duck, an apple, a table, and so on – actually that is not necessarily the case. The argument for F can well be the property of [being a red thing], [being of a certain shape] and so on. Despite the fact that an expression like “seeing something as red” sounds less natural than “seeing something as an apple”, the logic of ascription is the same. S sees an object as having a certain color that S can recursively recognize, a color to which S is perceptually and cognitively sensitive<sup>51</sup>. In cases of seeing something as red, as square, as having a certain size, and so on, there is not just a categorization prompted by the appreciation of a sensible profile, there is also a recognition of properties directly belonging to the strictly, visually appreciated sensible profile. So, there are *seeing-as* episodes that concern purely *perceptual* properties, even if they are cognized or recognized within the episode. Accordingly, there are two possible kinds of mistake involved in *seeing-as*: A mistake consisting of prompting the wrong category in front of a particular exhibiting a sensible profile which is correctly appreciated by the subject, and a mistake consisting of failing to appreciate properties the very sensible profile is made of, so to speak. An example of the first mistake could be a case in which S correctly sees a shape with a color, a size (a case of seeing the sensible profile as it is) but she takes the particular exhibiting that

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51 The very same happens with the locution “O looks F” or “O looks as an F”: the argument for F can be an adjective, like “red”, or a sortal term, like “a tomato”, but both refers to properties, the property of being red and the property of being a tomato. See Price 2011, 141. In the same vein, we can say that S sees O as F or S sees O as an F, according to whether F denotes a property to be expressed with an adjective, like [red], or a sortal property to be expressed by a name, like [a tomato]. Anyway, both “seeing something as a red thing” and “seeing something as a tomato”, are ascriptions having the same *structure*, although the properties referred to are quite different.

profile to be an F when it is not an F. An example of the second mistake could be the case in which you see a particular as having a shape, and/or a color, and/or a size, that the particular does not objectively exhibit. The latter is a purely visual mistake, so to speak. The first is a cognitively thicker mistake.

What do we mean by the recognized properties directly belonging to the *sensible profile*? It is that set of properties the visual system is sensitive to in the first place. In what follows, I will call them *spatial-chromatic-morphological* properties (SCM), namely, those properties the subject must be visually aware of in the first place, in order to be able to take that visually appreciated sensible profile as being something known, as being an (example of) F<sup>52</sup>. Without seeing an object as having certain colors, certain shapes and sizes, certain locations and spatial relations with the surroundings, a subject could not take any seen object to be anything else. I call an instantiated cluster of those basic SCM properties an objective “sensible profile”<sup>53</sup>. A particular is seen by S in virtue of S being aware of some properties of its sensible profile, in virtue of S looking some way so S, as we had put the same point above.

#### 4.6 – The features of seeing-as

Let us finally sum up that long but necessary digression about *seeing-as* ascriptions:

- 1) [Seeing *a* as (an) F] is implicative (*a* must be there to be seen) but it is not factive (*a* may not be an F), it has correctness-conditions insofar as it may be wrong/incorrect/mistaken.
- 2) It does not entail *seeing-that a* is (an) F even though it puts the subject in a position to see-that *a* is an F, provided that the subject possesses the concept of F and the relevant propositional capacities. Though, seeing *a* as an F does not necessarily involve either the [F]-concept possession or conceptual abilities at all.
- 3) Nonetheless, *seeing-as* is cognitive and involves a *taking-as* stand toward the seen object, consisting of the exercise of a positive recognitional, 'categorical' capacity. Such ascriptions are referentially opaque just insofar as they ascribe a way an object is *cognized* by the subject and from the point of view of the subject.
- 4) Finally, when it is used non-metaphorically but literally, as referring to episodes of

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<sup>52</sup> In the same vein, McGinn 1982, 42, calls those properties the “manifest properties” of an object.

<sup>53</sup> I take the expression from Johnston 2004, but I do not mean to commit myself to his way of characterizing it.

recognition-by-vision, *seeing-as* presupposes the visual awareness of a *sensible profile* – made out of spatial-chromatic-morphological properties – as a strictly perceptual basis for the thicker categorization (in case F is not itself a SCM property like being of a certain color, shape, size, location and the like). So far so good for *seeing-as* ordinary ascriptions.

## Section 5 - Looking, seeming, appearing

### 5.1 – Looks/Seems/Appears: Analogies and differences

Ascriptions of visual perceptions often involve predicates – like “seeming”, “looking”, “appearing” – belonging to the “experiential” vocabulary, that characterize the ascribed visual episode from the point of view of the subject, so to speak<sup>54</sup>. Let us straightforwardly start our analysis by using everyday examples. Consider some common ordinary uses of “looks” to begin with:

- 1) *a* looks F (to S)
- 2) *a* looks like (an) F
- 3) *a* looks (to S) as if it is F
- 4) It looks (to S) that [*a* is F], It looks as though [*a* is F], It looks as if [*a* is F]
- 5) There looks to be an *a* which is F

The *looking*-ascriptions are but only one relevant type among the ascriptions involving what Chisholm calls the “language of appearing”<sup>55</sup>. Indeed analog statements to “looks ----” could be constructed with “appears” and “seems” – when used in visual contexts – in the place of “looks”<sup>56</sup>. Although, as Austin suggests<sup>57</sup>, there are relevant and philosophically interesting differences between appears-, seems-, and looks- ascriptions in ordinary discourse. Firstly, suitable contexts of ascriptions for “looks” do normally involve *vision*. At least, they involve episodes of

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54 As we will see, “looks F” often characterizes something as having an *objective* look. When I say that expressions as “looks” have to do with the point of view of the experiencing subject, I mean that even objective looks are potential ways of being experienced by one (by everyone, by a “normal” perceiver) as looking in such-and-such way. Without any subject of experience at all, even objective looks would just be purely *potential* looks.

55 Chisholm 1957, Chapter 4.

56 Austin 1962, 33-43.

57 *Ibidem*.

*seeing*, so that when they are used with reference to non-visual episodes they are metaphorical applications stretching the proper sense of “looking” in the same way as “seeing” itself can be stretched as to cover non-visual cases (see above). On the contrary, “appears” and “seems” may or may not carry an implicit reference to vision or to literal seeing. An *a* may well *non-metaphorically appear* or *seem* F without *a* being seen or *a* being a typically visible entity, without its appearing F being the consequence of a visual episode (for example, of the appreciation of a visually given sensible profile). According to Austin, while “looks” involves a *visual appearance*, “appears” tendentially involves a reference to *special circumstances* and “seems” tendentially involves a reference to *evidence*. Let us consider that taxonomy by considering an example: a) “He looks guilty” b) “He appears guilty” c) “He seems guilty”. Approximately, they respectively mean: a) His *visual appearance* is typical of guilty men (be he guilty or not) b) Given such *unusual circumstances*, one may take him as being guilty (even if he is not) c) There is a *prima facie evidence* that he is guilty.

So, a man can seem guilty without looking guilty. Independently of his visual appearance, there may be evidence that he is guilty. *Vice versa*, a man can look guilty without seeming guilty. Despite exhibiting a visual appearance which is typically associated with guilt, there is non-visual evidence that he is not guilty. So, a man can appear guilty without either looking or seeming such. For example, he can appear to be guilty given such and such extraordinary coincidences, but fortunately for him there is independent evidence that these are just coincidences, and so on. Of course, these three uses are not unrelated: The *a*'s distinctive visual appearance (look) may well be used as an evidence (seem) supporting the proposition that *a* is F. Likewise, a distinctive look exhibited by *a* may be what you appeal to when you state that *a* appears F in special circumstances. But there is no immediate implication from looking to seeming, or from looking to appearing, or the other way round. One could understandably say that the Moon *looks* no bigger than a sixpence, even if she would never say that the Moon *seems* no bigger than a sixpence<sup>58</sup>. “Seeming” has to

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58 “Seems”-, “looks”- and “appears”- ascription are occasion-sensitive, so to say. Depending on the context even their relation changes. For example, as Austin suggests, football players seen from the highest seats of the stadium can be said to “look like ants” without that implying at all that they “seem ants” thereby. So, that an animal looks like a pig in the distance, could eventually be used as a *prima facie* evidence that it is a pig, so that one could say that it also seems a pig. But if a cloud is

do with a non-conclusive evidence, and is therefore appropriate for cases when it may or it may not be the case. If you know that *a* is not F, you do not generally say that *a* seems F, neither do you say that if you know that *a* is F. A particular feature of “seems”, having to do with its reference to evidence, makes its logical behavior quite different from both “appears” and “looks”. You can say that judging from its appearance, something is such-and-such, you can say that judging from its look, something is such-and-such, but you cannot say that judging from its seeming, something is such and such. That depends on “lookings” and appearances being *facts* on which a judgment can be based, whilst “seeming” is already a *prima facie* judgment or an inclination to judge. In other words, “seems” refers to a certain body of evidence, “looks” and “appears” refer to facts that may eventually count as a non-conclusive evidence for a proposition, that a seeming consists of. Given all that, given also that “appears” when used as involving vision can be substituted by “looks” plus a reference to some special circumstances<sup>59</sup> – it is clear that the constructions involving “look” are of the greatest interest for our concerns. Indeed in their most natural use they seem essentially to have to do with visual perception, differently from “appears” and “seems”. Consequently, let us focus on them.

## 5.2 – A principle governing 'looks'-ascriptions

In the Austinian example provided above, the predicate standing as a complement of “look” does not actually denote a typically visible property: [guiltiness], whatever it is, is not the kind of property we would take as observational, as something the eyes could be directly sensitive to in the first place<sup>60</sup>. Nonetheless, seeing someone and appreciating a certain cluster of visual SCM-properties typically associated with that ‘thick’ property ([being guilty]), can make it possible that one *looks* guilty, appears

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said to look like a pig instead, there would not be any temptation whatsoever to say that the cloud *seems* a pig thereby.

59 Of course not *every* occurrence of “appears” implicitly or explicitly entails the presence of special circumstances. Ordinary discourse is occasion-sensitive, context-dependent, variable, heterogeneous. Austin himself does not mean to argue that a reference to special circumstances is necessary for “appears” to be appropriate. Rather, he tries to reconstruct the use of such an expression according to what a normal speaker *usually* and *generally* does with that expression.

60 I argued above (see Section 2) that we can see an object only in virtue of being visually aware of some of its properties. In that sense, if S sees O, O must look somehow to S. Now, nothing can be literally seen by one *only* in virtue of looking guilty to one. Rather, it can be seen in virtue of looking blue, so-and-so shaped, moving, and the like. For the time being, that intuitive test should be enough to demarcate observational properties from non-observational ones.

guilty according to its look, seems guilty to one if one is to judge him just on the basis of his actual look. So, we can express that as a general principle:

*In order for something a to look F, when F is not an SCM-property, a must look G in the first place, where G is a complex of SCM-properties which individuates a certain visual profile.*

Let us forget guiltiness then, whose recognition just-by-looking, by the way, presupposes high-level skills at recognizing facial patterns, at fine-grained psychological interpretations of expressions matched with verbal and non-verbal behavior, and so on. But even if we take another non-SCM complement of “looks” involved in the ascriptive scheme “a looks F” – like “a pig”, “a table”, “a tree” – still the principle just mentioned holds. Something can look F (say a pig) only if it exhibits a sensible profile made of a certain cluster of SCM-visual properties<sup>61</sup>. For example, those distinctive features typically characterizing pigs, like a pinkish color, a certain shape and size, certain movements, and the like. So, what I have just noted also entails that for an *a* to look F to S, S must possess the recognitional capacity for Fs, namely, S must be able to be prompted to a certain recognition by being able to associate that known/familiar type of things with the as much familiar typical, distinctive sensible profile exhibited by things of that type. So, we should distinguish expressions like “looks angry, looks (like) a pig, looks European” and the like, from expressions like “looks blue, looks round, looks to be moving toward me, looks big” and the like. When “looks” is used literally, the first type of ascription to one's experience always and necessarily entails the second type. Roughly put, there is a purely visual-perceptual “look” on the one hand, and a cognitively loaded recognition based on the appreciation of a purely visual-perceptual look, on the

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<sup>61</sup> For now I keep totally neutral about whether properties like [table] or [pig] can be represented in perception. According to the Content View on perception, O's looking F to S can, for some cases at least, consist on S's visual experience's *representing* the property F as instantiated by O. According to our principle above, *if* the Content View is true and *if* properties like [table] and [pig] could be contents of perceptual experiences, then it would be true that: In order an experience to represent something as a pig or as a table, the very same experience must represent the object as instantiating such-and-such SCM properties, like [pink], [of that size] and the like, in the first place.



other<sup>62</sup>. No thick recognition just by looking, without sensitivity to strictly visual properties.

### 5.3 – Three uses of 'looks'

Not only are there many possible constructions involving “looks”, there also seem to be different and irreducible uses of that expression. A classical taxonomy of these uses has been notoriously provided by Chisholm<sup>63</sup>. Chisholm distinguishes three uses which he respectively calls *epistemic*, *comparative*, and *non-comparative*. Such a threefold taxonomy has been successively articulated by Jackson as well<sup>64</sup>, though Jackson's version is slightly different as we will see soon.

Let us introduce and consider such a proposal for a critical assessment in the first place.

The epistemic use is paradigmatically (but not only) given in the propositional construction like “It looks as if P”, for example, “It looks as if the dog is running after a cat”, or “it looks as if it will rain soon”. Such sentences can be indexed to a subject (“It looks to me/to S that P). Their use is called epistemic insofar as they allegedly mean: *There is a body of visually acquired evidence that supports the proposition P*<sup>65</sup>. So, “It looks (to me) as if P” roughly captures the situation referred to by Austin when a certain visual look is considered as a potential evidence for a proposition, resulting in a “seeming”. But while “seeming” is already committal, it is a *guarded assent*, the epistemic use of “looking” is not necessarily committal. That there is a body of visually acquired evidence that supports the proposition P, can well be compatible with the knowledge that non-P, while such a circumstance is ruled out for “seeming”-claims. If I know or believe that it is not going to rain, I can say that it

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62 Here “based” does not entail inferential processes from premises to conclusions of course, but it only entails that given a capacity of a certain kind, a more basic capacity of another type must be already in play.

63 See Chisholm 1957, ch. 4.

64 See Jackson 1977.

65 Such epistemic use of “looks”, individuated by Chisholm and Jackson, corresponds to the Austinian analysis of “seems” where the evidence supporting the proposition must be of a visual nature. On the epistemic sense of 'looks', see also Alston 1999 and Lyons 2005. Lyons distinguishes a 'pure' and an 'experiential' sense of what he calls epistemic-doxastic 'looks'. According to the pure use, X looks F to S iff S is disposed to believe that X is F, according to the experiential use, X looks F to S iff the way X looks to S disposes S to believe that X is F. We are interested in the experiential use here. I have called the pure use, at least when not essentially connected with perceptual means, 'metaphorical' (just as *seeing* when not involving the visual apparatus), and I leave it to one side.

looks as if it is going to rain<sup>66</sup>, but I would not say that it seems that it is going to rain. Maybe I have heard the official forecast, so that I know it will be sunny, but at the same time it looks as if it is going to rain soon because the sky is darkish and the air is wet. So, “it looks as if” is a non committal claim that there is visually acquired *prima facie* evidence supporting a proposition, independently of whether P is known to be true or false for other reasons (non-visual collateral knowledge and the like).

However, there is a non-propositional construction not considered by Jackson, consisting of the scheme “*a* looks (to me) as if it is F” (let's say: F = triangular). As Maund points out<sup>67</sup>, in such ascriptions (or self-ascriptions) the object *a* must be a seen object which plays a causal role in the ascribed experience of *a*'s looking F to one. Differently from “It looks as if [*a* is F]”, “*a* looks as if it is F”, for example, is not compatible with S not seeing *a* at all, while on the contrary it may (even visually) look to me as if *a* is F because I see that *b* is G and *b*'s being G supports the proposition that *a* is F<sup>68</sup>. So, in sentences like the latter, two distinct elements are involved, a *seen object a*, and a *distinctive way* it looks which can eventually provide a reason for a certain belief about *a* (so to ground a “seeming” concerning *a*). The non-propositional construction – let us call it *de re*-looking construction – therefore involves reference to a distinctive visual appearance of the seen object,<sup>69</sup> while the propositional construction does not<sup>70</sup>.

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66 Although, it would not be a very natural thing to say. That may be why Travis 2004, 76, does not agree: “It cannot look as if X on this notion where it is perfectly plain that X is not so”. I find that if you say “It looks as if P even if not-P”, you are saying that all the evidence immediately available supports P, but you have other sources of knowledge which defeat such evidence. Maybe it sounds a bit unnatural, but it seems to be perfectly understandable.

67 I take that remark by Maund 2003, 137ff.

68 For example, it seems to me to recognize the postman coming toward my house, so I say: “It looks as if the mailbox is still empty”. I see the postman and his coming toward my house, so that seen fact supports the proposition that the mailbox is still empty (given that I have already taken home the post yesterday). Seeing *b* (postman) and seeing that *b* is G (him coming to my house) supports the proposition that *a* is F (the mailbox is empty). No causal role is directly played by the mailbox in that “looking”, I don't even need to be seeing it. Differently, if I say that “the mailbox looks as if it was empty”, presumably I am seeing it, maybe without opening it so that there can be room for doubt (otherwise I would just say that the mailbox is empty).

69 As Sellars points out, in ascribing “X looks red to S”, I am *endorsing* the existence of X, while in ascribing “It looks to S as if there is a red object over there”, I am not even endorsing the existence of an object seen by S and looking to her a certain way. See Sellars 1953, § 21. For example, the first can be a successful perception or an illusion, but not a hallucination, the second could be also a hallucination without any object being there to be seen. On these lines goes also Snowdon's disjunctivist treatment of 'looking'-ascriptions: if (it looks as if there is an F), *either* (there is something which looks to S to be F) *or* (it is to S as if there is something which looks to S to be F). See Snowdon 1981, 185.

70 So, if it is true that “If I see something it looks somehow to me” (Shoemaker 1975, 299), as we

The second use of “looks” is called *comparative* by both Chisholm and Jackson. It typically (but not exclusively) comes in *look-like* constructions, like “X looks like (an) F”, “X looks like Y” and so on. For example, “Jack looks like his brother”, “that zebra from here looks like a horse”, “Tom looks like a poodle”, “the football players, seen from the high terraces of the stadium, look like ants, or like black spots”, and the like. That use explicitly establishes a comparison between two things with respect to the way each of them respectively looks (where only one thing needs to be actually seen). They look the same way, namely, they exhibit a similar visual appearance. That comparison may be indexed to a subject, to more or less special circumstances, to a time, to a point of view, and so on. For example, to me, now, with that light and from my actual point of view, that zebra over there looks like a horse. That indexing does not mean that comparative looking-claims are intrinsically subjective. On the contrary, A can look like B, or like an F, without further qualifications. Two things can share a shape, a color, a whole sensible appearance just because that is the way they are, they look similar when both appearing as they are, seen in standard circumstances by anybody. Moreover, *when a looking-claim is made which is indexed to a subject and to her actual point of view, there is not necessarily a reference to the individual subjectivity involved in the particular episode.* I can well say that X looks like Y to me, from here, in these circumstances, meaning that such-and-such conditions makes X and Y look the same (or similar), whoever is looking at them in *these* conditions I now find myself in<sup>71</sup>. A football player seen from the highest seats of the stadium, objectively – at least intersubjectively – looks like an ant, like a black small rolling ball, and so on. Ways of looking, and the relational property of something's looking like something else, are *publicly* assessable features of objects<sup>72</sup>. The comparative use, though, must be

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have argued for above, on the other side it is true the other way round, namely, that if something looks somehow to me, I must be seeing it.

71 Here by “these conditions” I mean: The type of conditions of which my actual conditions are a token.

72 As Austin brilliantly points out “[...] the way things look is, in general, just as much a fact about the world, just as open to public confirmation or challenge, as the way things are. I am not disclosing a fact about *myself* but about petrol, when I say that petrol looks like water” (Austin 1962, 64). To use Searle's expression, the reciprocal property of looking the same (characterizing two things) is not “ontologically subjective” (Searle 1992). If it presupposes ontologically subjective properties characterizing the experience of a subject who appreciates such a looking-like relation, that has to be argued on independent bases. Looking-like relations are objective relations appreciated by subjects through their experiences.

distinguished from the epistemic use because it does not entail any evidence supporting a proposition, any “seeming” to S as if things are in a certain way. X's looking like Y or like an F to S, does not entail at all that it looks to S as if X is Y or an F. That drawn shape looks like a horse to S, but it in no way looks as if it is a horse. Appreciating the similarity of the way X looks to the way F looks is by no means the same as being inclined to believe that X is an F, nor is it the same as taking X's look as eventually supporting the proposition that X is F. So, comparative looking has nothing essential to do with *evidence* (even though, obviously, a similarity between the looks exhibited by two objects *may* be used as evidence for propositions concerning the respective things). A relevant feature of the comparative use is that, when the ascriptive scheme involves an object and a sortal term as in “*a* looks like an F to S”, ascribing a comparative looking-like experience to a subject entails ascribing her the general capacity to recognize Fs just by looking, to have both familiarity with F's sensible profile and the recognitional capacity concerning examples of F as such. If *a* can look like a table to me, then generally I must be able to recognize tables just by looking, I must be familiar with tables, if I must know what they are (where “knowing” is to be meant loosely, as not necessarily involving the possession of the respective concept but only the recognitional category, see above the *seeing-as* Section).

Both the epistemic and the comparative use of “look” have to do with visual appearances as experienced by a subject. The epistemic use involves a certain body of evidence being *visually acquired*, so it implicitly ascribes a visual experience to a subject. The comparative use, by comparing ways of looking, presupposes the subject's visual sensitivity to each of both ways of looking which are compared. For example with *the way a* looks as grasped as being the same as *the way* Fs look)<sup>73</sup>. In order to visually appreciate a *looking-like* relation, I must be able to visually appreciate the involved *relata* in the first place<sup>74</sup>. Indeed looking like an F is looking

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73 On pain of infinite regress, “X looks like (an) F” must presuppose a non-comparative grasp of the general way Fs look. If that way was specified by F's looking like Gs, an implicit reference to the way Gs look would be made thereby. Now, if G's looking such-and-such was also comparatively specified, then a foothold for that last comparison should be pointed, and so on. We need to stop at some point and refer to *the way* things of a certain kind generally look, independently on them looking like something else.

74 By pointing a *looking-like* relation, either we can compare the typical way Fs look with the typical way Gs look, or we can compare the particular way that F looks now in that actual circumstance

the way an F *looks*, so the comparative use is explained using “looks F”. If the comparative use was not grounded on another non-comparative sense of “looks”, his explanation would be patently circular and involve a regress<sup>75</sup>.

#### 5.4 – *Is there a phenomenological 'looks'?*

So, it seems that both those uses presuppose a third, more fundamental use of “looks” which is neither the epistemic one nor the comparative one but must be implicitly involved in them. Chisholm negatively calls it “*non-comparative*”, while Jackson positively labels it “*phenomenal*”. Such a use refers to *the way* or to *a way* something visually looks, which both can ground a *looking-like* claim – *a* looks like an F because both *a* and Fs look *that way* – as well as an epistemic use – *a*’s looking this way may be an evidence that *a* is this or that way. How are we to specify a way something visually looks without appealing either to what it looks like or to what it seems *prima facie* to be? By describing a sensible profile as an arranged and unified complex of SCM properties (for SCM=spatial-chromatic-morphological). For example, if *a* looks like a pig, it must look the way pigs typically look. So *how* do pigs typically look? Excluding a circular comparative appeal to some other type of things pigs could look like, we are to individuate some typical “piggish” visible features, a complex pattern of SCM-properties exhibited by pigs in standard conditions: Colors, shape, movements and patterns of movements, size, shape-details, and so on. Such a complex visual appearance would constitute a complex *look* decomposable in elements like: It looks [pink], It looks [round (in a certain manner)], it looks [with that and that shape] and so on<sup>76</sup>. Recognizing a pig just by

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with the typical way Gs look, or we can compare the typical way Fs look in certain circumstances with the typical way Gs look in other circumstances.

75 That remark is made by Byrne 2011, 72. Travis 2004 complains that *looking-like* claims are normally silent on what way is both the relata just look. “Pia looks like her sister”: Well, *what way*, *how*, do Pia and her sister look? He takes that as an argument against that lookings cannot determine the content, but that is not our concern here. To take in Travis’ suggestion about looking-like, we need to individuate another non comparative use and sense of “look” to make sense of the comparative use. Travis does not recognize any other non-comparative use apart from the one Chisholm and Jackson call the epistemic use.

76 The verbal description of a F’s general sensible profile could not be as fine-grained as needed for individuation of that sensible profile. That is not the issue at stake here though. I am talking about distinctive visual profiles, whose indication could eventually need to be partially demonstrative. For example, “that round shape typical of pigs” would be circular as a part of the description of a general way pigs look, but it could make sense as a demonstrative way to pick out a certain peculiar round shape in order to be understood by one who is familiar with pigs and their visual

sight presupposes being able to be visually aware of these *look*-properties as well as of their unified complex as a global sensible profile, and appreciate them as potential presentations of pigs.

Such a “phenomenological” use of looks<sup>77</sup> therefore would concern strictly visual properties and sensible profiles. According to Jackson<sup>78</sup>, the phenomenal use – that is how he calls it – is limited to properties like “red”, “triangular”, “moving”, and the like, so that “it looks blue” can be phenomenal but “it looks old” cannot<sup>79</sup>. Moreover, he argues that “looks” has such a special meaning when (and only when) it is followed by what I have been calling SMC-predicates, namely, terms for colors, shapes, sizes, distances and the like. Why is there a need for introducing that third use? Is its application really limited to SCM-properties? What Jackson calls “phenomenal use” is the one involved in cases like the following ones:

- 1) There is a sense in which a tilted coin looks elliptical to S, even if it seems round to S.
- 2) There is a sense in which a red surface at night looks brown, even if it seems red to S.
- 3) There is a sense in which a blade of grass before S's eyes looks bigger to S than a huge tree in the distance (which is the same sense in which the Moon looks no bigger than a sixpence).
- 4) There is a sense in which a straight stick into water looks bent, even if it seems straight and not bent.

Now, these cases do not hint at all at a body of visually acquired evidence for a

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recognition. What matters here are visual properties we are sensitive to, not our verbal description of them.

77 While Jackson calls it “phenomenal”, I prefer the looser characterization of it as “phenomenological” because Jackson's positive account of that use takes it as involving mental objects which strongly resemble the more classical and notorious *sense-data*. But just recognizing the existence of a phenomenological use in the ordinary discourse is still neutral on the existence of intrinsically subjective phenomenal properties having a suspicious ontology like *sense-data*. See below.

78 See Jackson 1977, 77ff.

79 Also Tye 2000, 54, agrees with Jackson on that phenomenal looks talk involves locutions of the form “X looks F to S” where 'F' must express a *sensory* property. Other philosophers, who hold a) that high-level properties like [dog] or [lemon] can be represented in visual perception b) that the phenomenology of experience supervenes on represented properties, do not limit the phenomenal look-ascriptions to strictly visual properties.

proposition, so the epistemic use is ruled out as a candidate for interpreting the sentences above. The coin's looking elliptical in that context is by no means even *prima facie* evidence that it is elliptical (at least it *may* be evidence that it is round). The surface's looking brown in that case is not evidence for it being brown (at least it is evidence for it being red). The blade of grass's looking bigger than the tree in that circumstance is not evidence for the proposition [the blade is bigger than the tree], the bent appearance of the stick partially immersed into water is not evidence for its being bent<sup>80</sup>. Nor are these essentially comparative cases. If they were, in any case they would presuppose implicit reference to *a* look to be picked out non-comparatively (may be demonstratively, or otherwise), on pain of circularity. So they need to belong to a third, irreducible use or sense of “looking”<sup>81</sup>.

Perhaps some would not agree that that is a legitimate *ordinary* use of “looks”, indeed some hold that it is actually just a piece of philosophical jargon. But do we really need any philosophical background at all to immediately understand 1-4, to understand for example that the Moon looks no bigger than a sixpence in a *certain* sense? I do not think we do. On the contrary, we do talk that way quite naturally. Provided that we do, it has to be made explicit *what* we do when we do so. According to Jackson, in doing so we implicitly quantify over mental objects having intrinsically subjective phenomenal properties, namely mental items which are analogous to the classical *sense-data*<sup>82</sup>. But I think it is quite possible to hold that there is a “phenomenological” use of “looks” in ordinary discourse about experiences and experienced things, without accepting that there is an even implicit commitment to *sense-data*-like entities as a result. For that I call that third use *phenomenological* because it sounds more neutral than “phenomenal”. Indeed, that use has to do with the ways a thing can appear to a perceiver, but that in no way entails that such ways of appearing are necessarily 'mental' or intrinsically subjective.

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80 The Jackson's proposal on which the 'phenomenal use' is limited to SCM-properties, does not mean that *any* look-ascription followed by SCM-properties must be phenomenal. An SCM-look ascription may well be epistemic. An object may be said to look red because there is *prima facie* evidence, in certain circumstances of (non-optimal) observation, that it is red, so it looks *to be* red. It is important to remark that an object can keep its 'purely visual' epistemic look (that size, that shape, that color) and change its 'non purely visual' epistemic look: a DVD can look intriguing and then unappealing, because of a change of interest in the subject, without changing its visual looks. The example is by Price 2011.

81 A similar distinction, between “intentional look”, public and referential, and “qualitative look”, private and subjective, is to be found in Block 1990.

82 See Broad 1925, Price 1932, Ayer 1940.

### 5.5 – Phenomenological 'looks' is not independent

I will argue that when we say that a tilted coin looks elliptical or that the moon looks no bigger than a sixpence, we are implicitly making the very sophisticated counterfactual operation of comparing the actual experienced situation with another possible perceptual situation in which we would be looking at an elliptical object (or at a sixpence-big object). Namely, we do compare two objective ways of appearing, one of which is actual, the other of which is only possible. So, comparing two ways of appearing does entail the capacity of non-comparatively appreciating the way each *relatum* looks, but that does not entail at all that the “appearance-property” standing as a complement of “looks” is intrinsically mental or subjective. So, such uses are sorts of complicated comparative uses which do presuppose a non-comparative, “phenomenological” but not a phenomenal use of “looks” in the sense meant by Jackson. Now I try to make my point explicit.

Take the sentence: “The penny looks elliptical”, said in front of a tilted coin which my experience does not present as *being* elliptical at all but rather as being a round object seen from a certain perspective. Now, in saying that it looks elliptical, I indirectly refer to the way elliptical things look. So, I refer to the distinctive appearance exhibited by things that *are* elliptical, seen in a given circumstance which I take as paradigmatic for fixing a typical way of looking, as a mark constituting the visual memory of that property, so to say (in a similar way, if I am to suddenly visualize my brother, I “put before my mind” his face seen from before, even if I would suddenly recognize him in many other perceptual circumstances). So, what I am saying is: Even if the penny looks the way round things look to one when tilted, it also looks in a similar way to the way elliptical things look to one when *not* tilted. Likewise, the Moon looks no bigger than a sixpence, because it looks – in a certain, quite abstract respect – the way a sixpence looks up close. So, a red thing looks brown insofar as it looks the way a brown thing looks in daylight, which is the paradigmatic circumstance that fixes the visual memory of “the” way a red thing looks when it looks as it is. Being able to abstract away those phenomenological similarities between objective looks from the respective perceptual circumstances, is a very sophisticated skill. Indeed the tilted coin looks to be round because of our



visual appreciation of perspectival properties, the tree looks to be bigger than the blade because binocularity and focus make us able to appreciate the distance, the object looks to be red because our visual system is able to keep the color looking (to be) constant despite illumination-changes. But in a really sophisticated sense (although an *ordinary* and not just an exclusively philosophical sense) the tree may be said to look smaller than the blade of grass, the red object may be said to look brown, and so on. When an object moves away from us, despite the size-constancy (it looks *to be* a constant size), still *something* changes in our visual experience, indeed it is thanks to that change that we can perceive that it is moving away from us<sup>83</sup>. In order to express that change, we can lean on a counterfactual situation which would be in *some way* similar to our actual one: We can imagine the way a stationary object would appear, when becoming smaller and smaller before our eyes. That is what “looks” in such a special “phenomenological” sense mean. If we call looking<sup>1</sup> the “looking” involved in the epistemic constructions (= looking *to be* = visually seeming) and looking<sup>2</sup> the phenomenological one, then we could say that:

X looks<sup>2</sup> F iff it exhibits the same visual appearance an F would exhibit in a possible experience of an F seen in paradigmatic circumstances, in which it would look *to be* an F, i.e. look<sup>1</sup> (an) F.

As clumsy as that characterization could sound, I think that it captures what matters. Such phenomenological use of “looks” is distinct but nonetheless parasitic on the use of “looks” involved in epistemic constructions where looking F means looking *to be* F. The tilted coin does look<sup>2</sup> elliptical without looking to be elliptical, because it looks as an elliptical coin would look *to be* in certain paradigmatic circumstances other than the actual ones. What I am denying, then, is not the existence of a phenomenological use of “look”, but the fact that it must concern ontologically subjective properties (Jackson) referred to by a sort of parallel phenomenal language. Rather, it concerns publicly assessable properties that characterize worldly objects,

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83 Peacocke 1983, 12-14, discusses the case of seeing two trees of the same size on the same street. The one which is farther away will look smaller in some sense, even though it does not look to be smaller. On the contrary, in optimal conditions it look to be the same size as the nearer one. In short, there is a phenomenal contrast between the trees, which does not seem to be due to a contrast in which properties are experienced as characterizing the trees.

though it implicitly refers, for a sophisticated comparison, to a non-actual, counterfactual perceptual situation in which *other* circumstances hold and different objects would be seen.

#### 5.6 – 'looks F' depends on 'is F'

So, according to that interpretation of the “phenomenological” use of “look”, “looks F” (looks<sup>2</sup>) in that special sense is parasitic on- and dependent on “looking to be F” (looks<sup>1</sup>).

Now, I want to argue – on the lines of a famous thesis held by Sellars<sup>84</sup> – that on its own “looking to be F” is logically dependent on “is F”, so that “being F” is prior to “looking F” even for F = SCM- properties (like [green], [square], [round] and the like). If that is the case, not only looking-F (looks<sup>2</sup>) is parasitic on looking-to-be-F (looks<sup>1</sup>), but also looking-to-be-F on its own is parasitic on *being-F* in a strong sense. Given the sentence “a looks F to S” with respect to its superficial grammar, we have a triadic relation, that of [looking] involving an object, a subject and a property as its arguments. *Sense-data* theorists analyze such a relation by appealing to sense-data<sup>85</sup>. For example, when the (round) penny looks elliptical to John, provided that nothing elliptical is out there, the [elliptical]-property would be instantiated by a mental sense-datum, which would be the 'real' argument for F. Others would take the [looking]-relation as primitive and therefore not analyzable<sup>86</sup>. Without entering into that substantial debate, I will take advantage of some illuminating remarks by Sellars in order to show that we do not *need* to introduce any intrinsically subjective entity to either explain or analyze the ordinarily ascribed *looking*-relation “X looks F to S”<sup>87</sup>. The core idea is that of taking reports like “a looks F to me” as saying *less* than “I

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84 Cfr. Sellars 1953, §§ 10-23.

85 Other sense-data theorists, like Broad 1925, introduce sense-data not to analyze the relation above but to *explain* it in cases when, as in the example above, nothing elliptical is there. Also Jackson 1977 and Robinson 1994 accept *sense-data*-like mental objects as the only possible explanation of perceptual illusions. But for the time being we do not need to enter into that substantial debate here, because now we are concerned with the ordinary discourse.

86 That is the so-called theory of appearing, originally proposed by Chisholm 1950 and then developed by Alston. See Alston 1988, 1999, 2005.

87 Of course, there may be many other substantive reasons for introducing *sense-data* which are independent from trying to make sense of the ordinary discourse insofar as it involves *looking*-expressions and the like. I am not interested in arguing again *sense-data* theories as such, rather I am pointing out that we can make perfectly sense of ordinary looking-sentences without taking that such sentences (rightly or wrongly) implicitly quantify over *sense-data* or analog mental entities.

see that *a* is F” but as implicitly referring to that positive case, namely, as characterizing one's visual experience as being just like one in which one sees that *a* is F – or *a* as being F just as it is – but at the same time without *endorsing* that content [*a* is F]. If “*a* looks F” would mean “*a* is F according to my visual experience”, the ascription of something looking red to one is the ascription of an experience individuated by its being just as though one was *seeing* that something is red, just as if one is seeing something as it *is*<sup>88</sup>. So, all that looking-red involves is the ability to recognize red things just by looking, plus the possibility of talking of one's experience as withholding its authority about how things are according to it. As Sellars says:

“‘*x* looks red to *S*’ has the sense of ‘*S* has an experience which involves in a unique way the idea that *that x is red* and involves it in such a way that if this idea were true – and if *S* knew that the circumstances were normal – the experience would be correctly characterized as a seeing that *x* is red.’”<sup>89</sup>

The priority of “is red” over “looks red” entails that the perceptual standard conditions for recognizing something as red – which must be known by one mastering the [red] concept – are conditions in which things look *as they are* (= red), conditions that give content to the very concept of *being* red. So, instead of analyzing [red] as “what *looks* red in standard conditions”, the very standard conditions for something being recognized by one as *being* red also fix what it means to just look red to one without being such. If *a* just looks red to one, one's experience is as if one was experiencing a red thing, without being such an experience (no red thing is experienced indeed).

Sellars illustrates that priority of “is F” over “looks F” through a fictional story<sup>90</sup>, which I will now re-tell and sum up a bit freely. Suppose John, the owner of a necktie shop, has only experienced colors in standard conditions in daylight and has learned the respective concepts that way, so that when he says “This is green”, “that

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88 Sellars's account of “looking” is actually the first appearance of a disjunctive theory of experience, whose paternity is generally ascribed to Hinton 1967.

89 Sellars 1953, § 22.

90 See Sellars 1953, § 14-17.

is red”, people nod and approve. Electric light is invented, but John resists for a while without it. As soon as he installs a light bulb in his shop, some troubles come about. As he says “that necktie is green”, a customer disapproves by saying “no, it is blue, come out here and see”, but John replies “*now* it is blue, inside it was green though”, and so on. Firstly, he would realize something like this: “Well, it is blue in fact – I rule out that electric light suddenly changes the color of my neckties – but still it is *as though* I was seeing a green necktie when I looked at it here in my shop”. After some time he would learn to make another kind of report, like “it looks green in here, but it is blue”. So, firstly he has learned that things can look different from the way they are, because of variations in perceptual conditions, so that the experience of an F in special conditions can be just as the experience of a G in normal conditions. He also learns to characterize the visual experience *as of* seeing that *a* is G – when knowing that *a* is F – as “looking-G”. In Sellars' terms, he now can ascribe to his experience a certain propositional claim (es. that is G) without *endorsing* it. Of course, by learning that a green thing can change its look according to the circumstances, he is still learning the concept of [being green], because before that awareness his very concept [of green] was quite rudimentary. At some point the fact that looking at the blue necktie in the shop is similar to seeing a green necktie will become so obvious, that John would say that it “looks green” only in a very sophisticated sense, while he could more plausibly say that it looks blue in the first place. It actually looks the way blue things look in here, it begins to look as it is as soon as its variations are taken as the normal behaviour of blue things when displaced.

In any case, “something merely *looking* green to S” is defined, as an experience, by reference of “S' seeing that something *is* green”, through the subtraction of the endorsement conveyed by the latter. Now, John can become familiar with the general fact that blue things look this or that way in this or that circumstance, where those “ways” are fixed by paradigmatic experiences of other properties in normal conditions. For example, a yellow thing seen in the dark looks a bit like a green thing seen in perfect illumination under the sun. Learning that that way is the way yellow things *look* in the dark, is learning both the [yellow]-concept and a use of “looks” which is not bound anymore to certain specific circumstances. So, even though

something can look a way (F) while it does not look *to be* that way, it can look F (green, elliptical) because it looks the way F-things look to be in paradigmatic circumstances. On the one hand, it can *look-to-be* a way (yellow, round) because the experience of it is an experience *as of* seeing that it is that way (where “as of” is neutral about whether it is such an experience or not).

To sum up that last point, the concept and the understanding of “looking F” depend on the concept and the understanding of “being F” even for F = SCM-properties, not the other way round. When “looks F” is used in a phenomenological sense (as not entailing that something is F at least according to one's visual experience), it means that something's visual appearance in one respect is just like the one F-things have when seen in some paradigmatic conditions. In turn, the way F-things look in normal conditions is the way they *are*, so that either “looking F” means “looking for one respect as F-things look when they look as they are” (phenomenological sense) or it means “looking *to be* F (epistemic sense)”, or it means “looking the way F-things look” (comparative sense). The phenomenological sense is also interpretable as a sort of sophisticated species of the comparative use, and both the comparative and the phenomenological uses presuppose the epistemic one. I can grasp what it is for something to look like an F or to look<sup>2</sup>-F (like “looks elliptical” said of something that looks to be round) only if I can grasp what it is for something *to be* F and at the same time I am able to visually recognize something as *being* F. On the other hand, the epistemic use presupposes the ability to recognize Fs (say, elliptical things or red things) just by looking, an ability involving a certain visual phenomenology. That visual phenomenology is actually what is involved in looking-talk as such, provided that “It looks F to me” in its more fundamental sense means “my visual experience in some relevant respects is (phenomenologically) as if I was experiencing an F”. So, the three uses are deeply and reciprocally interwoven but they are not to be confused with each other either. The phenomenological sense of “look”, importantly, does not entail at all a commitment to intrinsically subjective properties (like sense-data, or “phenomenal colors” or the like), it only entails the ability to recognize certain properties just by looking at the objects having them, which in turn entails that experiences do have a visual phenomenology making it possible that things look some way to the perceiver.

### 5.7 - Conclusions

Now I will briefly sum up what I have acquired in that last Section.

“Looking”-, “appearing”- and “seeming”- constructions have been analyzed with respect to their similarities and differences. If “appearing” ascriptions usually hint at special circumstances and “seeming” ascriptions have mostly to do with a non-conclusive evidence, both of them do not necessarily have to do with visual episodes, as is the case of “looking”-ascriptions instead. For that reason, “looking”-constructions have been what we have specially focused on. At least three distinctive, irreducible uses of “looks” can be individuated: An *epistemic* use having to do with visual acquired evidence supporting a proposition (like “seeming”), a *comparative* use having to do with similarities in ways different (kinds of) things distinctively appear in their sensible profiles, and a more controversial *phenomenological* use which is involved in the other two and is interwoven with them. That last use appears to be irreducible especially when applied to properties [F] or [G] things are not taken to possess even though those things may be said to *look* F or G (that round coin looks elliptical, that yellow shirt looks green now). Nevertheless, that use does not involve anything more than publicly assessable properties that *may* objectively characterize seen things. Indeed, looking-F in such a peculiar sense means looking with a *certain* respect the way F-things look *to be* in other paradigmatic circumstances. In addition, I have argued that “looks F” in that last more natural sense (*a looks to be F*) is on its own conceptually dependent on “is F”.

Another very important feature of “looks F” is that when F is not a spatial-chromatic-morphological property (as [square], [bigger-than], [red], [round], and the like), in order for *a* to visually look F *a* must exhibit a certain distinctive sensible profile made of SCM-properties in the first place, properties the subject must be generally sensitive to.

### Conclusions

In that first chapter, I have taken into consideration the ordinary basic vocabulary for perceptual ascriptions concerning vision. Namely, I have analyzed the most relevant

terms and constructions involved in ascriptions and self-ascriptions of episodes of visual perception. *Seeing*-ascriptions, in their different constructions, on the one hand, and the related experiential terms like “looking”, “seeming”, “appearing”, on the other, have been analyzed with respect to their logical behavior at a certain length, with particular attention to their reciprocal relations.

In Section 1 I have briefly argued for the methodological necessity and legitimacy of starting a substantive philosophical inquiry on perception from the analysis of ordinary language and pre-theoretical discourse. Making our intuitions explicit about what seeing, for example, is implicitly *taken* to be according to the way it is ascribed in everyday discourse, is a way of individuating the *explanandum* in the first place - what we are interested in when we ask, for example, “what is seeing”? If the very question is to make any sense to us before we come to know the answer, then we must have a partial, rough and general access to the inquired object. Even though making such a pre-theoretical access explicit is not answering any substantive question (like the one above), still it is a way to start the inquiry by bringing to awareness what we already take the inquired object to be insofar as we show that in talking to and understanding each other. In talking about someone seeing something, we show what we take seeing to be, maybe mostly in a non-thematic form. We could even be systematically wrong, but only a positive theory could establish it with substantive arguments. Nonetheless, waiting for a theory to stand such a “manifest image” on its head, it seems philosophically wise to carefully consider that manifest image in the first place. Even if that manifest image is not normative in a strong sense, nevertheless the capacity of saving and explaining our basic intuitions on the matter, would be at least an advantage for a philosophical theory of visual perception.

In Section 2 I have taken into consideration ordinary contexts of *object-seeing* ascriptions. Firstly, I have spelled out a list of necessary and sufficient conditions for seeing-something to be truly ascribed, such that *seeing-X* has been defined as: A certain *episode* consisting of a *discrimination*-relation between a *perceiver* and an *environmental object*, where the object is *causally* responsible of its being discriminated through appropriately impacting on the subject's *visual apparatus*, in such a way that the object *looks* to S a certain way. Secondly, I have argued that

seeing-X is implicative, that it is a success-verb, that seeing-X ascriptions generate transparent and extensional contexts. I have also argued that, even if what you see is a matter of what you are causally connected to in your surroundings, object-seeing has some minimal phenomenological constraints, to the effect that there must be a way O visually looks to you, if you are to see O.

In Section 3 I have treated *seeing-that* ascriptions and their logical behavior. As a result, I have concluded that *seeing-that* is a fully-fledged propositional attitude which gives rise to opaque contexts (where substitution fails). I have also argued that *seeing-that* is conceptual (i.e. you need to possess the concepts of F if you are to see *that* something is F), and factive (if you see that P, then P). All these features of seeing-that are best explained by taking the meaning of ordinary instances of seeing-that as equivalent to “coming to know by visual means”. As a consequence, I have provided a definition, according to which S sees that P iff: “Thanks to becoming *visually aware* of those objects, properties and relations which are the constituent of the environmental fact which makes P true, by *conceptualizing* those constituents and by *grasping the structure* of that very fact, S *comes to know* that P is the case”. That definition is meant to capture only those cases of true ascription where “seeing-that” is neither *metaphorical* — knowing or coming to know that P by whatever means — nor referred to an *inferential* knowledge only remotely dependent on a visual episode.

In Section 4 I moved on to a treatment of *seeing-as* ascriptions. I have shown that *seeing-as* is peculiar and irreducible either to *seeing-O* or to *seeing-that*, even if it entails the first and is entailed by the second. I have also argued that *seeing-as*-ascriptions give rise to non-transparent contexts, and that this logical feature is best explained by *seeing-as* being cognitive, categorical, and recognitional. It entails a cognitive stand the perceiver takes toward a seen object, although such a stand or “taking” need not be either conceptual or epistemic-propositional. *Seeing-as* is implicative like object-seeing, and it is not factive, differently from *seeing-that*. Being both cognitive and non-factive, *seeing-as* can be right or wrong, namely, its ascription makes room for a normative evaluation involving the possibility of mistake: *Seeing-as* can be mistaken. When “seeing an *a* as F” is not metaphorically ascribed (as equivalent to considering-as), it necessarily involves the visual



appreciation of a sensible profile, namely, of a unified complex of spatial-chromatic-morphological properties (I called them SCM-properties) as typically exhibited by Fs, where S possesses the general capacity of recognizing Fs just by looking. To concentrate all these acquisitions I have defined *seeing-as* as follows: “*Seeing a as an F* is seeing an F in *a* thanks to the exercise of a general *recognitional* capacity prompted by the visual appreciation of *a*'s objective *sensible profile*”.

In Section 5 I have left seeing-ascriptions behind to focus on experiential predicates like “seeming”, “appearing”, “looking”, insofar as they are ordinarily used to ascribe or self-ascribe visual experiences. If *seeming* normally hints at non-conclusive evidence (“It seems that P”, “X seems F”, “It seems to S as if P”, and the like) and *appearing* normally involves an implicit reference to special circumstances, both of them do not necessarily entail a reference to seeing or vision. On the contrary, *looking* when non-metaphorically used does involve reference to the visual presentation of a seen object. For that reason I have specially focused my analysis on *looking*. Firstly, I have distinguished propositional constructions (It looks as if P, It look as though P) from a *de re* construction (*a* looks F, *a* looks as if it is F) which involves reference to a *seen* object looking some way, so I focused on the latter.

An important distinction I have made, is that between SCM-properties, like [square], [yellow], [big], and non-SCM-properties, like [old], [European], [pig] and other 'thick' properties. To this end I have established the following principle: *When F is not an SCM-property, a must look G in the first place, where G is a complex of SCM-properties which individuates a certain visual profile.*

Subsequently, by critically relying on the relevant literature I have distinguished an *epistemic*, a *comparative* and a *phenomenological* use of *looks*. When used epistemically, as in “It looks as if *a* is F”, “*a* looks as if it is F”, it means: *There is a body of visually acquired knowledge that non-conclusively supports the proposition [a is F]*. So, the epistemic use is an analog to “seems” when used with reference to vision, but nonetheless it is not as committal as “seems” is. Something can look F to me even if I know it is not F, but something cannot seem F to me if I know it is not F. The comparative use covers cases like “*a* looks like *b*”, “*a* looks like an F” and the like. It roughly means that *a*'s *sensible profile* is similar to *b*'s (or to Fs') *sensible profile*. If that cow looks like an horse, its visual profile is such that it is similar to

the typical visual profile horses exhibit. On pain of an infinite regress, the comparative use presupposes a non-comparative one (*How* do horses look? If they just look like G's, then how do G's look? And so on). That third use, also presupposed by the epistemic use (how to analyze a “visually acquired body of knowledge”?), is what I have called the *phenomenological* use. When *a* looks F to S *a* exhibits a certain visual profile, whose appreciation by S is a condition both for a visual episode counting as an evidence (epistemic) to S and for S to appreciate the similarity between two visual profiles (comparative). In particular the phenomenological use explains how it is possible that, even when F is an SCM-property, *a* looks F without looking like an F or without that look being an evidence for claiming *a* is F. The phenomenological use is in play, for example, when we say that a tilted coin looks elliptical, even if we know just from that very visual episode that it is round and looks *to be* round (epistemic), even if it does not even look like elliptical things (comparative). However, I have argued that that use does not entail at all a commitment to the existence of intrinsically subjective properties, least of all to the existence of mental objects having them. On the contrary, following Sellars among others, I have argued that “looks F” logically and conceptually depends on “is F”, in such a way that, when we claim that something looks F without looking *to be* F — according to the phenomenological use — we are implicitly positing a counterfactual perceptual situation, different from the actually experienced one, in which things would look *to be* F. Calling the phenomenological look “look<sup>2</sup>”, I have stated that view in the following principle: *X looks<sup>2</sup> F iff it exhibits the same visual appearance an F would exhibit in a possible experience of an F seen in paradigmatic circumstances, in which it would look to be an F*. Something can look F without being known to be F thereby, because it can look, in a certain respect, the same way something *else* would look in looking as it *is* in a paradigmatic presentation.

So far so good for the preliminary analysis of the basic visual and experiential terms. Before using these acquisitions to enter into the matter of perception theory and articulate a positive view (Chapters III-VI), in the next chapter I will present and critically discuss the most classical version of the Belief Theory.

## CHAPTER II – Some Basic Features of Perceptual Experience

### Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections.

Section 1 critically presents the classical Belief Theory of perception and discusses at a certain length some of its virtues and the many problems it faces. Section 2 rises some problems of the Belief Theory: I show that such a view is incompatible with experimental data about vision and visual experience, so that it must be either deeply revised or abandoned.

### Section 1: The Belief Theory: Arguments For and Against

#### *1.1. – The Belief Theory (BT)*

Through our perceptual experiences, we cognitively relate to our surrounding environment in such a way that those experiences put us in a position to come to know how our environment is arranged, which properties are exemplified in it, which objects are present, what relations such objects and properties entertain with each other, and which events occur that involve those objects, properties and relations. It is by means of our perceptual experiences in the first instance, that we as subjects keep in constant touch with that part of the physical world surrounding us we act upon and judge about. Indeed, very often the exercise of our perceptual capacities immediately gives rise to true beliefs about the world. For that reason, a well-known classical view on perception straightforwardly identifies perception with belief or, more precisely, with episodes of belief-acquiring. Even though nowadays the so-called *Belief Theory*<sup>1</sup> is not a mainstream view anymore, critically presenting it seems to me a good way to enter into the matter by both contrasting and demarcating perception from belief, and evaluating the nature of their intimate connection. The core of the Belief -Theory of perception, in Armstrong's word is that:

“Veridical perception is the acquiring of true beliefs, sensory illusion is the acquiring of false beliefs”<sup>2</sup>

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1 See Armstrong 1968, Pitcher 1970, Heil 1983.

2 Armstrong 1968, 208.

The reason why Armstrong talks about belief-acquiring instead of belief *simpliciter*, is the following one: A belief is a dispositional state, that can produce occurrent events as judgments. Whilst judging that P is a mental event, believing that P is not an event, even though on the one hand its *acquiring* may be an event, on the other, it typically produces mental events with the same content P, namely, correspondent judgments that P. Once I have acquired a belief and until I do not envisage good reasons to revise or reject it, I can be ascribed that belief as a permanent disposition to make judgments, inferences grounded in that belief, as well as actions consistent with that belief. Judgments, actions, and inferential reasoning can be occurrent manifestations, or *expressions*, of related doxastic dispositions. Such states not only produce events, but may well be produced by events. Indeed certain empirical beliefs are produced by the occurrence of perceptions.

So if perceptual experiences are by their very nature events or episodes<sup>3</sup>, they cannot be identical to states or dispositions as beliefs are, rather they are to be identified with the episodes of acquiring of certain empirical beliefs. Of course, they are acquisitions of empirical beliefs *by means of senses*, not by whatever means. A visual experience will be an eyes-dependent belief-acquiring, for example.

## 1.2 – Virtues of BT

*Prima facie* that view has some important advantages. Firstly, it straightforwardly explains the *intentionality* of perception by appealing to the intentionality of beliefs. As Armstrong points out:

“The intentionality of perception reduces to the intentionality of the belief acquired” (Armstrong 1968, 210).

A belief that P has the propositional content P. A belief-state is a state with content, so the acquiring of such a state with content P can be taken as an episode having the

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3 The first who has stressed that perceptual experiences are events rather than states, was Ryle 1949. Indeed on his view perceptual verbs are achievement-verbs, namely success-verbs denoting the occurrence of a cognitive accomplishment. Even better would be to take perceptions as *episodes*, because an episode can last a bit through time, as a perception like staring at a relatively stable scene for a while could, even though the event/episode distinction is blurred and vague, differently from the state/event-or-episode distinction, which is much more important and clear-cut.

same intentional content characterizing the so acquired state. In that view, intentionality is grounded in content, provided that a state's representing something as being some way is a way for such a state to be to be *about* something<sup>4</sup>. If beliefs are intentional states insofar they are representations, so will be their acquisitions as perceptions.

Secondly, such a view elegantly explains how it is that having a certain perceptual experience so naturally involves forming a certain perceptual belief about the world. On that view the very experience just consists of the acquiring of the respective belief, so no special transition is needed.

Thirdly, that view explains the intuition that we can be right or wrong in perceiving the world, where being wrong amounts to being in a false state, and being right amounts to being in a true state. Perceptual experience can be veridical or falsidical insofar as it can be respectively the acquiring of a true or of a false belief. Illusory and delusive perceptions are sensory acquisitions of false beliefs. Veridical perceptions are (appropriate) acquisitions of true beliefs, so episodes of production of empirical knowledge about the surroundings.

### *1.3 The Argument from Illusion: BT, the Sense-Data Theory and the Adverbialist View*

From a historical point of view, such a view presented some very important virtues in avoiding the embarrassing consequences of the classical Sense Datum Theory which used to be the mainstream view of perception during the first half of the past century<sup>5</sup>. According to the Sense Datum theory, what we are directly conscious of in perception are mental items, intrinsically subjective entities having the properties they look to have, or being as they appear so infallibly known by the perceiver through the very act of her experiencing them. Instead material objects populating

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4 The notion of intentionality was firstly introduced by Brentano 1874 as that property, characterizing mental states, of being “directed upon” or “about” something: “In presentation, something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired, and so on” (Brentano 1874, 88). Having an object for a mental state is the basic way of being an intentional state. Whilst having content entails having intentionality, it is not obvious that having intentionality entails having content: Object-intentionality, for example desiring *that* object, may be a property of states which do not exhibit content-intentionality. More on that, later.

5 See Moore 1910, Russell 1912, 1922, Broad 1925, Price 1932, Ayer 1940. More recently, updated versions of the sense-data theories have been held by Jackson 1977 and Robinson 1994.

the external world would be accessed only indirectly by the perceivers, through them experiencing subjective Sense Data which in some way resemble those worldly objects they give indirect access to. Leaving aside the details, the most relevant among the many problems of such a view is the extravagant ontology to be attributed to Sense Data. They are non-physical, subject-dependent entities – so their position is a priori incompatible with a physicalist view of Mind and Nature – they can be *indeterminate* insofar as experiences can be such<sup>6</sup>, they can even be *contradictory* insofar as experience can be such<sup>7</sup>. Another quite interesting objection moved by Armstrong, is that such mental objects should be so peculiar that for them the relation of “being identical in a respect” cannot be transitive, in such a way that A can be exactly identical to B in respect to property F, B can be exactly identical to C in respect to F, without A being exactly identical to C in respect to F thereby. Suppose I cannot distinguish either A's color from B's color or B's color from C's color, but I can distinguish A's color from C's color. If Sense Data *ex hypothesi* are as they appear and are incorrigibly known, for them subjective indistinguishability entails identity, but for them it can paradoxically happen that A is identical to B in a respect (ex. color), B is identical to C with that very respect, but A is different from C with that very respect! Something must be wrong in that<sup>8</sup>.

Within the Belief View of perception such difficulties do not seem to arise. Firstly, there is nothing surprising in indeterminacy of belief contents, since I can well perceptually acquire the belief that the hen has a large number of speckles without having to believe that it has a certain N-number of them. Secondly, If I look at A and B and acquire the belief they are the same color, then I look at B and C and acquire the belief they are the same color, I acquire two beliefs which turn out to be

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6 For example, I can visually experience a speckled hen without being visually aware of a determinate number of speckles the hen allegedly presents in my perception. If the “mental hen” is a Sense Datum which by definition *is* as it appears, so it must be an indeterminate object, having an indeterminate number of speckles. On that see Chisholm 1942. Sanford 1981 argues that sense data, if they existed, should have contradictory properties.

7 For a discussion of such problems, see Armstrong himself, 1968, and Pautz 2007. For example, the Waterfall illusion is such that the Waterfall looks to you both moving and not moving at the same time. On that case and its relevance for the theory of perception, see Crane 1988. Another example of contradictory perceptual contents is given by impossible figure, as Escher's or Reutersvärd's drawings, to make a well-known example. On that see Crane 1992.

8 Russell accepted that consequence and held that “identity in a respect” is not a transitive relation. But it is so intuitively obvious that if A and B share the same property and B and C share the very same property, that property must be shared also by A and C, that denying that inevitably looks and *ad hoc* and unsatisfactory solution.

incompatible or false only once I look at A and C at the same time. That last belief about their difference I so acquire makes me revise (at least one of) the two previously acquired beliefs. So “identity in a respect” is a transitive relation, but my experience can consist in me wrongly acquiring the belief that certain things are identical in a respect whilst another perception can correct the previous acquisitions just insofar as it is another, more authoritative, act of acquiring.

In addition, the Belief Theory purports to remove the very ground on which the Sense Datum theory has been proposed as the only possible “solution”, namely the so-called Argument from Illusion and the analog Argument from Hallucination<sup>9</sup>. Both arguments have been often provided as inescapable cases against Direct Realism, which is in short the ordinary and intuitive idea that in perception we are just directly aware of the perceived world. The first (AI), on a plausible and summarized reconstruction, runs as follows: In perceptual illusion, something appears F without being F (Intuitive Definition of Illusion); Whenever something perceptually appears F to S, given that the property F is somehow presented, S is aware of something which *has* the property F (sometimes called “Phenomenal Principle”<sup>10</sup>); But *ex hypothesi* the perceived object is not F, so S must be aware of something else (Leibniz's Law); Therefore we need to posit a mental Sense Datum which is F and S is aware of (Inference to the Best Explanation); But if illusions involve awareness of Sense Data and are potentially indistinguishable from veridical experiences, then we are *always* aware of Sense Data in experience (Generalization)<sup>11</sup>. The second argument (AH) is analog to the first but slightly different. For any veridical experience there could be a subjectively indistinguishable hallucination<sup>12</sup> (Intuitive Assumption). In hallucination one is aware of *something*,

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9 For a more detailed and critical analysis of those well-known arguments, see Austin 1962, Robinson 1994, Dancy 1995, Smith 2002.

10 Phenomenal Principle has been variously formulated by Sense Data theorists. Robinson 1994, 31, renders it as follows: “If there sensibly appears to a subject to be something which possess a particular sensible quality then there is something of which the subject is aware which possess that sensible quality”.

11 The argument from illusion is presented by Moore 1910, Broad 1925, Price 1932, Ayer 1940.

12 An illusion is an experience where some object in the world is perceived, but the experience presents it as being a way it is not. A hallucination is an experience where something is 'presented' which does not exist at all in the world. For example, seeing a green lemon as being yellow is an illusion, having an experience as if you were seeing a yellow lemon when there is no seen lemon (neither green nor yellow), is a hallucination. That intuitive distinction is more philosophical than scientific. For example the “Hermann-Grid” illusion – looking at a grid of white lines on a black background you “see” grey spots at each intersection between the lines, but there is no grey spot at

for example of an object experienced as being such and such (Phenomenological Evidence). The object you are aware of does not exist *ex hypothesi*, so it must be a Sense Datum (Inference to the Best Explanation). But if hallucinations are subjectively indistinguishable from veridical experience, then in experience we are never aware of worldly objects but we are always aware of Sense Data (Generalization). So, given that these arguments seem to make impossible the option of Direct Realism – in Illusion and in Hallucination by definition you cannot be aware (just) of the external world – Sense Data need to be posited as the only direct objects of perceptual awareness.

Without entering into a detailed analysis of these very controversial arguments, I have briefly introduced them only to stress a purported virtue of the Belief Theory, without meaning at all either that the Belief Theory is the only alternative in town to the Sense Datum Theory as a “solution” of these arguments, or that these arguments are as conclusive and knock-down against Direct Realism as they historically purported to be. In any case, if perceptual experience is belief-acquiring, what you are aware of in illusions and in hallucinations are the *contents* or your acquired false beliefs. For example, you can well be aware of that that you are experiencing is something blue, even if you are perceiving something yellow (illusion) or you are not perceiving anything (hallucination). The content of your beliefs is nothing non-physical, it is just the way you come-to-believe the surrounding world is arranged.

Another traditional attempt to face the Argument from Illusion without accepting the dubious ontology of Sense Data, is the Adverbialist View. Adverbialists (Chisholm 1966, Ducasse 1942)<sup>13</sup> reject the very Act-Object analysis of perceptual experience, so they claim that when you visually hallucinate a red tomato you are not aware of a Sense Datum, namely, a non-physical particular having the visible features of a red tomato. Instead of you being aware of a red and circular mental item – as it could seem at a first sight by trusting the superficial grammar of experience-ascriptions – [red] and [circular] are *ways* of S's experiencing, rather than objects of S's experience, so S visually experiences 'circularly' and 'redly' rather than experiencing

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all – in the standard jargon philosophy of perception would be called a hallucination.

13 The adverbialist view has been defended by Sellars 1967. For a more recent defense of the Adverbialist View see Tye 1984. For persuasive criticisms to the view, see Lycan 1987 and Butchvarov 1980.



something circular and red, in the same way in which someone can be said to dance a merry dance just to mean that she dances merrily. When you experience (as of) a red circular object in fact [red] and [circular] are ways of your experience's being modified. So there is no need to hypostatize alleged mental objects of awareness to justify the possibility of hallucinations and illusions. Without entering into further details, here I want to point at two main weaknesses that "solution" has been conveniently charged with. First of all, there is a big problem of phenomenological adequacy<sup>14</sup>. When we introspect our experiences we seem to be aware of objects and properties presented to us, we do not just seem to be aware of ourselves being modified, or affected, in certain ways. On the contrary, in that view the ways of S being affected in a given experience and the ways in which things appears to be to S in virtue of having that experience, are neatly separated even if the second is an effect of the first. As Martin 2008 (II), 33, points out "[...] we cannot separate our knowledge of what it is like to be in a state from knowledge of the subject matter presented to one in being in such a state of mind [...] to know what such experience is like is in part to know how things are presented to one as being"<sup>15</sup>. Experience appears to have a 'subject matter' we can attend to, and the adverbialist view is inadequate insofar as it does not do justice to that immediate phenomenology of experiencing<sup>16</sup>. An Adverbialist could reply that phenomenology is tricky, and that

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14 On the phenomenological inadequacy of Adverbialism, see Maund 1994, 200ff., Martin 2008.

15 That is not the so-called *transparency* of experience we will deal with later on. Transparency or 'diaphanousness' (see Moore 1922, 25ff.) is that property of experience in virtue of which, if we try to describe the intrinsic properties of our experience, we end up describing the way the experience presents the objective world as being. But whilst transparency is denied by Sense Data theories, that less committal phenomenological observation is compatible with the Sense Data theory (not with Adverbialism though). Indeed, also Sense Data are 'topics' for the experience, presented as being certain ways. Those topics are taken to be mental though, but the Act-Object- or 'Topic'-principle which captures our immediate phenomenology is respected both by Sense Data theories and the Belief Theory but not by Adverbialism. Differently, transparency, which also seem to capture our phenomenology, is not respected either by Sense Data theories or Adverbialism, but it is respected by the Belief Theory. For Belief Theory such topics concerned in- and by experience are contents rather than objects (even if contents can well be object-dependent, as we will see later).

16 Martin 2008 (II), 30ff., also points out that another relevant feature of our perceptual phenomenology is incompatible with Adverbialism: In introspecting our experiences we not only come to know objects and properties we are purportedly attending to, we may also come to discover *how* we can experience those objects, properties and relation, for example by exploiting chromatic contrasts, shadows, illumination condition, differences in focus and the like. Experiencing involves a conscious point of view on something, so that introspection makes explicit also those very elements of experiencing which makes possible that point of view on the surrounding world. For further criticism of the adverbial view, see Butchvarov 1980 and Lycan 1987.

even if the phenomenology of experience turned out to be incompatible with the account, so much the worse for the phenomenology. Phenomenology would turn out to be systematically misleading.

But there is another worry, having to do not only with phenomenological constraints. Suppose you see a red cube over a green circle. The way things appear to be to you by having that experience, exhibits a semantically articulated content. You see a red cube over a green circle rather than seeing a red circle over a green cube, or a green cube over a red circle, or a red cube under a green circle, and so on. So, you do not just see properties and objects and relations, you experience a certain relation between certain objects having certain properties – each having their own properties – where that relation is not symmetrical: The cube is over the circle and not the other way round, the red thing is over the green thing, and not the other way around, for example. Now, if the purported properties given in experience E are just ways of E's being modified, how is it that experiencing [redly] plus [greenly] plus [cubically] plus [circularly] plus [overly] makes me come to be in a cognitive state with such a semantically structured content? In short, a juxtaposed sequence of adverbs cannot render the *articulateness* of the information we acquire through experience<sup>17</sup>.

An Adverbialist could reply that seeing a red cube over a green circle is a certain *complex* way of being modified which typically causes a belief that there is a red cube over a green circle, instead of other beliefs even involving the same (concepts of) objects, properties and relations. That reply would only shed light on the inadequacy of the theory itself. Either the relation between experiences and what they make us take to be the case is just inscrutable and mysterious, or the elements that at least *seem* to be given in experience are not reducible to ways of being modified, no matter how complex these ways are.

With respect to that, Belief Theory seems to involve a more promising treatment of the Argument from Illusion/Hallucination than the Adverbialist proposal, with the advantage of avoiding the commitment to ontologically suspect entities like Sense Data. A belief that [there is a red cube over a green circle] can bear a content as

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<sup>17</sup> That articulatedness of perceptual information is not to be conflated with the propositional structuredness of perceptual beliefs, as we will see in the next chapter. For the time being, it is sufficient to point out that perceptual information has an such an articulation that the Adverbialist View cannot capture and explain.

structured as a propositional content could be. In addition, the committal nature of belief explains how it is that in experiencing (as well as in hallucinating) a red cube over a green circle we take things to be a certain way insofar as they appear to be that way *in* the experience, not only 'because of' or '*due*' to the experience. To conceive that such an experience can be a hallucination/illusion there is no need either to posit a mental non-physical red-and-cubic item, or to take the experience as a complex cluster of ways of being affected which is never witnessed in phenomenology. Rather it is sufficient to take the experience as the acquiring of a belief whose content – that there is a red cube over a green circle – can not be exemplified at all (hallucination: There is no cube and no circle) or partially exemplified (illusion: ex. there are a cube and a triangle but they are not respectively red and green, they are not one over the other, etc.).

To sum up, the Belief Theory seems to explain some fundamental features of perceptual experience, on the one hand, and was historically appealing as an alternative to the Sense Datum theory which could avoid the main embarrassing difficulties of the latter, on the other.

#### *1.4 – The problems of BT. Objections and Possible Replies*

Nonetheless, there are other types of evidence and other arguments that seem to jeopardize the identification of perceptual states with states of belief-acquiring. Let us consider some of these problems now.

First of all, beliefs are propositional attitudes towards structured contents, in such a way that having a certain belief involves possession and exercise of those concepts the belief is, so to say, made out of. I cannot believe that Gs are F without possessing the concepts {G} and {F}<sup>18</sup>. So, if perceptions were acquisitions of beliefs and beliefs involve concept-possession, then only conceptual beings would have perceptual states. That is still not a knockdown objection, because the idea that perceptual experiences are conceptual states is an option within the debate, as we will see later. But it puts a strong constraint on the acceptability of the view, to the effect that the Belief Theory is true only if perceptual conceptualism is true. In addition, if the Belief Theory is true, then either non-linguistic animals do not have

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<sup>18</sup> To avoid confusions, I will adopt the following notation in the rest of this work: [F] = the property of being F; {F} = the concept F.

perceptual states and perceptual experiences properly speaking, or we should ascribe to non-linguistic animals beliefs and concept-possession, so we should buy a very undemanding idea both of what it takes to possess a concept and of what it takes to be a believer<sup>19</sup>. The first option seems unnecessary and arbitrary, the second option entails a sort of trivialization of the view, because it identifies perceptual states<sup>20</sup> with belief acquisitions only at the cost of adopting a very poor notion of belief without explaining what it really is and how it relates to propositional attitudes like our fully structured perceptually acquired empirical beliefs.

Secondly, it seems that providing a case of perception without belief, or even a case of perception without any *acquiring* of belief, would be sufficient to defeat the view: If perceptions were episodes of belief-acquiring, neither perceptions without respective beliefs nor perceptions without respective acquisitions of belief would be possible. Both the first and the second case seem quite common though. To begin with the first case, many times we have a perceptual experience as if things were a certain way, without believing they are that way. That typically happens with perceptual illusions, like the Müller-Lyer illusion or the Ponzo Illusion, where two equal lines seem to be different in length<sup>21</sup>. The interesting, well-known phenomenon is that even once we are told that the lines are equal, the experience of them continues to be as if they were unequal. That feature of perceptual experience, often called cognitive impenetrability and allegedly due to the informational encapsulation of perceptual modules<sup>22</sup>, makes perceptual experience relevantly insensitive to collateral knowledge, for example to the fact that we judge and believe that the lines are equal because we are told it. So we have a perception which does not give rise to a corresponding belief, instead the persistence of the illusion despite our belief on the matter entails that we believe and judge things to be other than the way they are experienced in perception. So, perceptual illusions known as such appear to make a strong case against the Belief Theory.

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19 In fact that entailment is accepted by Armstrong himself, who writes: “If perception is the acquiring of belief then clearly it must involve the possession of concepts. For to believe that A is B entails possessing the concept A and B. But since perception can occur in the total absence of the ability to speak, we are committed to the view that there can be concepts that involve no linguistic ability” (1968, 210).

20 To respect the standard way of talking I keep talking of perceptual states, but it is clear from what said before that perceptions are to be considered events or episodes rather than states.

21 See Figure 1 and Figure 2 at the end of *this Chapter*.

22 See Fodor 1983, Pylyshyn 2006, Crane 1992, Palmer 1999.

The second case is also very common. Suppose you know your desk is black because you see it every working day. Now you are visually experiencing it, but there is no event of *acquiring* the belief that the desk is black, just because you cannot acquire what you already possess. So, if there can be a perceptual experience without any doxastic change or increasing, then perception is not belief acquiring but it must be something else. According to the first case, perception cannot either be belief or necessarily involve belief. According to the second case, *ad abundantiam*, even if perceptual states could be belief states, anyway they could not be acquisitions of belief states.

Advocates of the Belief Theory have offered some replies to such challenges, but they do not seem fully satisfactory. As a first move, the case of Perception-without-Belief is faced by treating perception as an *inclination* to believe. For example, if we perceive the lines looking unequal but we know on independent grounds they are equal, there is an inclination to believe they are unequal, which is successfully contrasted by a more authoritative non-perceptual, previous knowledge, so the inclination is “held in check by a stronger belief” (Armstrong 1968, 213) or it is a “suppressed inclination” (Pitcher 1970, 78)<sup>23</sup>. Although, that reply involves a substantive modification of the original view, to the effect that now perception has become an *inclination* to acquire a belief, it is not anymore the acquiring itself. It is quite different to say that perceptions are belief-acquiring inclinations from saying that perceptions are belief-acquisitions full stop.

Things get even worse if we consider that sometimes perception does not even involve any inclination to acquire a belief. For example, one's own image on a mirror looks like the bodily presence of a doppelgänger, but in no way do we find ourselves inclined to believe it is the case. So, things can perceptually appear to be a way we do not believe they are, things can even perceptually appear a way we are not even *prima facie* inclined to believe they are. Moreover, things (as in the second case above) can perceptually appear to be a way we already believe they are, so there is neither acquisition nor inclination-to-acquire at all<sup>24</sup>. Armstrong and Pitcher counter-

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23 Pitcher 1970 distinguishes three cases: a) *Full belief*, when an experience just coincides with acquiring a belief b) *Half-belief*, when we suspend the judgement although we have an inclination to believe a certain content c) *Anti-belief*, when we resist the very inclination in virtue of possessing more authoritative collateral knowledge.

24 Although, once the modification from 'belief-acquiring' to 'inclination to believe' is accepted, that

reply by appeal to counterfactual analysis, on the following lines: Granted that I do not believe that the lines are unequal, or that there is a doppelgänger behind the glass, still we can say that *had I not known* that I am facing an optical illusion, I would have been at least inclined to believe that the lines are unequal, *had I not known* how mirrors work in our world and other facts of that kind, I would have been inclined to believe that a doppelgänger is facing me. In the same vein goes the treatment of Perceptions-without-Acquisitions. Had I not already believed that my desk is black, that experience would have been the (inclination to an) acquiring of the belief that my desk is black. Armstrong calls such cases “the acquiring of a *potential* belief” (1968, 215). So the view gets more and more modified as well as less and less clear as soon as it embeds the objections in itself, so to speak. Perception is not belief, nor is it acquiring of belief, but it is suppressable inclination to acquire a belief, then it is characterized as a suppressable inclination to acquire a *potential* belief<sup>25</sup>. What is stated then, if not that perceptual experience is intimately connected with perceptual beliefs and in normal conditions it gives rise to beliefs in systems capable of believing? In addition, *why* are such episodes inclinations to believe one or another content? *What* does it make that perceptual experience I am having to (suppressably) incline me to acquire the belief that P rather than the belief that Q? There is a difference between me being told that my desk is black, and me seeing that my desk is black. Now, if a theory of perception is meant to capture what perception essentially is, and perceiving my desk is only one of the indefinitely many ways I can come to believe that it is black, the peculiarity of that special way of coming-to-believe that *a* is F perceptually rather than otherwise, should be embedded in the general characterization provided by the theory. In other words, even granted that perception is a special way of *prima facie* coming-to-believe certain empirical propositions about our surroundings, what does make that way special, what does make such episodes what they are beyond them being just *a* way of being inclined to believe that something is the case? Perceptual means, namely involvement of sense-

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objection could be accommodated: If you already believe that your desk is black, still your actual perception contributes to reinforce your belief state as being an inclination to believe what you already believe. Even if you cannot acquire a belief you already have, still you can be inclined to believe – maybe uselessly – a content you already believe.

25 As Smith 2001 rightly remarks, a potential belief is not more a belief than a potential chair is a chair.

organs, is too poor an additional characterization to enucleate the distinctive way in which a perceptual experiences enriches our doxastic life<sup>26</sup>.

### 1.5 – BT and the Phenomenological Adequacy Constraint

So, the Belief Theory does not seem to meet what we may call the constraint of *phenomenological adequacy* that a good theory of perception should meet. As we will see more in detail, perceptual experience exhibits a conscious phenomenology, and that phenomenology is relevant both for individuating the very perceptual episode exhibiting it and for explaining how it is that that experience gives rise to this or/and that belief rather than to another. In particular, perceptual experience exhibits a phenomenology of “*bodily presence*” of the environment, as Husserl puts it<sup>27</sup>, which is neither explained nor captured by the reductive analysis provided by belief-theorists<sup>28</sup>. Just taking perceptual experience as an inclination to come-to-believe certain propositions, and exteriorly adding that that inclination is exerted on the subject by perceptual means, leaves unexplained the intimate relation between the peculiar phenomenology determined by these “means” and the (potential) beliefs that such conscious episodes give rise to. Likewise, even though the phenomenal character of experience does not need to be hypostatized into *qualia* or non-physical Sense Data, nonetheless it needs to be accounted for in some way. The *apparent* bodily presence exhibited by the phenomenology of illusions and hallucinations is too recalcitrant to be reduced to incoming awareness of belief-contents. Something

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26 A variant of the Belief Theory is the Judgment Theory articulated by Craig 1976, according to which perceptions are to be equated to judgements rather than to beliefs. Since the notion of judgment must be defined in terms of belief – can you judge that P without believing or coming-to-believe that P? – the criticism of the Belief Theory seems to me to be as much challenging for that more recent variant of the view.

27 Cfr. Husserl 1910/2006. On the phenomenology of bodily presence which as calling for explanation in perceptual theory, see Smith 2001, 2002. Moved by ontological worries, Armstrong unsatisfactorily reduces perceptual phenomenology to a doxastic element: “The content of our perceptions, which so many philosophers want to turn into a non-physical object, is *simply* the content of the beliefs involved” (1968, 215).

28 It is worth to say that by “Belief Theory” here we mean the *reductive* analysis which just equates perceptual experience with belief-acquiring, as it happens in the Armstrong-Pitcher view. A non-reductive analysis would take belief-induciveness as an essential feature of perceptual experience, without denying the irreducible and as much essential presence of a sensory aspect. For example, in the classical theory of Reid perception is constituted by “sensation plus conception”, a sensory episode and a consequent belief. The main worry of Armstrong is just that of avoiding a two-factor view (raw feel + judgement) because he is trying to provide a physicalist alternative to the Sense Datum theory, which hypostatized the qualitative element of experience as a domain of non-physical entities.

essential is missing in that picture.

So, Belief Theory, at least as it has been classically articulated – to my knowledge – does not seem phenomenologically adequate. Even if it was true it would be deeply incomplete, it would fail to capture and explain an *essential* element of its object.

Another aspect of that lack of phenomenological adequacy is the reductive way of treating perceptual introspective awareness. According to Armstrong, given that perceptual experience is inclination to acquire a potential belief – where that potentiality is counterfactually specified – “introspective awareness of perception would be the awareness of the acquiring of such potential beliefs” (1968, 218). But perceptual introspection, whatever it is, involves an access to the phenomenology of one's own experience, which is irreducible to an awareness of oneself acquiring a set of potential beliefs. In particular, that theory entails that perceptual introspection, by means of which we have access to the content of our perceptions, would involve the grasp of a counterfactual of the kind discussed above, like: “Had I had different beliefs and knowledge than I have now, that state I am just having would have inclined me to acquire such and such beliefs”: Can it really be what perceptual introspection amounts to? Whatever introspection is, it seems strongly counter-intuitive that it is made out of the grasp of such abstract and logically sophisticated counterfactual contents<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore, if introspection is a self-conscious access to perceptual phenomenology, and beliefs *as such* lack phenomenal character<sup>30</sup>, why should the *mere* acquiring of an empirical belief exhibit a distinctive phenomenology instead? If there is no distinctive phenomenology in believing that *a* is F, why should there be one in being inclined to acquire the potential belief that *a* is F? By reducing perceptual experiences to belief-acquiring, belief-theorists do not do justice to the essential role of phenomenology in both individuating perceptual experiences and explaining their cognitive role. Even if an *ad hoc* theory of introspection could maybe fill that gap, the more *ad hoc* collateral views are added, the more weakened and less plausible becomes the global picture.

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29 On the constraint of phenomenological adequacy, see Smith 2001, Crane 2011.

30 Although there is an ongoing debate about that – see Horgan and Tienson 2002, Pitt 2004, Kriegel 2009 – the mainstream view is still that beliefs do not have a proprietary phenomenal character. In any case, it is the distinctively *perceptual* phenomenal character (for example, visual) what must be done justice of within a theory of perceptual experience, it is not just a generic phenomenal character of any other sort. The *sensuous* character of perception cannot be disregarded.



### 1.6 – *Beliefs, Inferences, Concepts*: Rationality Constraint and Generality Constraint

In any case, even if we accept as a substantive and clear view, the thesis that perceptual experience is inclination to believe or suppressable inclination to acquire a belief by perceptual means, even if we leave aside the doubts of phenomenological inadequacy hinted at above, still there are further problems with that view which concern the radically different behavior of perceptual experiences from perceptual beliefs in the economy of our cognitive lives. Let us explore these problems more closely now.

Beliefs are mental states involving concept-possession and inferential abilities, their ascription is subject to the normative constraint of rationality typical of full-fledged propositional attitudes<sup>31</sup>. Beliefs, concept-possession and inferential abilities are intimately connected, to the effect that possessing a concept entails the ability to compose it with other concepts so to form one or more beliefs. Having a belief on its own entails the subject's ability to compose it with other beliefs or judgements so to draw inferences and produce rule-governed reasoning. If that is the case, attribution of *rationality* – meant as sensitivity to reasons plus aiming at truth – is a precondition for crediting a subject both with belief-states and with concept-possession at all. So, insofar as beliefs necessarily involve concepts, any argument against perceptual conceptualism turns out to be an argument against the Belief Theory as well. I will reconsider conceptualism later, now I only anticipate some main criticism of that view.

According to many philosophers<sup>32</sup>, a relevant condition for concept-possession is what Evans 1982<sup>33</sup> introduced as the *Generality Constraint (GC)*. Roughly speaking, according to *GC* if S possesses the concept {F} and is able to think [*a* is G], in case {F} can be meaningfully applied to *a* and {G} can meaningfully applied to *b*, then S must be able to think [*a* is F] as well as [*b* is F] (provided that she knows *b*). I cannot be credited with possession of the concept {love} unless, if I think that John loves Mary, I am also able to think that Mary loves John, or that Diego loves Mary,

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31 On that, see Davidson 1973, 1982, Evans 1982, Crane 1992.

32 Cfr. Evans 1982, Peacocke 1992, Brandom 1994, Crane 1992. For a radically different view see Fodor 1998.

33 See Evans 1982, 100ff.

provided that I know Diego<sup>34</sup>. Of course, I must be able to entertain these thoughts, even if I could believe they are false: “meaningfully applied” does not mean “truly applied” indeed. *GC* entails that a concept is never possessed and exercised in isolation but always as a constituent of actual or potential propositional structures as thoughts, beliefs or judgments. Likewise, *GC* entails that in entertaining a single thought – or in possessing/acquiring a single belief – we manifest capacities which can be recursively exerted in a potentially infinite number of different cases<sup>35</sup>. Intentional propositional states “come not as single spies but in whole bataillons”, as Crane vividly remarks (Crane 1992, 11), so that if you have a belief you must have many other beliefs rationally interacting with each other as well as with other types of intentional states (desires, intentions, hopes, fears and the like). In order to have the concept of {F} I must have many beliefs in which that concept figures<sup>36</sup>, likewise, in order to have a belief I must have many other beliefs interacting under constraints of logical and semantic consistency and being revisable in the light of other incoming beliefs. Namely, I must have articulated inferential abilities. Vice-versa, in order to play their logical and semantic role in reasoning, beliefs must be internally structured into discrete constituents – the concepts – whose composition produces and explains the inferential properties of the beliefs in which such concepts occur. As Evans 1981, 132, puts it: “behind the idea of a system of beliefs lies that of a system of concepts whose structure determines the inferential properties of the beliefs”.

These features of beliefs and concepts are often characterized as *normativity* and *holism* of the intentional. If I ascribe to you the belief that the table is red, I must ascribe to you the belief that the table is colored, the belief that the table has a surface, the belief that the table is not transparent, the belief that if just another thing in the room was red, there would be just two red things in the room, and so on. In ascribing you a belief that *a* is F, I need to ascribe you all beliefs sufficient for you to

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34 {John}, {Mary} and {Diego} as constituents of potential thoughts are singular concepts, namely, concepts which apply only to an individual.

35 In fact CG is a way of stating the so-called compositionality of thought as involving both its productivity and its systematicity. See Fodor 1975.

36 Possessing a concept C amounts to knowing the conditions of its satisfactions, and knowing when C is satisfied involves knowing that certain *beliefs* involving C would be true in certain circumstances, false in others.

possess the concepts contained into the ascribed belief (according to *GC*)<sup>37</sup>, I also need to ascribe you the belief that many propositions immediately incompatible with that belief are not true, and so on. By “normativity” it is meant that if you believe *P* you ought to believe other things, are you to be rational, so that in ascribing you a belief I am treating you as a rational being having a whole belief-system aiming to consistency therefore sensitive to reasons and logical consequences<sup>38</sup>. By “holism” it is just meant that intentional contents of your propositional attitudes are reciprocally co-determined in such a way that you cannot have a single attitude toward a content without having many other attitudes to that content as well as to many other propositional contents.

Now, if having a belief-state involves all that and the Belief Theory of perception is true, perceptual states would likewise involve all that and exhibit a similar behaviour in our cognitive lives. But that does not seem to be the case. Consider the reasons-sensitivity of belief-forming, on the basis of which our beliefs are open to constant revision through the income of new evidences and the increase of our knowledge. Revisability in the light of evidence is an essential feature of belief, but as we have seen, persistence of illusions though disbelieved shows that perceptual experience does not just behave like belief. A perception can very well make you revise a previous belief you had, but it cannot be *revised* in light of a belief that is incompatible with it. If perceptual experience could be *reduced* to belief-acquiring, it would be a state sensitive to reasons and to availability of new evidence so that the inclination to believe in the experience would just disappear as soon as we come to believe otherwise. But it does not disappear – nor does it lose its 'phenomenology of immediacy' – therefore perceptual experience does not meet the essential constraints of belief ascription like revisability, sensitivity to reasons and evidence, logical constraints of consistency, and so on.

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37 Which beliefs are sufficient for a subject to be ascribed possession of a certain content, is a big substantive problem.

38 You do not need to consciously think all contents you “must believe” if you are rational and believe that *P*. A belief, as a dispositional state that may or may not produce conscious judgments and thoughts, can well be unconscious. For example, I used to believe that the first minister has two legs also before making that judgment now. It was true that if one would have asked my about that, I would have answered in a certain way, if I had heard that the first minister has lost a leg, I would have thought that he has just one leg, and so on. Even if I do not know it explicitly, I believe many contents that it is rational for me to believe, given that I believe certain propositions and I am in a position to envisage those contents as necessarily entailed by these propositions. Beliefs need not be conscious.

### 1.7 – Further Difficulties of BT

Another case against this identification has been made by Crane 1988. Some experiences have contradictory contents at the same time, as in the case of the Waterfall Illusion where the waterfall looks to be both moving and not moving. Now, contradictory beliefs at the same time do not occur to the same subject, just because our doxastic life is constrained by rationality and requirements of consistency in such a way that the contradictions nested in our whole system of beliefs will be removed as soon as they are made explicit and conscious as such, namely, as logically incompatible. A subject can very well doubt and oscillate between P and not-P for a while of course, but she cannot explicitly believe P and not-P at the same time. So, if experiences with contradictory contents are possible in a way in which contradictory beliefs are not possibly held, perceptual experiences are not beliefs. So perceptions lack inferential structure and do not entertain logical-deductive relations as beliefs do. As such, they do not exhibit the essential features of belief such as normativity and holistic dependence. As Crane 1992, 18, remarks, there is nothing else you *ought* to perceive just because you perceive something as being such and such, but there are many propositions you ought to believe if you are to believe that something is such and such. So perceptual experiences are evidentially relevant *inputs* of new information and contents to our reasoning systems, and can well make you revise your beliefs, but not the other way round. That asymmetry, of great importance from an epistemological point of view, is incompatible with the Belief Theory and, all the more so, cannot be explained within it.

In addition, there is a relevant difference between the way certain information is acquired in perception and the way information is doxastically acquired, which remains unexplained within the framework of the Belief-Theory. Consider your visual experience of a cup of coffee on your table. In having that experience, I acquire the belief that [the cup on the table before me has coffee in it]. Now, I could acquire the belief that [the cup on the table before me has coffee in it] – suppose I am looking elsewhere and you tell me – without having to acquire beliefs with detailed contents concerning the shape, size and color of the coffee, the table and the cup, their orientation, their distance from me, and so on. On the contrary, I *cannot*

visually experience the presence of coffee in the cup without experiencing the particular shape of the cup, its particular shade of color, its orientation, *how much* coffee is in the cup, *how dark* it is, and many other details of the seen scene. That difference speaks in favor of an asymmetry between the perceptual way and the doxastic way we acquire information about the world. A belief contains a *discrete* piece of information the believer commits to without having to commit to more specific information thereby. Of course if I come to believe that the cup has coffee in it, I need to come to believe (though maybe implicitly) that the coffee must have a color, the cup must have a shape, and so on. But firstly that is something I must *infer* from the content of my belief. Secondly these inferences, differently from the visual experience, may well leave indeterminate *what* color the coffee has, *which* shape the cup has, *which* size the table has, and so on. In Dretske's terms<sup>39</sup>, that is a distinction between an *analog* and a *digital* coding of information involved respectively by belief and perception, so that any belief I can come-to-acquire through having a perceptual experience, is a different way of “digitalizing” the rich, profuse and detailed content of my visual perception. I will critically focus on that important distinction later<sup>40</sup>. Here it is enough to point out that, in the same way a 'picture is worth thousand words', we could well say that an experience is worth thousands beliefs. In having a visual experience I am in a position to form at once many specific beliefs about a certain range of objects, properties and relations, without having to infer one from another. For example, seeing an object involves seeing its actual shape, color, orientation, illumination, distance, size, spatial relations and so on, in a way in which acquiring a belief about that object does not involve acquiring other beliefs about its *actual* properties. A belief theorist could reply as follows: 1) Nothing prevents perception from being the simultaneous acquiring of a very *high* number of beliefs<sup>41</sup>. A perception is an episode of belief-acquiring, not the acquiring of a single belief 2) That I must acquire certain specific beliefs about actual shapes, sizes and colors (SCM-properties) in visually experiencing a scene, does not depend

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39 See Dretske 1981, 135-153, Dretske 1988, 1990, 1995, 2000.

40 See *this Chapter*, Section 2; Chapter III, Section 3.

41 Still, in order the Belief Theory to be plausible and consistent, that number of acquired beliefs must be *finite*. The information acquired cannot be other than determined and limited with respect to the means, the ways of the information being coded, the time of causal exposure to the environmental stimuli, and so forth.

on that experiencing being not reducible to belief-acquiring, rather it depends on that the *visual* way of acquiring beliefs entailing that certain specific beliefs need to be acquired together. In short, perception is a special case of belief-acquiring where the subject must acquire many beliefs at once, and these beliefs need to contain certain specific information about certain kinds of properties, depending on the perceptual means involved. For example, acquiring the belief that something is edged by touching it will involve the acquiring of specific beliefs about the particular texture of the touched object, whilst seeing the same edged object need not involve belief-acquisitions about the texture rather it will involve belief-acquisitions about the color, hearing something moving on your left (say someone is calling you) will not involve belief-acquisitions about the color of the moving object but it will involve belief-acquisitions about the pitch and the tone of the sound it is producing, whilst seeing the very same moving object will keep 'belief-neutral' about what sound it is producing but will need to involve belief-acquisitions concerning which color, size and shape it has.

Nevertheless, that reply leaves unexplained *why* visually coming-to-believe that X is moving should entail visually coming-to-believe that X is so-and-so shaped, so-and-so colored, at this or that distance and so on. As a matter of fact, the concept {red} does not entail a *certain* way of being shaped, a *certain* way of being distant, and so on. So, the beliefs acquired through a given experience have specific contents which do not entertain inferential relations and do not entail each other, still these beliefs need be acquired together. So the *way* contents are perceptually acquired determines these contents being in certain relations that are not those inferential relations in which belief-contents normally stand to each other. That must have to do with the nature of perceptual information itself. Belief contents are insensitive to their informational origins in a way perceptual contents are not<sup>42</sup>. In perceptual experience *what* information I come to acquire is inextricably connected with *how* I come to acquire it<sup>43</sup>. That does not hold for the semantic content of belief.

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42 On that see Jacob 1999, 82-85.

43 On that, see Evans 1982, specially the Chapters 6-8.

## Section 2: Against BT: Arguments from Experimental evidence

### 2.1 – Inattentional- and Change Blindness: *There is seeing without noticing*

Another case against the Belief Theory is constituted by the available experimental evidence that visual perception does not always involve perceptual belief. In what follows I will discuss a bit of such evidence by dividing the material in two parts. Firstly, I will present and consider the well-known phenomenon of seeing-with-noticing involved in normal vision as well as in experimental cases of Inattentional Blindness and Change Blindness. Then I will introduce the Sperling Experiment and critically discuss some interpretations of it. Secondly, I will consider some evidence coming from the clinical study of pathological cases such as some forms of Visual Associative Agnosia, some forms of Optic Ataxia, and some forms of Blindsight. Finally I will argue all that evidence taken together constitute another big, insurmountable problem for the Belief Theory of perception.

Inattentional Blindness<sup>44</sup> is the failure to visually notice a fully-visible but unexpected object because attention was engaged in another task, event, object or local part of the scene. A quite bizarre example of such a phenomenon is the “Invisible Gorilla” experiment (Simon & Chabris 1999)<sup>45</sup>. Subjects facing a video of a basket match are asked to keep track of the passages or are given some other special task involving attentional focus on details, so at some point a lady with an umbrella dressed as a gorilla enters into the playground and comfortably plays with the other players. The majority of subjects is unable to notice and recognize the gorilla, even though it is so evident to them once they are told about its presence, that it becomes even hard to believe they could have failed to notice such a macroscopic object perfectly falling into their visual field<sup>46</sup>.

Another analog, interesting and well-known phenomenon is Change Blindness<sup>47</sup>. In the most classical experiments, a photograph is briefly presented to the subject, followed by a blank, then followed by an identical photograph but sometimes

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44 See Mack & Rock 1998, Simon & Chabris 1999.

45 Here is a link to the video of the experiment: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo>

46 According to Pani 2000, in cases of IA “you see the stimulus but you do keep conscious of it in a belief-way”. Therefore, IA would be a case of unconscious seeing. According to another interpretation, more liberal on what ‘being conscious amounts to’, IA could be a case of consciously seeing a feature without noticing it.

47 On Change Blindness see the debate between Dretske 1994, Dennett 1994. See also Simons 2000, Rensink 2002.

followed by a similar but not identical photograph. The difference can be an object that changes color, shape, or disappears. That exposition can go on for fifty times or more, still subjects are unable to see the difference between the two pictures, even though they had sequentially and carefully “explored” both the pictures<sup>48</sup>. Change Blindness (CB) in fact is an analog but different phenomenon from Inattentional Blindness (IB), insofar as it involves memory and the comparison of a past percept with a present one, whilst IA is a failure to notice a present object or visible feature within a single scene we are presently facing. An example considered by Dretske 1994, 2006, consists of the presentation of two pictures of the same group of people in the same positions and circumstances, apart from the fact that in the second picture one of the eight people is just missing. Another example provided by Dretske 2000, 125, asks us to accurately glance at two figures A and B which will look to us perfectly identical<sup>49</sup>. Although, the figure B has a well-visible black spot which is absent from the figure A. Now, on the one side, we have not noticed that spot, otherwise we would have easily been in a position to detect and report how A and B differ. On the other hand, we have glanced attentively at all details of both figures, so we have a strong intuition that we must have seen that black fully-visible spot in figure B as well as the correspondent fully-visible spotless white area in figure A. How is it then that we see things we did not even realize we were seeing?

Both IB and CB seem to show that there are things we see without *noticing* them, so that seeing should not be identified with visually noticing. We see more than we notice, in short. Why is that relevant with respect to assessing the plausibility of the Belief Theory? It matters a lot because acquiring a belief entails exerting the concepts the belief is composed of, committing to its content or endorsing it, and that

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48 See Block 2007. The cause of Change Blindness is well-known. In experiments things are arranged so that changes are introduced into the scene during the subject's saccades. Saccades are ballistic eye movements that can happen several times a second. During the saccade, the visual system takes in little or no information about the scene.

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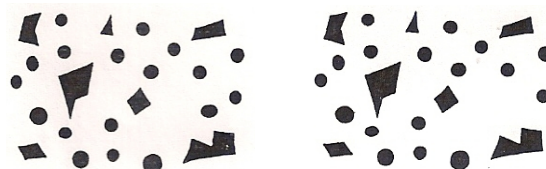


Figure 3



can only be a conscious event involving *noticing* what you come to believe and the object/objects you come to acquire the belief about. If there are things we see but we do not notice, therefore there are things that are contents of our perceptions but fail to be contents of any allegedly acquired beliefs, this eventuality constitutes a case against the Belief Theory. Without noticing and recognizing the seen objects as some kind of thing or as having this or that property, all the more so there can be no acquiring of beliefs about the objects seen. So seeing cannot be coming-to-believe<sup>50</sup>. Intuitively, we are inclined to say that the subjects do see the invisible gorilla, that the subjects do see the eighth person missing in the second photograph, that the subjects do see the point making the difference between the figures, although they do not notice these objects so that all the more so they do not acquire conscious beliefs about those even seen objects. So, if acquiring a belief involves conceptualizing the constituents of its content, and conceptualizing presuppose noticing and recognizing as its condition, it seems straightforward that if within your perceptual experience there are things you see but do not notice, perception cannot be just *equated* to belief-acquiring.

In Dretske's efficacious terms (Dretske 2000), the cases above show that we can have visual *object-awareness* without having *fact-awareness* of circumstances involving the object we are aware of. For example, we are visually aware of the black point making the difference between the two figures but we are not aware *that* they differ, we are visually aware of the gorilla moving around but we are not aware *that* there is a gorilla moving around, we were visually as aware of the eighth person in the first picture as we are aware of the correspondent portion of space no longer occupied by him in the second picture but we are not aware *that* a person we had seen in the first picture is missing in the second picture<sup>51</sup>. Actually acquiring a belief involves what Dretske calls *fact-awareness*, believing is always believing that something is the

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50 In fact it is possible to visually *notice* something without *recognizing* it as a certain kind of thing. I can notice something that suddenly begins to move within my visual field, without being able to recognize it. In any case, what matters to us is that recognizing entails noticing, and believing entails recognizing. Even if I can notice O without recognizing O and maybe I can recognize O without acquiring beliefs about O, anyway acquiring a belief about O entails recognizing O which on its own entails noticing O. So seeing without noticing entail seeing without belief-acquiring.

51 Imagine you see 27 children on the playground, for a brief time. Probably you will see all the 27 children, so you will become conscious of all those perceptual objects, but you will fail to become conscious of the *fact* they are 27. On the difference between object-awareness and fact-awareness, See Dretske 1981, 146ff., Dretske 1993, 1999.

case, insofar as believing is a propositional attitude. So object-awareness without fact-awareness means perception without belief, it means becoming perceptually aware of an object without becoming fact-aware of anything about it, it means perceiving something without acquiring any related belief about it.

Now, a counter-strategy of the belief-theorists would be that of denying that seeing without noticing is possible. You wrongly believe you had seen something without noticing it, but in fact you do not see anything until you notice it. So, even if you think “I must have seen it, it was there before me and it is so big and fully-visible after all!” you think wrongly, you just haven't seen the gorilla, or the black spot, or the eighth person, and the like<sup>52</sup>.

Another more subtle reply would restrict the validity of the Belief Theory to perceptual *experience* rather than concern perception as such. Perceptual experience is conscious perception. So, maybe you even see the unnoticed objects above, but you do not experience them, so it can be maintained that perceptual experiences are belief-acquisitions, that therefore they must involve noticing and recognizing the seen objects. Seeing is not sufficient for visually experiencing, so it is not a problem if seeing is not sufficient for belief-acquiring, because the so modified theory is that visually experiencing, not just seeing, is to be equated with belief-acquiring.

Let us consider one of the examples above and call Mario the eight man missing in the second picture, so we can ask: 1) Did S *see* Mario? 2) Did S visually *experience* Mario?

If S saw Mario but did not consciously experience him, then perception cannot be belief-acquiring but the possibility that perceptual experience is belief-acquiring is left open. If S visually experienced Mario, then not even perceptual experience can be belief-acquiring<sup>53</sup>. The subject reports that she cannot see the difference between picture A and picture B, for sure she cannot have noticed Mario (nor did she notice

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52 This is the move made by Dennett 1991, 1994, and Nöe 2004.

53 An advocate of the Belief Theory could reply that even if S did not consciously experienced Mario, S could have acquired an *unconscious* belief concerning the presence of Mario. That looks like a desperate move though. Granted that unconscious beliefs are quite possible (see above), it is much less obvious that there can be unconscious events of belief-acquirings. In addition, if a belief-acquiring involves a conceptualization, we should be able to think of an exercise of conceptualization happening at a certain time as a punctual event but without any consciousness. In any case, a belief must be essentially apt to become conscious and interact with other beliefs in producing inferences. As we have seen, the doxastic realm is normative, beliefs are states we are responsible for. How can a subject be responsible for and rationally responsive to beliefs he does not even know to have acquired?

his absence of course)<sup>54</sup> and acquired beliefs about him.

Now, if S did not see Mario – as one has to hold if she holds the equivalence seeing = noticing = believing – as a consequence S did not see *any* of the people on the picture. As a matter of fact it is counterfactually true that, had S been put before two pictures whose difference was another person missing rather than Mario (say Gino), S would not have noticed the difference either, so S would not have seen Gino either. But the theory's entailing that S did not see *any one* of the people in the picture, seems to me to be an eloquent *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory itself. Mario was seen<sup>55</sup>.

Generally speaking, the attentional focus by foveal vision<sup>56</sup> involves a (blurry) difference within the scene falling under our visual field at a given time, between what is focused and is a thematic object of visual attention on the one hand, and what is “in view” but only as a potential topic of attention, as being “virtually present” (Nöe 2004). Now whilst I am looking at my desk, on the periphery of my visual field there is the door of my office. Even if I am not visually focusing on the door, still it is *now* counterfactually true that *if* the door moved I would notice its movement. It is quite natural to infer from that fact that I must be seeing the door now, but only certain kinds of change in the scene would make me *notice* it.

Of course, in normal visual perception we notice and recognize (and believe) a lot of things, so it could be maintained that perception, globally considered, essentially involves episodes of noticing and taking things as being some or some other way. In fact you cannot overlook *everything*<sup>57</sup>. At a given time, your perceptual experience has some 'topics' put under your attention and involving conscious recognition. But what is at stake here is whether perception can be identified and *reduced* to those episodes of noticing-recognizing-believing, not just whether perception *involves* such episodes.

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54 There is still the possibility that she noticed Mario and suddenly forgot it. But we are talking of normal subjects not showing special impairment of the memory-skills. In any case, at least in IA (Inattentional Blindness) the scene is present so the memory has nothing to do with the phenomenon.

55 Suppose in the second picture Mario is substituted with Franco, who looks completely different. In that case both Mario and Franco would be seen, but not their *difference*. In Dretske's view a difference is a *fact* about two relata, the fact that they differ indeed, such that you cannot see a fact without noticing or believing it. See Dretske 1993.

56 Foveal vision is that involving the fovea. Having the highest concentration of cones, the fovea is the part that grant the maximal visual acuity.

57 On that, see Smith 2001, Husserl, *Ideen* I, § 84.

It is perhaps worth considering that noticing is not identical to believing. Noticing an object and some of its property is a condition for putting us in a position to acquire a belief about that object, for example the belief that the object has such and such properties. So if I acquire a belief through perceptually experiencing a certain environmental condition, I must have noticed the object I acquire the belief about, but not the other way round. Specially, if believing has a normative, holistic and rational dimension as I have argued for above, that is not the same for noticing. Noticing a tree and some of its properties (ex. it being distant) does not involve acquiring a belief about the tree. Animals not possessing concepts and propositional attitudes can well notice certain objects and even overlook certain others objects. As I will argue later, there are ways of perceptually noticing and even of recognizing kinds of objects which do not involve acquiring a belief. But what matters here for challenging the Belief Theory does not concern the identity/difference between noticing and believing, for the time being it is enough to accept that in order to perceptually come-to-believe that a seen object is a certain way, that object has to be noticed in the first place. Believing entails noticing, independently of whether noticing entails believing or not. So seeing without noticing entails seeing without believing.

Those who hold that there is no seeing without noticing/believing, like Dennett and Nöe<sup>58</sup>, appeal to the so-called “Refrigerator Light Illusion”. As soon as you open the fridge, you seem to find the light on, so you could be wrongly led to believe that the light is always on. In fact, the light being on depends on you opening the fridge to look into it. Likewise, on that vivid analogy, our visual phenomenology presenting us with a whole scene continuously in view, where we seem to see more than the details and portions we are specially attending to, would be an illusion insofar as what we are seeing at a time *t* depends on our shift of attention on a newly noticed detail. As the light is off unless you open the fridge, your seeing a detail or an object is only potential unless you focus on it and notice it. In short, the Refrigerator Light Illusion involves mistaking a potential event for actual event. You take yourself to see something just because you are aware that you could notice it, but in fact you could

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58 See Dennett 1991, 1994, 2002; Nöe 2004, O' Regan & Nöe 2001. Actually Dennett and Nöe do not identify perception with belief-acquiring *à la* Armstrong, they rather take perceptions to be *dispositions* to believe.

see it only as soon as you noticed it<sup>59</sup>. What you take to be seeing without noticing is just potentially seeing, which amounts to nothing more than potentially noticing. So the seeing = noticing equation is thus vindicated.

## 2.2 – The Sperling Experiment *and what it tells with respect to BT*

Despite that subtle reply above having some force, the so-called *Sperling-effect* shows that we must see more than we notice<sup>60</sup>. Sperling<sup>61</sup> showed subjects arrays of alphanumeric characters, for example three rows of four characters each, for 50 milliseconds, followed by a blank field. Subject reported that they could see almost all characters. Although, when asked to say what letters they had seen, they could remember approximately only four letters, less than the half of the presented letters. Until that point, the situation is analog to the examples above concerning Inattentional Blindness and Change Blindness, namely, we are puzzled at deciding whether subjects did really see the 'forgotten' letters or instead they properly saw only the ones they noticed and are able to truly report. On the one side, S must have seen them, they were within her visual field and there was a phenomenal 'feeling' of having in view a continuous portion of space populated of many letter-shapes. On the other hand though, how is it possible that S saw all the letters if she can identify just four letters? Sperling found a genial way to settle the question experimentally. He introduced the play of a tone just *after* the array was replaced by the blank. Subjects were asked to report the letters composing the top row when the tone of the sound was high, to report the letters in the middle row when the tone was middle, to report

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59 Dennett 1991, O'Regan and Nöe 2001, Nöe 2001 variously argue for the unreliability of our introspective phenomenology, by appealing to phenomena like the Blind Spots in our visual field. As it is well-known a relevant portion of surface at the center of our retina is covered by nervous fiber such that there are no photo-receptors on it. But our experience does not introspectively present itself with black holes in the visual field. In addition, the visual exploration of the environment is not as continuous and uniform as it introspectively seems to us, rather it involves jumpy and discontinuous saccadic movements. All that is of the greatest interest but, as Dretske rightly remarks (2006, 164), what matters for whether in Change Blindness cases we see more than we notice, is not whether we see *everything* we introspectively seem to see, it is rather whether we see *more* than we notice. In other terms, that we are wrong in claiming to see the whole scenes falling under our visual fields in detail does not mean that it is wrong that there is *something* we see despite we do not notice it. See also Nöe 2006.

60 I have introduced a certain argumentative use of the appeal to the Refrigerator Light Illusion, concerning the reducibility of seeing to noticing. Another use concerns phenomenology, so it says that a perceptual state has phenomenology only as soon as you attend to it. These use are intimately connected but still different. For example, maybe there can be a phenomenology not involving any act of noticing or recognizing, much less involving an act of believing.

61 See Sperling 1960, Baars 1988.

the letters in the low row when the tone was low. In these cases, subjects were able to report all the letters of the 'auditorily intimated' row (but not those in the other rows, of course). Now, in that case saying that you must have seen the letters becomes more than an even a strong intuition, rather it is a necessity. Indeed, the acoustically induced decision to attend to one or another row is made *after* the visual stimulus has already been removed. So, provided that you cannot see objects that are not there, you must have seen them before they disappeared. Sperling-effect entails the existence of an “iconic memory” (Neisser 1967), a very short-term store of visual information that keeps accessible only when the subject is prompted in certain ways to attend to that information. Of course, as soon as the acoustic marker prompts the subject to attend to a row, the accessibility to the other rows irremediably vanishes forever.

There is a controversial and fascinating debate I will not enter in now, concerning whether the perception of the unattended letters is *conscious* or not<sup>62</sup>. So, whilst the experiment neatly shows that we can see things without noticing them, it is less obvious that it also shows we can consciously see or experience something without noticing it. In any case, the already *seen* rows can be accessed, though not all at once, *after* they have disappeared, so there is no room for arguing that you begin to see something only as soon as you notice it, as some tried to argue for with respect to Change Blindness and Inattentional Blindness. How could I begin to see something at a time in which it is not there anymore? It would be a sort of magic performance<sup>63</sup>.

### 2.3 – The case of Visual Associative Agnosia and BT

Some other examples of experimental evidence of the greatest interest for evaluating the Belief Theory, are clinical reports about patients with dramatic cognitive and perceptual pathologies. In particular, I want to briefly take into consideration the case

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62 See Block 2007. Block takes the experiment as showing that “phenomenology outstrips cognitive accessibility”. But others take it to show that vision outstrips phenomenology. According to them, the episode of vision acquires a phenomenology as soon as the subject attends to the objects. See also Dretske 2006.

63 There is an auditory analog of Sperling-effect consisting of an “echoic buffer” (not to be confused with short-term memory). Our system “iconically” stores auditory information for a short while, which can be accessed after the stimulus has ceased only if we focus our attention on that just stored material. To report an example by Fodor 2007, it may happen that I hear the public watch-bells ringing, say, for four times, when I am not attending that at all. Suddenly, I shift my attention to that perceptual intake because I need to know what time it is. There is a short interval within which I am still able to “count” the times of ringing.

of (a kind of) Visual Associative Agnosia first, then the case of Optic Ataxia, and finally the more familiar case of Blindsight.

Visual Agnosia<sup>64</sup> involves impairments in perceptual capacities that are not due to elementary sensory malfunction. Associative Visual Agnosia is a kind of that pathology – typically caused by specific kinds of brain damage – involving an inability to recognize familiar objects despite the patients normally being apt to perceive and describe forms and other visible features. So object-recognition<sup>65</sup> is impaired despite low-level visual perception working perfectly. The patient is able to recognize the objects through other sensory ways (ex. touch). She does not show impairments either to the visual system or to intellectual, descriptive or inferential skills. She just cannot “extract” from the percept the thick information concerning the kind of thing she is perceiving. As it is remarked by a scientist who worked a lot on that pathology, in Visual Associative Agnosia “a normal percept is stripped of its meaning” (Teuber 1968, 293). Despite the *form* perception being good<sup>66</sup> – at least in Pure Visual Associative Agnosia – the object-recognition is blocked, so the perceptual input is taken in but does not put the subject in a position to categorize the object in many relevant ways, therefore, she cannot acquire relevant *beliefs* about the object. As we have already noticed, maybe there can be recognitional acts in perception that are more basic than fully-fledged beliefs so that recognizing does not entail believing. In other words, maybe there can be something like a nonconceptual or 'proto-conceptual' recognition, but *vice-versa* full-fledged perceptual beliefs do involve conceptualization of the percept, so that if perceptual experience is possible without object-recognition, *a fortiori* it is possible without belief. Provided that Visual Associative Agnosia shows a dissociation between perception and belief, it speaks against their identity as a result.

A possible reply to the argument based on Visual Associative Agnosia, is that such a pathology only shows that there can be perceptual experience without *certain kinds*

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64 On Visual Agnosia see Farah 2004, Milner & Goodale 1995, Goodale & Milner 2004.

65 There are different kinds of Visual Associative Agnosia depending on the kind of objects the subject cannot recognize. For example, patients with Prosopagnosia cannot recognize faces, patients with Alexia cannot recognize words.

66 Form perception is impaired in Visual Apperceptive Agnosia, which is often but not always combined with Visual Associative Agnosia. The most interesting cases with respect to the Belief/Perception relation, is the Pure Visual Associative Agnosia, namely, object-recognition impairment without form impairment.

of belief-acquiring which occur in normal subjects, rather than showing that perception is possible without *any* belief-acquiring. In fact, these subjects do report that the seen object is red, wide, has such and such shape and color, and so on. For example, a subject cannot recognize a comb as a comb (even if she possesses the concept of {comb} and can be prompted to exert it perceptually, for example through touch), another subject cannot see a bottle opener as a bottle opener and asks whether it could be a big key<sup>67</sup>, but they both could wonder whether that was a key or this was a pipe insofar as they acquired true beliefs about the seen objects in the first place, concerning shape-properties, form-properties, color-properties and the like. So what these cases would prove is that certain pathologies can *reduce* the beliefs perceptually acquirable, but would not prove that perception is not belief-acquiring. For example, as we will see later, some philosophers take the content of perception to be confined to the representation of 'thin' spatial-chromatic-morphological properties (SCM)<sup>68</sup>. So if we combine the belief-theory with the view that the only properties represented in perception are SCM, 'thick' recognitional properties involved in representing a comb as a comb or a key as a key would not be properties represented in perception at all, so such cognitive failures at recognizing things would not be a *strictly* perceptual deficit. In that case, visual experiences of such patients would be acquisitions of beliefs concerning SCM-properties, as visual experiences had by normal subjects. So in perception we conceptualize objects as certain kinds of things and therefore acquire beliefs about them, but in cases like Visual Associative Agnosia, subjects fail to conceptualize objects as *certain* kinds of things (a comb, a watch, a known person, a word) but they do conceptualize them as red, bulgy, thin, distant, and so on, as normal perceivers do.

That reply is sound, but firstly it weakens the original theory by making it compatible only with a particular view on the range of properties representable in perception, secondly it still remains to be explained why these impaired subjects are able to prompt the exercise of the right thick recognitional concepts just by touching the very same objects they so 'poorly' see. If touch is (immediately and non-inferentially)

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67 Such examples are provided by experiments by Rubens & Benson 1971.

68 For example, McGinn 1982, Clark 2000, Byrne 2011. Theorists who hold that in perception are also represented 'thick' properties (like {comb} or {key}), are Siegel 2006, 2011, Bayne 2011, Prinz 2006.



'recognitionally rich' whilst vision of the same objects is 'recognitionally poor', there must be an impairment in vision, not just in the system of cognitive categorization of the percept. Maybe a further reply could be that the impairment is neither in visual perception nor in the system of categorization-recognition-conceptualization, rather in the mechanism of integration between the information strictly delivered by visual experience and certain non-perceptual concepts, whilst the mechanism of integration of tactile information with conceptualization is well-working. But the very fact of introducing so many positive auxiliary hypotheses seems to me to make this global line of defense more and more *ad hoc*.

#### 2.4 – *The Case of Optic Ataxia and BT*

Furthermore, there is other clinical evidence, concerning Optic Ataxia<sup>69</sup>, which is clearly immune to these possible replies above. Optic Ataxia is another kind of impairment which presents exactly an inverted situation of Visual Apperceptive Agnosia (which is, differently from Associative Agnosia, an impairment in recognizing and reporting information about forms and spatial properties). Patients with Visual Apperceptive Agnosia are normally good at manipulating, reaching and acting upon objects, in short they have a perfect visuo-motor control. On the contrary, visually ataxic patients are normally good at recognizing objects and verbally reporting what the objects are, where they are and how they are spatially- and shape-arranged, but they show dramatic impairments at doing elementary tasks like reaching an object with the hand, putting an object into a hole and the like. Both the impairments considered together provide evidence for the existence of two different relatively independent mechanisms implemented respectively in the so-called “dorsal stream” and “visual stream”<sup>70</sup>. Indeed Visual Agnosia depends on lesions of ventral stream, whilst Optic Ataxia depends on lesions of dorsal stream. Optic Ataxics behave as if they could not use the spatial information inherent in any visual scene, despite their perfect recognitional and descriptive competence. For example, while a subject with Visual Apperceptive Agnosia – involving impairment

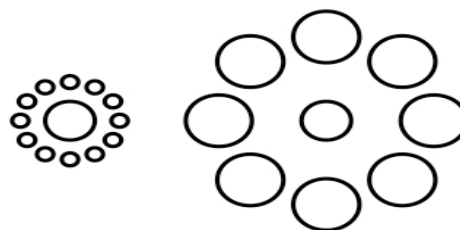
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69 On Optic Ataxia see Clark 2001, Milner and Goodale 1995.

70 The ventral stream leads from primary visual cortex, through V4, to temporal areas, the dorsal stream leads from the primary visual cortex, through MT, to parietal cortex. See Milner and Goodale 1995, Jennerod and Jacob 2006.

of *form* perception – cannot see the orientation of a displayed slit but can nonetheless post a letter through the slit, a subject with Optic Ataxia can recognize and truly report the orientation of the slit but is unable to post the letter through the slit, despite the fact that he does not have any physical impairment. The first is good at using perceptual information for recognition, recall and reasoning but is bad at using that information for fine-grained behavior and action upon the perceived scene, the second is good at that second task but is bad at the first.

Both the impairments provide evidence for a double coding of visual information that is to be found in unimpaired subjects as well. For example, consider the Tichener Circles Illusion<sup>71</sup>: A circle surrounded by an annulus of small circles appears bigger than an equally big circle surrounded by an annulus of big circles. That is what the experience makes you think or believe (provided that you are not told you are victim of an illusion). So, the size of the circle is misrepresented to the effect that two equal sizes appears to be different in virtue of surrounding distractors, just as it happened with the lines in Müller-Lyer Illusion. Now, you can enlarge the central disc of the second figure to make it as big as to (falsely) appear equal to the first central disc. So Algioti did, ingeniously, with his colleagues<sup>72</sup>. They used poker chips as the central discs and asked the subjects to immediately pick up the target disc on the left if the two disc appeared equal in size, to pick up the one on the right if they appeared different in size. Surprisingly enough, despite them' being under illusion (both phenomenologically and doxastically) they did the right choice, they acted according to the *actual* sizes of the discs. That experiment shows that, even in unimpaired perceivers, an intake of reliable perceptual information can be shown in fine-grained behavior without “arriving” to explicit consciousness to produce beliefs. On the contrary, that can happen *despite* wrong perceptual beliefs being acquired about the same scene.



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71 The Tichener Circles Illusion:

72 See Algioti et al. 1995.

Both Optic Ataxia and the Tichener Circles Illusion show *ad abundantiam* that perception cannot be belief-acquiring insofar as some level of perceptual information is used in action-guiding even if it is either absent from any content consciously considered and/or believed, or it is even in contradiction with the content consciously considered. So, in these cases not even the *ad hoc* replies above will do anymore. Here we have correct and useful visual perceptions of objects as having certain SCM-properties without any recognition-conceptualization *of them* as having *these* properties, not just without recognition-conceptualization of *other* thicker properties belonging to the same objects. Here the only reply perhaps would be that the behaviorally displayed information that the discs are unequal is not conscious, indeed it can co-exist with other conscious (wrong) information that they are equal. So, again it could still be the case that perception is not belief-acquiring but that *conscious* perception, or perceptual *experience* is such instead. Indeed the content of such action-guiding perceptions not only is not the propositional content of empirical beliefs, it is not even the content exhibited by our perceptual phenomenology (of course those contents for a Belief Theorists are one and the same). So that evidence is a good argument against the equation Perception = Belief-Acquiring but it does not work against the more restricted equation, Conscious “Experiential” Perception = Belief-Acquiring. So far so good. Nonetheless, the evidence that there is perception without belief at least should constrain the Belief Theorist to explain why there cannot also be perceptual conscious experiences without belief. Moreover, if those perceptions are intentional – as a matter of fact, they are *about* the circles, which are perceived, though unconsciously, *as* unequal in size – the main reason to introduce the Belief Theory is flawed. Such a theory purports to explain intentionality of perceptual experience by reducing it to intentionality of perceptual beliefs. But if there is perceptual intentionality without perceptual beliefs, then the fact of acquiring a belief with a certain content cannot be the *only* way to explain perceptual intentionality. In short, an appeal to the intentionality of beliefs as the best explanation of intentionality of perception is “screened off” by the existence of perceptual episodes – though non-conscious – which are intentional without involving beliefs.

## 2.5 – The Case of Blindsight and BT

On the other hand, the idea that only conscious perception is belief-acquiring meets an experimental obstacle in the experimental evidence concerning exactly the existence of perceptual belief-acquiring without any related *conscious* experience. The so-called Blindsight is such a phenomenon. In most cases of Blindsight there is a damage of the primary visual cortex (V1) which has the absence on any visual phenomenology as a tragic consequence, to the effect that the subjects claim to be completely blind<sup>73</sup>. Nonetheless, if prompted to a forced response or invited to guess about a surrounding scene, they show a surprising ability to answer correctly at levels significantly much above chance. Hilbert 1994, 447, reports the case of M.S., suffering of cerebral achromatopsia (color blindness due to brain damage)<sup>74</sup>. He denies seeing color, cannot sort objects by color, cannot name the colors of objects shown to him and mostly behaves as if he was completely color-blind. But in many experiments he shows good ability to recognize shapes and figures whose boundaries were specified exclusively by color. He acquires true empirical beliefs<sup>75</sup> by purely visual means but without any related visual experience. Vision directly operates to gives him beliefs about what is seen, without any mediation of visual experience<sup>76</sup>. Now, putting together these well-known experimental data (Inattentional- and Change Blindness, Sperling Effect, Visual Associative and Apperceptive Agnosia, Optic Ataxia, Blindsight), it seems we cannot escape the conclusion that visually experiencing is neither sufficient nor necessary for coming-to-believe by visual means. So not even just conscious experience can be equated with believe-acquiring. As a result, both the more ambitious version (seeing is believing) and the more

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73 On Blindsight, see Cowey 2010.

74 The source of Hilbert is Mollon et al. 1980. On achromatopsia, see Beauvois & Salliant 1985.

75 I say that he acquires true beliefs rather than knowledge, because it is far from clear whether such beliefs, although they are gained through a relatively reliable process, are or are not justified. In any case, even on a reliabilist view of knowledge, treating these true acts of guessing as knowledge would entail a very little demanding sort of reliabilism. The subject does not know whether she knows, does not even believe she is knowing, does not have any idea of whether and why that process of coming-to-believe is reliable and truth-conducive. In any case, that is not our concern here.

76 Another interesting case is the so-called *unilateral neglect*. Neglect patients often behave as if half of their world no longer exists. Due to brain-damage, they are totally oblivious of objects and features of the half of the room, they may eat only from a half of the plate, they may shave only a side of their faces, and so on. However, they indirectly show sensitivity to objects and features falling under the neglected half, when prompted. So, that is another example of perception without perceptual awareness, just like Blindsight. On unilateral neglect, see McGlinchey-Berroth 1997, Driver and Villeumier 2001, and Dretske 2006 for a more philosophical interpretation of the data.

restricted version (visually experiencing is believing) of Belief Theory must be definitely rejected.

## **Conclusions**

In Section 1 of Chapter II I have presented and critically discussed the Belief Theory of perception. Firstly I have pointed at some virtues of that view – *i.e.* explaining intentionality, semantic evaluability, and perceptual belief-forming without apparent transitions – which made the view historically attractive in facing the Argument from Illusion better than Direct Realism and Adverbialism but without committing to the ontological extravagances involved in Sense Data Theory.

Secondly, I have produced many arguments to show that the Belief Theory is to be rejected despite those theoretical advantages over other views. Those arguments have been grouped into two kinds, more philosophical arguments, and arguments based on experimental evidence (Section 2).

With respect to the first kind, I have considered the normative, rational, and holistic constraints for belief-ascription as well as the Generality Constraint holding for concept-possession. Were perception identical to belief, its content would satisfy those constraints, but it is not the case. Furthermore, I have argued that persistence of illusion cannot be accommodated within the Belief Theory, since the attempts to retool the theory by the notions of 'suppressed inclination' or 'potential belief' are doomed to failure. In addition, contradictory and impossible contents may feature in perceptual experience in a way they cannot feature in belief.

With respect to the second kind of arguments, in Section 2 I have considered different types of cases clearly showing that perceptual belief or belief-acquiring are neither necessary nor sufficient for perception. Change Blindness and Inattentional Blindness show that we can see objects and properties without noticing them, so without recognizing them, so without acquiring beliefs about them. On the other hand, any attempt to deny that conclusion by denying that we really see what we do not notice-recognize-form beliefs about, is dashed by other evidence as, for example, the Sperling Effect. The Sperling Experiments indubitably show that we must see at least something we do not either notice or believe to see at all, since we can be prompted to notice objects we are not in visual contact with anymore so we must

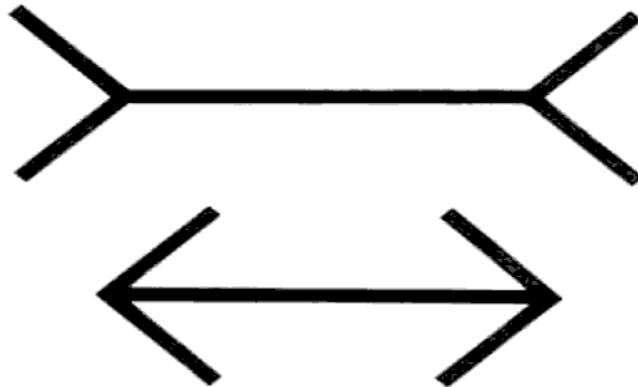
have seen them before.

I have also considered Visual Associative Agnosia (VAA), a pathology involving dramatic absence of object-recognition despite vision is not impaired. VAA shows that there can be visual perception of objects without a respective belief-acquisition of what these object are, so that divorce between (impaired) recognition or belief-acquiring, on the one hand, and (unimpaired) visual-perceptual capacities, on the other hand, strongly speaks for a distinction between the two.

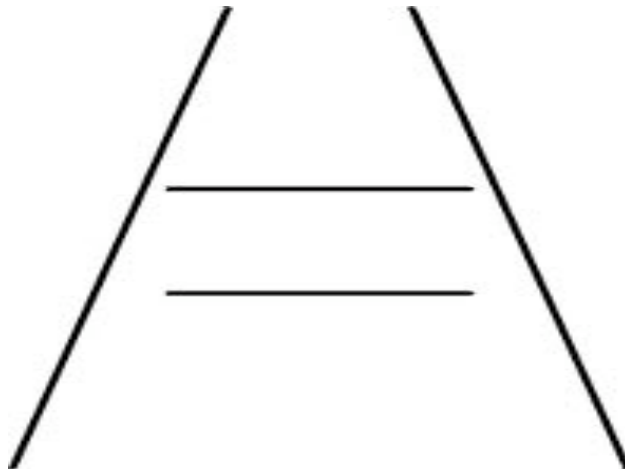
Moreover, Optic Ataxia also shows that there can be perception of spatial properties which suffices for fine-grained action-guiding, without any associated doxastic awareness of those perceived contents. That happens also in normal subjects, as the Tichener Illusion and other similar cases show. People behave as if they 'knew' that two circles are the same size, even though the very same circles consciously 'look' to be a different size, so there can be perception of spatial properties not only without a respective belief-acquisition, but also associated with the perceptual acquiring of a belief which contradicts the unawaredly perceived content. The Belief Theorist could reply that at least *conscious* perceptual experience is belief-acquiring, even if there may be absence of belief-acquisition in perceptions without experience. I have argued that also that move is challenged by the well-known case of Blindsight, where there is perceptual belief-acquiring without any perceptual conscious experience. So, if there is perception without belief-acquiring as well as perceptual belief-acquiring without conscious experience, neither perceptions nor perceptual experiences can be just *identical* with belief-acquisitions. If conscious perception was identical with perceptual belief-acquiring, we would expect that a perceptual belief-acquisition without conscious perception would be impossible. Blindsight shows that is possible though.

In the next Chapter, I will introduce the Content View as a necessary evolution of the Belief Theory that is not vulnerable to these objections.

**FIGURE I: MÜLLER-LYER ILLUSION:**



**FIGURE II: PONZO ILLUSION:**



## **Chapter III - The Content View**

### **Introduction**

In this Chapter I introduce and start discussing the Content View. In Section 1 I introduce the Content View as a promising way of saving the virtues of the Belief Theory without facing its main problems. In Section 2 I argue that the Content View best captures our intuitions and does the greatest justice to the ordinary way of ascribing perceptual experiences analyzed at length in Chapter I. Section 2 introduces the main issues that arise within the Content View and so prepares the more substantive discussion of the following Chapter. Finally, I will put these provisional conclusions together in order to sum up and state the points just acquired.

### **Section 1 – *The Core Idea of CV***

#### **1.1 *Introducing the Content View***

In the previous Chapter I have pointed at some important virtues of the Belief Theory. To recall them shortly, Belief Theory explains the *intentionality* of perceptual experiences, it explains their *semantic evaluability* – i-e. perceptual states can be taken as right or mistaken, as veridical or falsidical – and it explains why experiencing in this way, naturally involves *taking* things to be a certain way. Moreover, it was a better alternative to Direct Realism both than Sense Data theory (in facing the Arguments from Illusion and Hallucination without committing to a suspicious ontology) and than Adverbialism (in better doing justice to the articulate quality of perceptual information as well as to the 'purported objectivity' of perceptual experiences witnessed in their phenomenology, so in explaining how mind-independent objects could feature in the phenomenological character of experience).

But I have also considered many reasons why the view should be rejected, and I argued that those reasons definitely overwhelm the advantages. Among those reasons, I have considered that belief involves concept-possession, its ascription is normative and subject to constraints of consistency and rationality, differently from perception. In addition belief is committal in a way perceptual experience is not (I can disbelieve my experience), but illusory experiences persist despite disbelieved (as beliefs do not), experiences can present contradictory and impossible elements,



and so on. Furthermore, I have recalled some pieces of empirical evidence globally showing that believing is neither necessary nor sufficient both for perceiving and/or perceptually experiencing. Another weakness of the view I have stressed so far is its phenomenological inadequacy. Experiencing does not introspectively seem to consist *just* of us acquiring an inclination to believe certain propositions, especially if that inclination is counterfactually specified. There must be something more in perceiving than being potentially committed to an abstract propositional content.

A more promising view would be one which embeds the advantages of the Belief Theory without its fatal problems. That is what the *Content View* (CV) aims at doing<sup>1</sup>. According to that view, perception has intentional content and it is normally belief-inducing but it is not belief or belief-acquiring. As some of the best known advocates of CV put it:

“A perceptual experience represents the world as being a certain way” (Evans 1982, 226; Peacocke 1992, 66)

“Experiences may be correct or incorrect [...] In short, experiences have representational or semantic properties; they have content” (Davies 1992, 22)

“[...] experiences have contents, where contents are a kind of condition under which experiences are accurate, *similar* in many ways to the truth-conditions of beliefs” (Siegel 2010, 4)

In perceptual experience, things are represented as being in a certain way. If that is the case – if CV is true – then the *intentionality* of perceptual experience can be explained by experiences having content. Likewise their semantic evaluability as correct or incorrect, veridical or falsidical, can be explained by them having correctness conditions determined by their contents. Finally, the acquisition of beliefs which in normal conditions perceptual experiences involve, can be explained by the subject doxastically committing to the content of her perceptual experience, so that she *takes* things to be the way her experience represents them as being.

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<sup>1</sup> That label is of Brewer 2008. See Siegel 2011.

## 1.2 – CV and BT

So the main fundamental virtues of the Belief Theory can *prima facie* be embedded in CV. Can the problems of the Belief Theory pointed above also be accommodated within CV? Let us see.

Actually, the Belief Theory is a specific form CV can take. Indeed if experiences are belief-acquisitions, experiences are contentful states, they *do* represent the world as being a certain way; representing things as being such-and-so is just what a belief does. Although, CV as such is not committed either to take perceptions to *be* belief-acquisitions or to take perceptual content as being the *same in nature* as the content of belief. Firstly, a CV theorist can distinguish perception from perceptual belief and attribute content to both. Secondly, given that believed contents are *committal*<sup>2</sup>, *conceptual* and *propositional*, as well as *holistically ascribed* and *reasons-sensitive*, as seen above, a CV theorist should attribute to perceptions a different kind of content from the kind of content which characterizes perceptual beliefs. In that version of CV, not only perceptions have content on their own without being belief-acquisitions, but their content is also of a different kind from that of beliefs. How should such a content be characterized in order CV to preserve the virtues of Belief Theory without running up against its difficulties? Let us proceed by steps and cursorily retrace the main of those difficulties to assess at least how that alleged perceptual content must *not* be characterized.

Firstly, the belief states are fully-fledged propositional attitudes involving possession and exercise of the concepts constituting the believed contents. Belief ascription is subject to the *Rationality-Constraint* and concept-possession ascription is subject to the *Generality Constraint*, but perceptually experiencing something as being so does not need to meet these demanding constraints. So, are perception to be contentful episodes, their contents must be free from both *Rationality-* and *Generality* Constraint. Indeed no such content can be a belief or be identical in kind to the content of a belief.

Secondly, perceptually experiencing *a* as F cannot be as committal as believing that *a* is F. It must be at least possible that I take what I perceive 'at face value' and

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<sup>2</sup> Believing that P is committing oneself to the truth of P.

disbelieve the content of my perceptual experience, as it happens for example in illusions known as such. So, if perceptual experiences are committal in any way, they cannot commit us to their contents the way beliefs do. Indeed beliefs *are* commitments to the truth of certain propositions, to their contents being exemplified<sup>3</sup>.

Thirdly, perceptual content cannot be as indifferent to its informational origins as belief-content is, rather the *special way* of accessing that content must matter to what that content is. That content needs be *phenomenologically adequate*, so it needs somehow to embed in itself the 'vehicle' through which it is acquired<sup>4</sup>. So, perceptual content cannot be *just* the abstract proposition which constitutes believed contents, even if it is in virtue of having a certain content that a perception induces in the subject acquiring certain empirical beliefs, rather than others. That calls for an epistemologically and semantically satisfactory account of the transition from perceptual experiences to perceptual beliefs, but that will be treated later on.

In addition, perceptual content needs to be compatible with the experimental evidence I have recalled to make a case against the Belief Theory. If perceptions are contentful states, the kind of content they bear must allow that we can have such contentful states without *noticing* (a part of) the contents of these very states (Inattentional- and Change Blindness, Sperling Experiments); without *recognizing* the perceived objects as being of a given kind of thing (Visual Associative Agnosia); without even being perceptually *conscious* of them (Optic Ataxia, Tichener Illusion, Blindsight).

Maybe only a view involving a multi-layered content could accommodate all that evidence. Anyway, what is certain is that perceptual experiences cannot be beliefs and their content cannot be of a kind which is subject to the *Rationality*- and *Generality* constraints. Moreover, *if* GC is a good criterion for concept-possession, and if the arguments above are sound, then perceptual content needs be non-conceptual. In other words, some of the arguments I have introduced above against the Belief Theory, are good arguments against Conceptualism as well<sup>5</sup>. Perceptual

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3 That is clearly shown by the Moore's Paradox: "I believe that P but not-P" is a paradox just because believing P is committing to the truth of P, so that self-ascribing the belief that P cannot be consistent with judging non-P.

4 On that content/vehicle distinction and phenomenology, see Crane 2008, 23.

5 As we have remarked, beliefs involve concepts and concept possession involves having beliefs

Conceptualism<sup>6</sup> is that version of CV which holds that perceptual experiences have conceptual content. Even though experiences are not beliefs, in acquiring perceptual beliefs on their grounds a subject, *endorses* the very same kind of content which characterizes the experiences, so that having a perceptual experience with a certain content involves a display of the very same conceptual capacities which are operative in forming the respective perceptual belief. That idea is incompatible with the evidence just recalled, since seeing does not necessarily involve noticing, recognizing, conceptualizing, believing. So in seeing, for example, the very same “conceptual capacities which are operative in believing” are not to be found necessarily, even though seeing *often* involves attentive noticing, recognitional acts, as well as acts of conceptualization and belief-formation in those cognitive systems which are able to conceptualize and believe at all. More on that later.

### *1.3 – Phenomenal character and representational content*

I have charged the Belief Theory with the accusation of phenomenological inadequacy. Before asking whether and how some version of CV could do any better than the Belief Theory in that respect, I want to briefly introduce the notion of *phenomenal character*, a central notion for the debate about the nature of perception. Whilst all take perceptual experiences as having a distinctive phenomenal character, CV is a 'two components view'<sup>7</sup>, insofar as it takes perceptual experiences to exhibit two fundamental features: *phenomenal character*, and *representational content*. While the representational content is the way experience represents the world as being – or the way the surrounding world seems to be to the subject according to her perceptual experience – the phenomenal character is the 'what it is like'- or subjective aspect of experience<sup>8</sup>. For example, there is something it is like to see (a certain shade of) red, which is subjectively different from what it is like to see (a certain shade of) green. A given conscious mental state has phenomenal properties if there is something it is like to be in it. Perceptual conscious states are such that there is something it is like to be in them, so I will say that they are phenomenal states

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containing the possessed concept as well as being able to make certain inferences. A concept determines and explains the inferential properties of the beliefs in which it occurs as a constituent.

6 See McDowell 1994, Brewer 1999.

7 See Maund 1994, Siegel 2010, Chalmers 2008.

8 See Nagel 1974, who famously introduced such a 'what it is like'-characterization.

insofar they have phenomenal properties<sup>9</sup>. Also particular elements of a given perceptual experience can be said to have phenomenal properties. For example, if there is something it is like to see something bulgy, red and round, there is also something it is like to see something red, where such a phenomenal property is involved in the first complex phenomenal state. Of course a phenomenal state can very well be multi-modal. For example, there is something it is like to see certain objects and properties and hearing certain sounds at a given time. A global phenomenal state can also be not just perceptual but involving other emotional or 'feeling-like' conscious properties of any sort. With Siegel 2010, 20ff., we can call *overall experience* a certain global conscious state with its many facets, at a time *t*, like looking at the clouds, hearing the wind, feeling the cold air on one's face, touching and guiding the handlebars, and feeling happy when cycling into the forest. Taken an overall experience, we can zoom in, for example, on its visual component, namely, on the visual phenomenal state involved in the overall experience<sup>10</sup>. We can further zoom in on an aspect of that global visual experience and consider what it is like to see a certain property (ex. a certain color of a certain cloud). That single phenomenal property could be shared also by other visual experiences as well as by other very different overall experiences.

So a mental state has phenomenal character at all if there is *something* it is like to be in it, a mental state has the determinate phenomenal character it has according to *what* it is like to be in it for the subject being in it. The phenomenal properties of the state constitute 'what it is like' to be in that state. Often such properties are called *qualia*, but that word has many meanings and uses rather than a uniform and shared sense within the debate<sup>11</sup>, so I prefer to neutrally talk of the subjective, qualitative

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9 As Bayne 2011, 17, writes "phenomenal states are which it is 'something' it is like to instantiate". In Tye's words: "Consider your visual experience as you stare at a bright turquoise color patch in a paint store. There is something it is like for you subjectively to undergo that experience. What it is like to undergo the experience is very different from what it is like for you to experience a dull brown color patch. This difference is a difference in what is often called 'phenomenal character' (Tye 2007).

10 On that, see also Horgan and Tienson 2002.

11 Tye individuates at least four uses of the word: 1) *Qualia* as those introspectively accessible qualities making up the phenomenal character of your experience 2) *Qualia* as those intrinsic and non-representational features of non-physical *Sense Data* which are responsible of the phenomenal character 3) *Qualia* as those intrinsic, non-representational properties of experiences solely responsible for their phenomenal character, where that characterization is ontologically neutral about whether there are non-physical mental objects or not (Peacocke 1983, Nagel 1974) 4) *Qualia* as intrinsic properties of experiences which are also ineffable, non-physical and given

character of perceptual experiences, indeed their phenomenal character.

I am conscious that such a characterization is not very clear. But more than providing a definition of that “what it is like” aspect of experience, on the whole, an appeal is made simply to our intuition and to our introspective capacities. As a matter of fact, there is no way of ostensively pointing at such a subjective aspect in a publicly accessible manner, so *faute de mieux* each one needs to do so by herself, so to speak. In any case, according to CV, perceptual experiences exhibit two fundamental features, whose relation will be carefully examined later on: representational content and phenomenal character. A certain state S is a representational state if it has representational properties (= a content). The very same state S is also a phenomenal state insofar as it has phenomenal properties (= its phenomenal character). So, the phenomenal character of a visual experience consists of properties *of* your conscious experience you can introspectively attend to, whilst the representational content of a visual experience consists of properties your experience represents *things* as having<sup>12</sup>. When I visually experience a red square, in normal conditions something I see is represented both as red and square in my experience, so these are the representational properties providing my experience with its intentional content. The phenomenal properties of that very experience make up that subjective visual phenomenology which is typically associated with experiencing something as red and square, so they are the phenomenal character. So far so good.

#### *1.4 – Transparency and Richness of Details*

What about the phenomenological adequacy of CV then? What kind of perceptual content would be phenomenologically adequate? It should be one that could do justice to the phenomenal character of experience, one which would 'respect' or be compatible with the way perceptual experience presents itself insofar as it is introspectively accessible by us. Of course it is not *a priori* ruled out that the spontaneous phenomenology of experience is systematically misleading, but a theory which was consistent with the way experience introspectively *seems* to oneself to be

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incorrigibly to their subject (Dennett 1991). We are concerned only with the use 1, the most theory-neutral, so that none would ever deny that each conscious experience has *qualia*, namely, has a distinctive phenomenal character. On the different notions of *qualia* in the current debate, see also Martin 2008 (II).

12 On that, see Dretske 1995, Tye 2000.

featured, other things being equal, would be a much better theory than one which violated that Phenomenological Adequacy Constraint. Therefore, even if what I am calling Phenomenological Adequacy is maybe not an absolute theoretical necessity, still it is a relevant *desideratum* for a theory concerning *our* experiences and their manifest features, therefore concerning *us* as subjects of experience after all.

Now I want to introduce two fundamental features of visual phenomenology which are introspectively assessable: *transparency* and *richness of details*.

Transparency is that property of perceptual experience in virtue of which when you introspectively attend to the properties of your own experience you end up by attending to the properties your experience attributes to the objects you are perceiving<sup>13</sup>. In Harman's clear words:

“Look at a tree and try to turn your attention to intrinsic features of your visual experience. I predict you will find that the only features there to turn your attention to will be features of the presented tree, including relational features of the tree 'from here'” (Harman 1990, 667)

As soon as I search for the intrinsic properties of my experience, I only find the world and its properties or – to put it more exactly – the way the perceived world seems *to be* according to my experience. But that is nothing more than the representational content of my experience.

Transparency has been appealed to, to argue for different and incompatible views<sup>14</sup>. I want to argue that the Content View is at least compatible with transparency. The phenomenology of our perceptual experiences is such that they present themselves as having an 'objective purport', as attributing features and properties to the *real* perceived world we are facing. That is why CV is, with that respect, phenomenologically more adequate than Adverbialism or Sense Datum theory. On the other side, it does *prima facie* better than Direct Realism because it can better accommodate the Argument from Illusion<sup>15</sup>. If our experience is falsidical, it cannot

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13 Transparency was firstly introduced by Moore: when we try to introspect the sensation of blue, all we can see is the blue: the other element is as if it were diaphanous" (1922, 25). On transparency see Tye 2000, Siewert 2003, Stoljar 2004, Martin 2008.

14 On that, see Martin 2002.

15 Advocates of a disjunctivist version of Direct Realism (see Martin 2006, 2008, Fish 2009) claim

involve the real presence of (all) the properties we find in introspecting the experience itself, but it can well falsidically attribute to things properties things do not in fact have. So such a phenomenology of objective purport and 'direction to the world' is vindicated within CV, but also the eventuality that our experiences are illusory and may 'mismatch' reality, is not a puzzling problem anymore<sup>16</sup>.

Often transparency is used by the representationalist advocates of CV<sup>17</sup> to argue for representationalism, namely the view that phenomenal properties are identical to representational properties. But other versions of CV do not hold that identity<sup>18</sup>, so I leave aside that debate for the time being and take transparency just to fit very well with the general framework of CV as such.

As I have said, Belief Theory is not phenomenologically adequate, even if taking perceptions as belief-acquirings would explain the objective purport experiences seem to have. Take visual experience for example. What is missing and being disregarded by Belief Theory is the relevance of the special *way* of acquiring information, which is so phenomenologically salient in visually experiencing, especially insofar as that special way involves a factor which characterizes visual phenomenology in a way that cannot be explained if perceptual experiences were nothing more than belief-acquisitions. Namely, the *richness of details* or *fine-grainedness* of the visually conveyed information.

Assigning a content to a visual experience must involve a kind of content which is consistent with such a special fine-grained and profuse way of (purportedly) "taking in concrete reality" (Crane 2008, 24) which vision introspectively seems to be, since the semantic characterization of perceptual experiences needs to fit their phenomenological features if it is to explain their relevance in our first-person access to the content itself. If content consists in correctness-conditions and we access (come-to-know) such correctness-conditions of our experiences in virtue of them' having a distinctive phenomenal character, then that phenomenal character must be somehow 'witnessed' in content. As we saw, perceptual content is not separable from

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they can accommodate the problem of Illusion and Hallucination without giving up Direct Realism. I will take that proposal into consideration later. See Chapter VI.

16 I know things are not so easy, because the presentational phenomenology of hallucinations is still to be explained, but I will discuss the problem later on (see Chapter VI, Section 2.5). For the time being, these introductory remarks are sufficient.

17 For example, Dretske 1995, Tye 2000.

18 For example, Peacocke 2007, Block 1998.



its informational origins, differently from the content of beliefs<sup>19</sup>. Perceptual content and perceptual vehicle are originally entangled.

The difference between a *picture* and a *sentence* maybe a good metaphor to render the difference between perceptual content as it is witnessed in visual phenomenology on the one hand, and the content of perceptual beliefs acquirable on the basis of accessing that content, on the other<sup>20</sup>. Perceptual content presents itself as analog, unit-free<sup>21</sup>, continuous and profuse. Perceptual beliefs are ways of “extracting” *pieces* of discrete and 'digitalized' content from a more basic experiential content which is recalcitrant – phenomenologically, in the first place – to be identified with the potential extractions it can give rise to. Extracting pieces of information in a 'digital' form – as Dretske 1981 characterizes the doxastic form – involves a gain in classification (conceptualizing is classifying) but an impoverishment in terms of informational richness, a gain in quality against a loss in quantity of information. Consider an image as representing a scene. It is neither true or false in itself, it can represent a real scene in a more or less accurate way, with respect to different visible properties (colors, sizes, orientation, fidelity in morphological details, and so on). In visual experience the attended scene presents itself as a topic for further exploration, where indefinitely many details are potentially available for access, they are there at our reach, so to speak<sup>22</sup>.

So, if we take that picture/sentence analogy seriously, we can make the first important point about a phenomenologically salient difference in kind of content, between our experiences and our perceptual beliefs. Perceptual experiences can be more or less accurate, whilst beliefs are either true or false.

### 1.5 – The Scenario Content introduced

So, if representational content consists of correctness-conditions, the correctness-conditions for beliefs are their *truth-conditions*, whilst the correctness-conditions for

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19 As Crane 2008, 23, puts that very same point, “it is central to the phenomenology of experience that what is conveyed to the subject includes its specific vehicle”. What is conveyed to the subject in experience, is the content.

20 Besides Dretske 1981 and Crane 1992, 2011, also Fodor 2007 adopts that very analogy by taking perceptions as *iconic* (picture-like) representations on the one side, and perceptual beliefs as *discursive* (sentence-like) representations on the other side.

21 For example, you do not visually experience a distance in feet or in meters. On perceptual content being analog and unit-free, see Peacocke 1986.

22 As Nöe 2006, 422, remarks “Phenomenologically, the world is given to perception *as available*”.

perceptions are their *accuracy-conditions* in the first place. Accuracy is a gradual notion, which can do justice to the profuse and continuous nature of perceptual content as it is conveyed in our concrete experiences.

The well-know notion of *Scenario Content* (SC) articulated by Peacocke is a way of semantically characterizing perceptual experiences which does justice to their fine-grained phenomenology. SC is:

“specified by the ways of filling out the space around the subject which are consistent with the representational content's being correct” (Peacocke 1992, 105)

If the surrounding world instantiates the spatial type under which those 'ways' fall, then the content is exemplified and the perception is correct. That set of ways is to be determined egocentrically by firstly fixing an origin (for example the chest of the perceiver) and axes (for example, the directions back/front, up/down, left/right) with respect to the origin or center; then determining for each point within that centered space – identified by its direction and distance from the fixed origin – “whether there is a surface there, and if so what texture, hue, saturation, brightness and temperature it has at that point, together with its degree of solidity” (*ibidem*, 106). Once that Scenario Content is ascribed to a perceptual experience, the experience can be semantically evaluated as soon as it is cast into a *positioned scenario*, namely, each point of the scenario-content is matched with a correspondent point in the real surrounding environment where the subject is and its 'origins' are located, according to real directions, places, and a real time as well. A positioned scenario is easily assessable for correctness and accuracy. For example, a piece of the content it carries could be specified as follows: “in that point (= at a certain distance and direction from the origin) of the positioned scenario there is a red solid surface, with a certain bright, saturation, hue and orientation”. Now, if the real space around the perceiver is characterized that way, in that point, and that point of the spatial type is instantiated, then the perception is accurate with respect to that point. If not, it is inaccurate. That content is a spatial type used to semantically characterized the experience, it is not to be found somewhere “in the head”. Nonetheless, that style of content-ascription is phenomenologically apt, because it embeds reference to typically visual properties,

as represented from the 'point of view' of the perceiver, with a profuseness and concrete richness of details which is typical of conscious visual experiences, and, without that perceptual content, is reduced to beliefs or abstract concepts. Indeed, the subject does not need to possess the concepts used to specify the content ascribed to her experience. For example, the concepts {red}, {saturation}, {distance} and the like. *A fortiori*, the subject does not even need to acquire a belief having these concepts as their constituent, in order to have such an experience assessable for accuracy and so semantically evaluable throughout.

Now, that is not the only layer of content which experience is characterizable with, but it is a basic layer which already shows how a version of CV can be phenomenologically adequate, save the virtues of the Belief Theory and avoid at the same time those inescapable problems hinted at above.

As we will see later, there are other layers of perceptual content which are more semantically articulated than SC insofar as they involve explicit reference to 'discreet' objects as having types of properties, as involving 'thicker' recognitional acts, and so on. But now I am mostly interested in showing how CV can meet the main general *desiderata* a satisfactory theory of perception should meet, independently on how other more specific issues can be detailed and filled.

## **Section 2 - Some *prima facie* Virtues of the Content View**

### *2.1 – Distinctive Features of States with Intentional Content*

In fact CV is too rarely defended as such against its alternatives<sup>23</sup>. Rather, it is articulated in specific ways, and some sub-options within CV are argued for against others. For these reasons it seems to me opportune to preliminarily argue for its plausibility specially insofar as an alternative view – the Disjunctivism *cum* Naïve Realism (DJ-NR) – is affirming itself and challenging the very basic assumption of CV, namely, the idea that perceptual experiences are contentful states<sup>24</sup>. According

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23 For example, Evans 1982 and Peacocke 1992 – the champions of CV – never defend the truth of CV as such. A relevant exception is Siegel 2010.

24 See Martin 2002, 2004, 2006. Actually, a Naïve Realist does not need to deny that experience have content, it will suffice for her to hold that the notion of content is not so relevant in individuating and characterizing experiences. On the contrary, according to CV the content of a perceptual experience is an essential feature making the state what it is. Siegel 2010 argues for that Naïve Realism is compatible with CV. Although, as embedded in NR the notion of content becomes redundant. To say the least it ceases to be a key-notion.

to DJ-NR, perceptual experience is relational in a way experience could not be if CV was true. On that view experiences, when veridical, are relations having the world itself as a constituent rather than being representations of it; when falsidical, they are events of another *kind* which do not share anything with veridical experiences apart their subjective indistinguishability from them (each from its subjectively matching counterpart). So veridical cases are genuine relations to the surrounding world which is then 'directly manifested' rather than represented through them, and do not share anything essential or important with illusions and hallucinations, not even their alleged content. That is at least a well-known version of DJ-NR (Martin, Fish, Brewer)<sup>25</sup>. Other version of DJ-NR are available, but I will treat them later on.

Of course, in order to defeat that global challenge it will be necessary to develop a detailed version of CV that is able to face the criticisms moved by the advocates of the recently revived Naïve Realism. But since CV is perhaps slowly ceasing to be the mainstream view, some preliminary arguments at least for its *prima facie* plausibility, need to be introduced.

The first reason for taking CV as promising has already been recalled. Perceptions have *intentionality*, namely, they are states directed-upon worldly objects. Representing is a way of being *about* a represented target in representing the target as being a certain way.

Intentionality as a property of representations has been characterized with three main features. Firstly, the *power to misrepresent*, which would occur when perceptions are incorrect or mistaken (their correctness-conditions are not instantiated)<sup>26</sup>. Secondly, the *aboutness* itself, insofar as an intentional state *refers* to some object or condition, it is about something indeed. That is also a feature which essentially characterizes perceptual experiences – they are about objects or circumstances in the environment. Thirdly, the *aspectual shape*. In being about an object O, a representation of O always represents it (as being) a certain way, as F or G. Again, that is also a typical feature of perceptual experience, for example when I see an object and it looks some way to me (red, square, big), that would be the way my experience represents the object as being, if experience was an intentional-representational state. As Dretske 1995, 31, puts it “experiences are about objects, but one cannot experience an object

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25 See Martin 2004, 2006, 2008; Fish 2009; Brewer 2008.

26 See Chisholm 1957.

without experiencing it under some aspect<sup>27</sup>. So, perceptual experience has intentionality, and these three fundamental features of intentionality would be well explained by appealing to the notion of intentional content.

Crane 2010, 86, likewise identifies three main ideas that make necessary the introduction of the notion of content with respect to perceptual experience: *Aspect*, *Absence*, *Accuracy*. By 'aspect' he means what we have just called the aspectual shape, so that seeing something involves something's looking a certain way or its being visually given under some aspect. 'Absence' refers to the possibility for some intentional state to be about an object or a state of affair which does not actually exist<sup>28</sup>. For example, I can desire something which is not there, so my state has an intentional object which does not exist there, I can believe that a state of affairs holds, but that state of affairs is not satisfied by reality, and so on. Absence is also intimately connected with the power to misrepresent we have introduced above. If a state represents that something is the case and that fact does not hold, the absence of the represented fact is what makes the state a misrepresentation of the way things are. Also visual experiences can have absent objects, for example it happens in hallucinations or in illusions<sup>29</sup>. Last but not least, *accuracy* is a salient feature of experiences. So *aboutness*, (potential) *absence*, *aspect* and *accuracy* are salient features both of perceptual experiences and of contentful, representational states. A straightforward way of accounting for that striking parallelism, is that of taking perceptual experiences to *be* representational states. Nothing else other than a representation seems to have in itself these distinctive features of (possible) absence, (possible) accuracy and (necessary) aspectuality.

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27 If I perceive an object it looks some way to me. An object can look some way F to me if it is experienced by me as F. But experiencing an object as being a certain way F seems to require representing it as being that way, specially if we consider that S can experience O as F even if O is not F. On that see also Tye 2011, 185ff.

28 See Brentano 1874, Husserl 1913/70, Searle 1983.

29 Hallucinations lack a worldly object at all, illusions can represent a real perceived scene in such a way that it appears that a certain object is part of the scene but actually that object is something else. So, also a partial detail presented in an illusory experience can be 'about' non-existent objects, not only a hallucination.

## 2.2 – Perceptual Experience and Accuracy

That visual experiences are *assessable for accuracy* means that they can match or mismatch more or less the reality, so their accuracy is 'measured' by the world<sup>30</sup>. How can that happen if not by experiences being about reality and representing it in a certain way<sup>31</sup>? If that argument does not prove the truth of CV, at least it seems to me to be a natural conclusion and a very plausible inference to the best explanation.

A possible reply could be that many other processes or activities are more or less accurate, without being representations or contentful states, so being assessable for accuracy does not entail any possession of representational properties. For example, an occurrent example of digestion can be more or less accurate with respect to a standard of 'digestive efficiency' determined by the natural function, evolutionarily fixed, of the dedicated mechanism, but none would take a case of digestion to be a representation thereby. But that objection is resistible, because the accuracy-assessability involved in perceptual experience is not just a kind of generic bio-functional well-working, it presupposes a positive matching between the experience and the environment. In other words, there is a set of circumstances, or at least a cluster of environmental properties, the experience can match (veridical experience), partially match (illusion) or totally mismatch (hallucination). All that involves the idea of a *correspondence* or a mapping-relation between two domains which is more than an appropriate *reaction* to some external condition. Accuracy concerns such a correspondence, whose accessibility is a matter of how much of a domain is instantiated in the other domain.

So, as Siegel 2010 rightly remarks, the best explanation for the pre-theoretical distinction between partially veridical, falsidical and completely veridical experiences is that experiences have accuracy-conditions in virtue of which they can be more or less accurate, where the conditions of such accuracy are the contents indeed. Accuracy of perceptual experience has to do with experiences having the power of being veridical, partially veridical or falsidical, and these ordinary characterizations employ intentional and clearly semantic notions. In addition, the accuracy-conditions of perceptual experiences are *conveyed* to the conscious subject and have a phenomenological salience, to the effect that the properties presented in

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30 In Searle's words (see Searle 1983), perceptions have a world-to-mind direction of fit.

31 An argument on these lines is to be found in Siegel 2010, 30ff.

experience make it accurate only if they are *instantiated* in environment. Other functions like digestion can be normatively evaluated as correct/incorrect and even as more or less accurate, but they do not involve that the very same properties that are presented need to be instantiated in reality in order for the very episode to be accurate. That is the difference between a response to an environmental condition, which is also normatively evaluable as more or less accurate, and a *representational* response to an environmental condition, whose accuracy is a *sui generis* accuracy consisting of a distinctive kind of correspondence where a certain spatial type may be or may not be instantiated by a worldly token.

A set of accuracy-conditions which is conveyed to the subject through her experience's presenting properties that are instantiated when the experience itself is accurate, *is* a content. So perceptual experiences have accuracy-conditions conveyed to the experiencer in such a way that they cannot be other than contents. All that is enough to render CV at least a very promising working-hypothesis.

I want to end the third Chapter by arguing that many fundamental properties of the ordinary ascriptions of episodes of vision and visual experiences – analyzed at length in the first Chapter of *this work* – fit very well with CV, so that CV would mostly 'save' our pre-theoretical intuitions about seeing and visually experiencing, insofar as these intuitions are implicitly embodied in the ordinary perceptual vocabulary we adopt in everyday discourse. Not only then does CV seem to be phenomenologically apt, it also seems to be apt in vindicating the manifest image of us as subjects of experience capable of being in sensory contact with our environments.

Normally, when S sees an object O, O looks some way to S, say F. But O's looking F to S does not entail that S comes to believe that O is F. Seeing is not believing or coming-to-believe indeed. Nonetheless, in normal conditions and in absence of collateral knowledge, when a seen object O looks F to us we do tend to come-to-believe that O is F. When O is F, the episode of seeing happens to occur in normal conditions (without abnormal causal deviations etc.) and our visual apparatus is working well, we justifiably come-to-believe the true fact that O is F, so we *come-to-know* that O is F. In other words, we *see that* O is F. It may also happen that we come-to-believe by visual means that O is F but O is not F, for example, the lines are not unequal as they appear to be according to our illusory experience we falsidically

trust or endorse. So, we come to acquire a false belief by visual means. Both in case of knowledge or false belief, we acquire a perceptual belief through an episode of seeing something, through a visual perception, but that visual perception is *not* identical to that acquiring it often and normally gives rise to. We could say that the Belief Theory wrongly equates *seeing* with *seeing-that* (or visually coming-to believe-that).

Furthermore, not only can there be *seeing* without *seeing-that*, there can also be *seeing* without *seeing-as* as well as *seeing-as* without *seeing-that*<sup>32</sup>. In fact, S can see O without recognizing O as a kind of thing (as an F), even if it is true that seeing an object normally prompts certain cognitively 'thick' recognitions, namely, certain acts of *seeing-as*. So seeing is not necessarily either doxastic or recognitional but it does normally bring about perceptual beliefs in systems having beliefs and conceptual abilities, and does normally bring about recognitional acts both in systems having beliefs and conceptual abilities as well as in less sophisticated cognitive systems not endowed with conceptual capacities. In other words, not every recognition is a conceptualization, so recognitional seeing is more basic than visual belief-acquiring, and object-seeing is more basic than seeing-as.

According to CV, seeing-episodes are representational episodes. According to a certain non-conceptualist version of CV such episodes are more basic acquisitions of information than beliefs, nor do they need concept-possession. Perceptual content can be – and it normally is – an object for further extractions so it can be material, so to say, for 'takings', recognitions, and finally for beliefs.

We saw in Chapter I that object-seeing ascriptions are extensional and transparent ascriptions of an episode of discrimination involving the visual apparatus and caused by the discriminated environmental object itself. So the seen object is causally, contextually determined. Now, cognitive ascriptions are not transparent, so object-

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32 The relation of entailment is:  $\text{seeing-that } (O \text{ is } F) \rightarrow \text{seeing } (O) \text{ as } (F) \rightarrow \text{seeing } (O)$ , but it does not hold the other way round. No visual beliefs without visual recognition, no visual recognition without vision, but nothing prevents that there are episodes of vision without visual recognition as well as episodes of recognition without belief-acquirings and related acts of conceptualization. That absence of entailment defeats both the Belief Theory and the Conceptualist CV. Let us remember, for the sake of clarity, that being a Conceptualist does not entail being a Belief Theorist. For example, McDowell 1994, 1998 holds that perceptual content is conceptual but perceptions are not belief-acquirings. Rather, by acquiring a perceptual belief based on a perception, the subject just *endorses* the very same content of her perceptual experience, so that those contents need to be the same nature (=conceptual).



seeing *as such* is non-cognitive, at least in the broad sense that whether you see an object or not does not depend on whether you cognize it under a *specific* way. It is enough that you discriminate it *some* way, no matter what way.

As we have seen in Chapter II, *within* a perceptual experience there may well be object-seeing without noticing, but any perceptual experience involves some noticed objects at least, which look some way to the subject. In any case, experimental evidence shows that object-seeing does not necessarily involve either noticing or recognition, so the extensionality of its ordinary ascription is empirically vindicated, so to speak. What we see does not depend on what we believe we are seeing, nor does it depend on what we recognize in what we see, it does not even depend on what we notice.

*Seeing-that* ascriptions are ascriptions of fully-fledged propositional attitudes instead, so they involve respective ascriptions of concept possession and beliefs. They are referentially opaque and factive, to the effect that seeing that O is F is a case of coming to know by visual means that O is F. Anyway, *seeing-that*- ascriptions cover the success cases of the more general process of perceptual belief-acquiring, which may well be a cognitive failure, namely, the acquisition of a false belief. Again, all that fits very well with CV, according to which perceptual experiences have a content on their own which may or may not give rise to perceptual beliefs which *conceptualize* and *endorse* some aspects of that content by casting it into a propositional structure apt for it being believed.

So, “seeing facts” is no more than seeing objects as having certain properties and relations and – truly and justifiably –coming-to-believe that a seen object has this or that property or entertain such and such relations with other seen objects. Seeing objects, properties and relations put us in a position to come-to-know facts concerning those objects, properties, and relations, but the episodes of a kind are not identical with episodes of the other kind.

We have also discussed *seeing-as* ascriptions in Chapter I. Seeing-as when successful is recognitional seeing. Seeing-as is neither transparent nor factive and is normatively evaluable as right or wrong. It exhibits correctness-conditions measured by the way the world is arranged. Even when unsuccessful, seeing-as presupposes the possession of a positive recognitional capacity concerning a certain property, so it

is recursive and involves a *categorization* of the seen object. That is not conceptualization, nor does it involve belief-acquiring, rather it is the subsumption of a token under a type and does involve a 'taking', namely, a certain *cognitive stand* we could call a point of view on the perceived object. Such a cognitive stand is a belief-like state but it is not a belief, since it does not necessarily draw on inferential abilities and conceptual capacities. Actually *seeing O as (an) F* is the cognitive outcome of a perceptual episode, which is entailed by a belief that O is F but does not entail that belief. It amounts to seeing an F in O thanks to the exercise of a recognitional capacity prompted by the visual appreciation of O's *sensible profile*.

Now, according to CV seeing O as (an) F is representing O as being an F thanks to the representation of O's sensible profile in the first place. A sensible profile is made of SCM-properties, so representing an object as having a certain sensible profile is representing it as having a complex of visible properties like colors, size, shape, spatial properties, orientation, solidity, texture, and the like. In perceptual seeing-as any thicker categorization (ex. seeing O as a [pig]) entails the appreciation of that complex of SCM-properties which is typically exhibited by examples of Fs, so the recognition of a *visual type* in the first place.

Couched in terms of CV, in order to represent O as an F, when F is not a visual property, S' visual experience needs to represent O as having certain visual properties or exhibiting a distinctive sensible profile, recursively recognizable just-by-sight.

### 2.3 – CV and the ordinary semantics of 'seeing' and 'looking'

In Chapter I, I have discussed some relevant bits of the 'experiential' vocabulary, namely the logical behavior and the semantics of “looks”-/“seems”-/“appears”-ordinary ascriptions. There I argued for the same idea I have just stated: “In order O to *look F*, when F is not an SCM-property, O must look G in the first place, where G is a complex of SCM-properties which individuates a certain visual profile”. Provided that on CV O's looking F to S means S's visual experience's representing O to S as being F, then if we are to visually represent properties other than SCM, we would be able to do that in virtue of visually representing SCM-properties in the first place. So we can say that SCM-properties are the *basic contents* of visual experience. Actually, the *Scenario Content* introduced above is made out of those 'thin'

properties: colors, spatial relations, distances, shapes, and so on.

So there seem to be both 'thick' properties and 'thin' properties involved in perceptual content. Their reciprocal relation has to be articulated, it is to be inquired whether 'thick' represented properties – and which ones, eventually – may be considered as properties represented *in* perception instead of being represented by the subject just *in virtue* of the subject's having a perception in which only 'thin' properties are represented. I will leave this important issue aside though<sup>33</sup>.

In any case, insofar as seeing O as an F is (pre-conceptually and pre-doxastically) taking something as a token of the type F, it amounts to *representing* something as being an F, so provided that perceptual experiences involve *seeing-as* episodes therefore their nature is well consistent with CV.

In addition, CV also could explain the intimate entanglement between the different uses/meanings of 'looks'. If perceptual experiences represent the world as being a certain way, it is natural that what we have called 'epistemic look' and what we have called 'phenomenological look' are so inextricably blended with each other. The phenomenal character of experience 'maps' its representational content, as transparency shows, so that as soon as one attends to her own visual experience, in attempting to find visual 'looks' she ends up finding *ways* perceived things *look to be* according to her visual experience. So there are phenomenal properties in experience, but they cannot be picked out independently on the way things are represented to be when those properties are instantiated in experience. A visual experience presenting O as looking F in fact is a *prima facie* evidence that supports the proposition that O is F, because F is the way O looks to be in experience.

Now I can couch in terms of CV an argument I put forward before with respect to the different uses of 'looks'. Any way of describing one's own visual experience by phenomenal 'lookings' – for example, 'looks F' – in non-representational terms, must finally rest on an hypothetical situation where O looks to be F, so where O is *represented* as being an F. For example, when we say the penny 'looks' elliptical even if we know it is circular and it even looks *to be* elliptical, still we are saying that another experience presenting the penny from a 'frontal' point of view would *represent* the penny as being elliptical. When we say that the big distant tree looks

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<sup>33</sup> See Chapter IV, p. 96, footnote 11. There I explain why I am more sympathetic with the liberal view.

smaller than the near small tree, we are saying that in *another* experience sharing with the actual one some phenomenal properties (perhaps not the 'focal' ones), the distant tree would be represented as smaller than the other, namely such an hypothetical experience would incline S to take it that that tree *is* smaller.

In short, when visual properties are somehow instantiated but not represented as being had by perceived things, in fact these properties are still 'potential representational properties' of other experiences we need to counterfactually refer to when we adopt that sophisticated phenomenal introspective stand toward our actual experience.

Within the framework provided by CV, also the related dependence of 'looks F' from 'is F' I have argued for in Chapter I, is somehow explained. Something can 'look F' to S even if it is not believed by S to be F, only if S is able to recognize Fs just by looking, so only if S is able to correctly apply [ – is F] to seen objects. When O is claimed to look F even if it is known not to be such, what is claimed is “my experience is, at least with some relevant respect, *as if* I was experiencing an F”. So, visually experiencing something which is F as being F works as a 'standard experience' both for ascribing cases of 'just looking so' and for characterizing the experience itself with the phenomenal property [F]. Successful cases of seeing and seeing-as are paradigmatic in ascription of visual experiences, so that the ascriptions of an experience with a certain phenomenology and a certain content is asymmetrically dependent on ascriptions of veridical and successful experiences.

That asymmetry between ascriptions of veridical experiences and non-committal 'veridicality-neutral' ascriptions of experiences is explained within CV by considering that the accuracy conditions of an experience cannot be specified other than normatively, namely, other than referring to the circumstance in which such conditions would be fully satisfied (and the related contents would be instantiated). Just as belief-contents are specified by the circumstances that would obtain were the belief true, so perceptual contents are individuated by the way the world would be were the perception accurate. Meaning is not truth, but its individuation is truth-dependent.

Accordingly, the phenomenology of an experience – with its introspectable looking-properties – is specified by implicit reference to the case in which an experience with

exactly the same phenomenology was an accurate presentation of that purportedly experienced scene.

## Conclusions

In Section 1 of *this Chapter* I have outlined the core idea of the Content View (CV). I have argued that a non-conceptualist version of CV can embed the virtues of the Belief Theory without having to face its insurmountable difficulties. CV can be compatible with the experimental evidence speaking against the identity between perception and belief-acquiring, and can be immune to the main philosophical arguments showing the structural difference between belief-contents and perceptual content. In particular CV does not exhibit the *phenomenological inadequacy* which bears down on the Belief Theory.

I have briefly introduced the fundamental notions of phenomenal character and representational content, the two basic elements of perceptual experience according to CV. Perceptual experiences present themselves as having certain phenomenological features, so a good theory should at least try to be compatible with these manifest features. Two important features of experience that are graspable by introspection, are *transparency* and *richness of details*. Both features are done justice within a non-conceptualist version of CV of the kind I will articulate in detail in that work.

In considering visual content, I have briefly introduced the idea of a *Scenario Content* (SC) originally proposed by Peacocke, and I have argued that SC is a semantical characterization of perceptions that is phenomenologically apt, at least as a first basic layer of perceptual content. More generally, CV is in a position to make room for both transparency and richness-of-details, so CV does not make perceptual introspection into a systematically misleading activity. In addition, a style of ascription such as Peacocke's SC allows to assign 'iconic' and gradual accuracy-conditions to perceptual episodes rather than 'yes-or-no' truth-conditions belief-contents consist of, so it allows us to posit an *unstructured* content which can very well be both non-conceptual and profuse in nature<sup>34</sup>.

In Section 2 I have put together some putative virtues of CV, which is so seldom

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34 As we will see, perceptual content can well be structured in a certain sense to be clarified, even if it does not exhibit the semantic structure of a proposition. See Chapter IV, Sections 1-2.

argued for as such.

Firstly I have advanced some substantial reasons for taking CV as a promising view. *Aspect*, (possible) *Absence*, *Aboutness* and *Accuracy* are features of perceptual experiences that, taken together, strongly support the idea that perceptual experiences have representational content.

In particular, experiences are assessable for accuracy and such accuracy-conditions are conveyed to the subject in the experience in such a way that experience can match or mismatch reality. But only a contentful mental episode can have correctness-conditions involving the instantiation in reality of properties presented to the subject in the very episode.

In addition, I have argued that CV 'saves' our pre-theoretical intuitions concerning the possibility that our perceptual experiences are veridical, partially veridical or totally illusory. That idea may be given a sense only if we take perceptual experience to be able to partially match, totally match or totally mismatch the surrounding world, where the matching-relation is throughout representational.

Finally, I have argued that CV is well compatible with the pre-theoretical intuitions conveyed by the ordinary ascriptions of 'seeing'-episodes and experiential predicates like 'looking'/'seeming'/'appearing' analyzed at length in Chapter I. So, CV is consistent with the manifest image of perception and experience as it is implicitly shown and witnessed in everyday discourse.

The difference between *seeing-O* and *seeing-that* maps the difference between perceptually representing and coming-to-believe by visual means. So, *seeing-that* is a (true) doxastic representation which is based on a visual non-conceptual and non-doxastic representation. For CV O's looking F to S amounts to S's experience's representing O as being F. *Seeing-that* is not necessary for *seeing-O*, even if quite often seeing an object O as having a property F makes us acquire the belief that O is F.

*Seeing-as* or recognitional seeing is a middle-way representation which is not a belief or a fully-fledged propositional attitude but involves a cognitive stand toward a perceived object consisting of representing the object as falling under a *type*. When F is not an SCM-property, seeing O as an F entails that the related experience is a perceptual representation of a complex of SCM-properties composing a unitary and

distinctive sensible profile. *Seeing-as* is necessary for *seeing-that* but not the other way round. There is seeing without recognition, there is recognition without belief.

I have also argued that CV explains why the phenomenal use and the epistemic use of 'looks' are so inextricably meshed. The phenomenal character of our perceptual experience maps its representational content, so introspecting an experience in search of 'phenomenal looks' turns out to be just finding those properties perceived things look to have, those ways these things look *to be*<sup>35</sup>.

In the next chapter, I will articulate in more detail a specific version of CV, with the aim of showing later on how CV can well face the challenges put to it by the recent disjunctivist revival of Naïve Realism.

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<sup>35</sup> But for a *partial* revision of that acquisition, see Chapter IV, Section 3.

## CHAPTER IV: The Content View Articulated and Defended

### Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections. In this chapter I will articulate and defend a certain version of the Content View that can face those alleged problems of CV typically raised by their opponents.

### Section 1 – Layers and Components of Perceptual Content

#### 1.1 *Beyond the Scenario Content*

In the previous chapter (2.6) I have introduced the notion of non-conceptual *Scenario Content* as a phenomenologically apt characterization of perceptual experience in semantic terms. Nonetheless, SC cannot capture other distinctive elements of perceptual content as well as that of the correlative phenomenological richness of perceptual experiences. Indeed, the very same SC or “way of filling out the space” around S may characterize two of S's experiences which still differ in terms of represented properties as well as in terms of phenomenology. This just means that the position of SC is necessary but not sufficient insofar as SC does not exhaust the semantic and phenomenal richness of perceptual experience. Two examples by Peacocke 1992 can make that clear. Consider a square rotated 45 degrees in such a way that its four angles are located up, down, left and right with respect to your point of view<sup>1</sup>. As Palmer 1983, 292, notes, that figure is often immediately seen as an upright *regular diamond* rather than as a *tilted square*, but it can also be seen the second way through a sort of voluntary perceptual 'switch'. The square/regular diamond was first cited by Mach 1987, who considered it as a case of ambiguous figure<sup>2</sup>. Ambiguous figures are such that you can alternatively see them in two different ways, where such a change – known as *Gestalt switch* – happens suddenly due to the saccadic nature of our visual perception. In any case, the square/diamond figure can be seen two ways, such that these ways are not taken by the perceiver as two rotational variant of the same shape, rather as two instances of different shapes, a



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<sup>1</sup> Figure 4 (square/regular diamond):

<sup>2</sup> Also Palmer 1983 and Macpherson 2006 take it as an example of ambiguous figure.



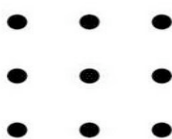
(regular) diamond or a (tilted) square indeed. So if the same SC is compatible with different perceptual contents, SC cannot exhaust the *whole* intentional content of perception.

According to Peacocke, whether we see the figure as a square or as a diamond depends on which symmetries we respectively perceive. When the figure is perceived as a regular diamond, the perceived symmetry is symmetry about the bisectors of its angles. When the figure is perceived as a tilted square, instead the perceived symmetry is a symmetry about the bisectors of its sides<sup>3</sup>. Different symmetries are immediately considered/disregarded, so the visual experience changes accordingly both in content and in phenomenal character.

Another example is related to spatial grouping. Consider a two-dimensional array made of nine ordered points forming a sort of square<sup>4</sup>. Now, you can alternatively see the array as a set of three *rows* or as a set of three *columns*. Provided that the array in view is the same in both cases so the SC is fixed, that also involves the presence of an additional perceptual content beyond SC<sup>5</sup>. This additional content is called by Peacocke *proto-propositional* (PPC). Proto-propositions are made out of individuals, properties and relations<sup>6</sup>, and a perceptual experience with a certain PPC somehow 'attributes' some property or relation to individuals, in virtue of having that PPC. For example in a certain visual experience a perceived individual may be represented as [square], [equidistant from], [parallel to] and the like. So that layer of perceptual content, even if it is non-conceptual and is not fully structured (is it not propositional indeed), involves a segmentation or the global scene into individuals

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3 For a detailed and critical discussion of that explanation by Peacocke, see Macpherson 2006.



4 Figure 5 (rows or columns?):

5 Seeing certain figures as exhibiting certain symmetries, seeing a set of points as a part of a column or as a part of a row, make a difference in the nonconceptual perceptual content as well as in the phenomenology of the experience. Indeed, those differences do not rest on the exercise of *concepts* like [symmetrical to] or [column]. Noticing a certain symmetry does not require the conceptualization of something as symmetrical, grouping points into rows (horizontally) does not require the conceptualization of something as a row, so no concept-possession is needed.

6 Such contents made out of individuals, properties and relations are standardly labeled as 'Russellian'. Indeed a Russellian proposition is a proposition made out of individuals, properties and/or relations (instead of 'Fregean' constituents like concepts, senses or other). On that see Chalmers 2006.

and properties they are represented to have, and/or relations they are represented to entertain. So the examples above are examples of experiences with the same SC but different PPC. PPC is essential to recognition or *seeing-as*. Consider seeing two objects as square despite their difference in terms of size, orientation, color and the like. In this case two very different SC may share the same PPC. So two different ways of filling out the space around S may be associated with the same way of perceptually representing the perceived objects constituting the scene, likewise the same way of filling out the space around S may be associated with two different ways of representing the perceived scene. In short, you can have same SC with different PPCs, or same PPC with different SCs. Therefore, SC and PPC are not independent but they are to be neatly distinguished. Perceptual experience has a PPC in virtue of having a SC, but having a certain SC does not determine alone which PPC the experience has (nor is that the case the other way round).

Not only does PPC contribute to determining the representational content of an experience, but it also contributes to determining the phenomenology of the experience. Seeing a set of rows or a set of columns are two phenomenally different visual experiences despite their sameness of SC, for example. As we will see, there is an intimate relation between phenomenal character and representational content, so it is no surprise that a change of the one involves a change of the other.

On the one side visual phenomenology is profuse, continuous and fine-grained, on the other side it presents the subject with objects experienced as having certain properties, so visual phenomenology also exhibits a 'discrete' aspect. Visual experience is not just as if detailed global scenes were presented to the subject, it is also as if objects contained in the global scene were presented to the subject as being certain ways and as entertaining certain relations with each other<sup>7</sup>.

## 1.2 - Proto-propositional Content and Seeing-as

Now I want to posit a parallel between the Peacocke's notion of PPC and the notion of *seeing-as* I have analysed in Chapter I (Section 4). I want to argue that that layer of perceptual content captures and explains what is involved in the ordinary

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<sup>7</sup> As Chalmers 2006, 110, remarks “Phenomenology of vision seems to present a world that is carved into objects at its joints. One does not simply perceive a distribution of mass and color: one perceives objects on top of other objects, each of which may be articulated into objectual parts”.

ascriptions of *seeing-as* episodes. Likewise I will argue that the necessity of introducing PPC between SC and the propositional-conceptual content of perceptual judgments and beliefs explains and parallels the existence of *seeing-as* ascriptions as an intermediate and irreducible level between *seeing* and *seeing-that*.

Firstly, PPC is assessable for truth. In perceiving something as a square, as symmetrical to something, as equidistant with something from something, you may be right or wrong, you may be in a true or in a false state according to how the world is arranged.

Secondly, PPC needs to be introduced as an intermediate kind of content between the *Scenario Content* and the conceptual content of our perceptual beliefs. In particular, if explaining the acquisition of observational concepts like [square] or [symmetrical] is not to be circular, such a conceptual mastery must rest on paradigmatic experiences having a corresponding PPC<sup>8</sup>. I cannot acquire mastery of the concept [square] without having some preceding experiences with the very content [square], which cannot feature in SC for the reasons hinted at above<sup>9</sup>. So PPC also grounds and makes conceivable the transition from experiences to perceptual judgments and beliefs, just like *seeing-as* somehow mediates the transition from simple object-seeing to epistemic *seeing-that*.

Thirdly, PPC is of the greatest importance for recognition, cognitive maps and spatial reasoning, just because recognizing the same individual, place, relation or property over time and across different contexts of presentation is fundamental for memory and explains the intelligent behavior of animals not credited with concepts, beliefs and inferential abilities. It would be impossible to retain in memory many global Scenario Contents and compare them with respect to some aspects or parts of them in order to plan actions or to produce integrated representations of the environment, but it is quite possible to identify and re-identify two individuals over time on the basis of perception of some of their co-occurrent properties and recognition of them in different occasions of presentation. Therefore, a segmentation of the scene into

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8 “[...] if we are to have a non-circular and individuating account of mastery of this perceptual concept [straight], that mastery must be related to some feature of experience which does not have to be explained in terms which presuppose possession of the concept.” (Peacocke 1992, 121). On the argument from circularity, see Crane 1992, Speaks 2005, Bermudez 1995, 2007.

9 I can accurately experience an instantiated way of filling out the space around me, which involves the presence of a square, without perceiving that region of perceived space as a square.

discrete elements like individuals, properties and relations is a pre-condition for perceptual recognition, memory and spatial reasoning.

Therefore, PPC is typically recognitional and must be posited not only to explain our acquisition of observational concepts but also to explain intelligent behavior of non-conceptual beings.

Now, these are all distinctive features of *seeing-as* episodes. *Seeing-as* episodes do not involve concept-possession or conceptualization, so they are non-conceptual just as states with PPC are.

*Seeing-as* is normatively evaluable as right or wrong, and it is essentially recognitional. Indeed, it is the positive exercise of a recursive, positive recognitional capacity, which entails the general sensitivity to a certain type. Just as a proto-proposition attributes a property to an individual and so it brings the particular under a type – the experience represents an O as F, for example a line as symmetrical with another – a *seeing-as* episode takes an object as being of a certain type, so it is *categorical*, or category-involving. A possessed category is a disposition which can be recursively prompted, or activated, by the vision of a certain scene, but it is not necessarily entailed by the vision of the scene as such. I can see two symmetrical lines without seeing them *as* symmetrical. So, given a SC there can be different PPCs. If PPC is equated with the content of *seeing-as* episodes, so given a seen scene there can be different ways of categorizing its more basic content – say its SC – according to what is noticed, what is recognized, according to how the seen scene immediately and pre-doxastically strikes the subject, so to speak.

So *seeing-as* episodes, as typically having PPC, involve the cognitive act of bringing a perceived particular under a certain, pre-conceptual, *generality*. *Seeing-as* contents are therefore *general* but still non-conceptual, and exhibit a certain 'bringing-under' structure, but still they are not propositional. So it is plausible to think that proto-propositional content is recognitional insofar as it is the typical content characterizing *seeing-as* episodes. *Seeing-as* episodes have PPC-contents.

Now, there is but an important asymmetry between *seeing-as* as I have characterized it, and proto-propositional perceptual states as Peacocke characterizes them. Peacocke invokes perceptual PCC only with respect to SCM-properties and

relations<sup>10</sup>, like [curved], [distant from], [parallel], [bigger than], [diamond-shaped], whilst in an episode of *seeing* an O as an F, the F-category may well be 'thicker' than that, like for example [duck], [rabbit], [lemon], [prey]<sup>11</sup>. In treating *seeing-as* I have also argued (1.4.3) that in order for S to see an O as F when F is not a SCM-property, S must visually appreciate O's sensible profile in the first place. Namely, S must see O as having a certain typical and unified cluster of SCM-properties. So there is a 'thin' *seeing-as* and a 'thick' *seeing-as* which presupposes the first, and perceptual states with Peacockian PPC can only be equated to 'thin' *seeing-as* episodes.

Although, the nature of that layer or perceptual content (PPC) is one thing, the kind or range of properties which could feature in such PPC, is another thing. Peacocke holds as a substantive additional thesis that only SCM-properties can feature in visual content<sup>12</sup>, but his position of PPC as a necessary layer of perceptual content is independent on that additional thesis. For the time being, let us say that PPC is necessary to do justice to both phenomenology and representational powers of perceptual experience, independently of whether one thinks that in perceptual experience only properties like [red] and [square] can be represented or that instead also properties like [being a rabbit] or [being a lemon] can be represented. In short,

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10 By SCM-properties I mean Spatial-Chromatic-Morphological properties, *strictly* visual properties so to speak.

11 On the issue of which properties can be represented in perception, there is a 'conservative' view (McGinn 1982, Tye 1995, 2000, Dretske 1995, Price 2011), according to which only low-level or thin properties can be perceptually represented (those I have called SCM), and a 'liberal view' (Siegel 2006, 2010, Prinz 2006, Baine 2011), according to which also thick or high-level properties, like [chair], [dog], [table] can be perceptually represented. I am sympathetic with the liberal view: genuinely perceptual *seeing-as* episodes can involve thick categorical contents, provided that the thick property ([table], [chair], [my mother], [animal], [something I have already encountered], [something edible] and the like) is categorized thanks to the immediate appreciation of its typical sensible profile (a type-complex of SCM-properties), and the association between that sensible profile and the thick category is established by *perceptual* learning, without any inference or reasoning involved: once a new perceptual scheme is stabilized and becomes an immediate recognitional disposition 'just by sight', the recognized thick property is to be considered a genuine part of the perceptual content. So, SCM-representations are systemic and the relative mechanisms are wired-in, whilst perceptual representations of thick contents are typically dependent on individual learning, and depend on the biographical history of the perceiver: they are cognitive exploitations of low-level representations, on the basis of the appreciation of a visible profile as a type associated to a thick property.

12 If one holds that only SCM-properties can feature in PPC, then 'seeing-as F' ascriptions where F is not an SCM-property – for example, seeing O as a rabbit, as a face, as a prey, as food, as the same I had met before – would not be *literal* ascriptions of seeing-as episodes, rather metaphorical ascriptions amounting to ascriptions of 'taking-as' cases which have not anything essential to do with perception.

be it thin or thick, perceptual content must involve PPC.

### 1.3 – Scenario Content *and* Object-Seeing

In Chapter 1 (Section 2) I have spelled out a set of conditions for a subject to be truly ascribed an episode of seeing something at all. Among those conditions was the subject's phenomenologically salient discrimination of the seen object from the surrounding environment. Call it the Discrimination Condition (DC). DC requires that the seen object must *look* some way to the subject so that it can be discriminated from its surroundings in virtue of that way, or these ways, it looks. DC is a very basic requirement. For example, you can well see a square in virtue of the square looking some way to you, but in order to see the square you do not need to see it *as* a square<sup>13</sup>. You just need to discriminate it somehow from the environment, for example by being visually sensitive to its contours so by appreciating certain contrasts and boundaries, or some other ways<sup>14</sup>.

Now, it is arguable that DC can be satisfied just by reference to an experience's having a certain Scenario Content (SC). Indeed an experience with a certain SC presents the subject with a certain volume of surrounding space dense with discriminable features. For example, SC involves representation of a certain surface at a certain point of the objective space, with a certain color, orientation, brightness, saturation, and so on. The subject can well be credited with seeing an object in virtue of seeing its surface by locating it and discriminating it from the surrounding space<sup>15</sup>. In order to see an object there is no need to individuate it in a specific way, no need of perceiving it as being a thing of a certain kind, no need to take or recognize it as something. That has been duly emphasized before by pointing out that object-seeing

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13 An 'object' you can see need not be a chair or a table. If a neutron stream was visible, such that it made a visible path, then you could see a neutron stream, even if you would not have any clue about that you are seeing a neutron stream.

14 Suppose a square object is suddenly thrown and its trajectory crosses your visual field. You see the speedily moving object without being able to appreciate its squareness. Nonetheless, you have seen the square object, in virtue of having discriminated it from its surroundings (otherwise, you would not have visually appreciate its movement).

15 At the level of Scenario Content, objects are not represented. Rather, an experience with a certain SC is sufficient for you to see an object in virtue of discriminating certain features of it. SC is still silent on objects *as* having properties. According to Clark 2000, our visual experience attributes colors to locations, rather than to objects. I do not agree in general, but that view can well be applied to visual Scenario Content, namely, to the basic semantic layer of visual experience. As we will see, there are other layers of perceptual content, involving objects, properties and relations.

is transparent and extensional (1.2.3). So SC is a basic layer of content that appears to be apt to capture the conditions for object-seeing. In order to see something you do not need to explicitly represent individuals *as* having certain properties and relations. It suffices to represent some properties that in fact characterize the seen object in such a way that representing those properties makes available for discrimination the object that has those properties

Nonetheless, there is something to be noted here. In order for S to see something (O), S must have a visual apparatus, O must be there to be seen and O must (appropriately) cause the very episode of seeing O (see 1.2.1). Now, a certain experience could have a certain SC without any object being there to cause the experience itself, maybe even without that S actually being equipped with a visual apparatus. Visual hallucinations, indeed, can be semantically characterized by ascribing them a certain Scenario Content, but they are not cases of seeing, insofar as seeing involves a real relation to a seen object whilst visually hallucinating something does not involve any real perceptual relation. In addition, it is possible to imagine a visual experience – at least a conscious mental state subjectively identical to a visual experience<sup>16</sup> – had by a brain in a vat or (more realistically) induced in a subject without a working visual apparatus. That experience would have a certain Scenario Content but for sure it would not be a case of seeing. So, *given* that all causal, existential, and relational conditions for seeing something are satisfied, SC is apt to capture the other condition for object-seeing (DC). If you see an object *also* in virtue of your visual experience having a certain content, that content is a *Scenario Content*, even if for a given visual experience to have a certain SC is not sufficient for that experience to be a case of seeing. So far so good.

Now I have just proposed a double parallelism relating *object-seeing* to SC on the one hand, and *seeing-as* to PPC on the other. So, provided that there cannot be (literal) *seeing-as* without *object-seeing*, an important question is whether there can

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16 Whether we can call 'visual experience' a certain kind of hallucination, just depends of the way we interpret the adjective 'visual'. If an experience is visual only if it involves an act of vision, so a hallucination cannot be a visual experience (it may occur without any genuine act of vision). In that case, certain hallucinations introspectively *seem* visual experience without being such. In case an experience is visual if it involves the phenomenology typically involved in experiences of visual perception, then a hallucination can well be a visual experience, insofar as it exhibits a certain phenomenology which is indiscriminable from that associated with an act of visual perception.

be *object-seeing* without *seeing-as*. Even if their conditions are different, it may well be that the one cannot occur without the other. Given our parallelism, the above question is identical to the question of whether or not there can be visual experience with SC but without PPC, provided that there cannot be visual experiences with PPC but without SC<sup>17</sup>. I do not want to take a definitive stand on that, so I only argue according to the intuitive plausibility that 'normal' perceptual experience<sup>18</sup> is always imbued with acts of recognition, acts of noticing, and that it naturally involves taking the seen objects as being such-and-so. So, maybe it is possible for some (abnormal) experience to have *just* a Scenario Content, but it is plausible to think that SC is a basic layer which acquires cognitive significance for knowledge, reasoning and action only insofar as it allows acts of recognition and categorization, insofar as it exhibits PPC. Especially, if we consider the essential belief-inducing role of perceptual experience, it appears quite reasonable that PPC is a fundamental feature of perceptual content, given that its presence allows the transition from perception to belief. So, given an experience with SC it seems that there must be a PPC. Given a case of object-seeing it seems there must be an act of seeing-as, but it is clear that in order for an episode of object-seeing to occur, there is not need that a *particular* act of *seeing-as* occurs<sup>19</sup>. Likewise, given an experience with a certain SC, there is no *determinate* PPC that experience must have in order to be possible. Though, it seems that there must be *a* PPC<sup>20</sup>. As we said before, you cannot overlook *everything*, so even if in a given experience you can see many things without noticing or

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17 Peacocke 1992 answers 'No' to that question. For him, SC is not autonomous indeed.

18 In Chapter 2, Section 2.1-2.3 I have discussed experimental evidence that there is seeing without noticing. But the point here is not whether there can be something we see without noticing it, rather the point is whether there can be a perceptual experience in which we do neither notice nor recognize *anything* at all.

19 As Dretske remarks, [...] in order to qualify as a perceptual state (seeing *s*) a structure must be *coupled* to a cognitive mechanism capable of exploiting the information held in sensory representation". (Dretske 1981, 258, Chapter 6, footnote 29). See also Dretske 2000. Although, no *particular* way of exploiting that perceptual incoming information is required for the information to come in through a perceptual channel.

20 Also Peacocke 1992, 124, denies autonomy to SC with respect to PPC, even if he does not really argue for that beyond the remark that that thesis is reasonable: "I doubt that we could ever justify the attribution of genuinely spatial content to an organism's state, of a kind going beyond sensitivity to higher-order properties of stimulation patterns, unless the subject were on occasion to employ states with these contents in identifying places over time", where such identification is an example of experience with PPC. Anyway, one thing is to say that there are no organisms having experiences with SC that never have experiences with PPC, another thing would be to argue that, in organisms having experiences with both SC and PPC, an experience can occur on a given occasion, which does exhibit SC without exhibiting any PPC. After all, I think that that question is not among the fundamental ones.



recognizing them, you cannot fail to recognize anything at all.

#### 1.4 – Three Layers of Content

In Chapter 1 I have also analysed *seeing-that* ascriptions, besides *object-seeing* and *seeing-as*. I have argued for the view that these ascriptions attribute to a subject an episode of coming-to-know a fact by visual means. So *seeing-that* is visually acquired propositional knowledge, it is a propositional state involving a perceptual episode or state rather than just being a perceptual episode or state. In particular, *seeing-that* is the factive, successful ascription of a more general case of coming-to-believe by visual means, namely, of perceptual judgment or belief. I have also argued that if you are to (literally) see that *a* is F, you must see *a* as an F, likewise if you are to see *a* as an F you must see *a* in the first place. So there is a transition involving three respective layers of content, from the SC which characterizes *object-seeing* (seeing *a*), to PPC which characterizes *seeing-as* (seeing *a* as F), to the conceptual and propositional content which characterizes the resulting perceptual belief or judgment *that* [*a* is F]. Such a threefold representational transition may be usefully represented into a scheme, which embeds our acquisitions about the special nature of perceptual content (Chapter 2):

[Seeing O]  $\rightarrow C^1$  (*Scenario Content*) {discrimination}  
 [Seeing O as an F]  $\rightarrow C^2$  (*Proto-propositional Content*) {recognition}  
 [Seeing-that: O is F]  $\rightarrow C^3$  (*Propositional Content of Empirical Judgments*) {knowledge}

LAYER OF CONTENT	KIND OF CONTENT	TYPE OF CORRECTNESS	NATURE OF CONTENT	CONSTITUTED ENTITIES	KIND OF MENTAL STATE	NATURE OF THE STATE
$C^1$ : <i>Scenario Content</i>	iconic, analog	accurate/inaccurate	dense homogeneous	points in the space	perceptual experience	non-conceptual
$C^2$ : <i>Proto-propositional Content</i>	discrete, half-structured	true/false	discrete and heterogeneous	Individuals properties relations	perceptual experience	non-conceptual (categorical)
$C^3$ : <i>Propositional Content</i>	fully structured	true/false	discrete and abstract	(recombinable) concepts	empirical judgment or belief	conceptual

These intimately related levels of content open the possibility for different kinds of *mistakes* to occur in perceptual judgment or belief. I can have an experience with an inaccurate SC, such that it constrains the possible PPC and gives rise to a false belief.

Or I can have an experience whose SC is accurate, but I fail to rightly recognize certain properties at a PPC level, so I come to acquire a false perceptual belief despite the basic SC of my experience being accurate. Or I can have an experience with accurate SC and also with a veridical PPC, so that I see Fs as Fs and Gs as Gs, but nonetheless I form the false belief that *a* is not F and *b* is not G, for example on the basis of fallacious collateral knowledge which makes me distrust my experience, or in virtue of some other cognitive *defaillance* of the 'central' belief-forming and/or inferential system. When everything goes well – which is mostly the case – perceptual beliefs are brought about by their correctness-conditions insofar as perceptual experiences are brought about by their correctness conditions and the content of perceptual experience being successfully conceptualized and given a propositional structure accordingly. In any case, it is very important to keep in mind that some mistakes in perceptual judging are not 'strictly perceptual' mistakes, on the one hand, and that when there are perceptual mistakes they can be of different kinds (inaccurate SC, inaccurate PPC, or both), on the other.

### 1.5 – *The Limits of Dretske's Theory of Seeing*

In this sub-section I want to critically evaluate Dretske's famous theory of seeing. I will argue that this view presents some very important weaknesses – it rests on a false dichotomy between two kinds of seeing<sup>21</sup> – so that it must be either rejected or integrated with a missing part.

#### 1.5.1 – *Two Ways of Seeing*

The core of Dretske's well-known theory of seeing (Dretske 1969, 1981, 1988, 1995) has remained the same through the years, despite some specific advancements and theoretical enrichment<sup>22</sup>. To sum it up very shortly, Dretske distinguishes 'simple -' or 'non-epistemic seeing' (SS) and 'epistemic seeing' (ES); the first is cognitively

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21 As I will show, it is not the dichotomy itself, that is false, it is rather its supposed completeness, that is wrong.

22 In Dretske 1969 the theory is meant to address epistemological worries as well as to capture some theoretically relevant features of ordinary language. In Dretske 1981 the theory is embedded into a more general theory of information, so it is a theory of different ways for certain states of carrying information and for cognitive systems of picking up environmental information. In Dretske 1995 the information-based theory is further enriched with a bio-functional and teleo-semantic component.

neutral and is equated to *object-seeing*, the second is cognitively loaded and is equated to *fact-seeing*. SS is of things like tables, chairs and the like, whilst ES involves knowing facts about seen things. In other words, ES amounts to *seeing-that*. Those different states respectively involve different kinds of awareness, object-awareness and fact-awareness. In seeing *a* I become visually aware of *a*, in seeing that *a* is F I become aware of the fact that *a* is F. Seeing *a* in itself is concept-free, while seeing that *a* is F is a concept-charged mental state and hence it involves a belief, so it is propositional (perceptually acquired) knowledge:

“If S is aware that x is F, then S has the concept F and uses (applies) it in his awareness of x [...]. Perceptual awareness of facts is a mental state or attitude that involves the possession and use of concepts, the sort of cognitive or intellectual capacity involved in thought and belief” (Dretske 2000, 134)

While sensory perception (object-seeing) is the pick up and delivery of information, cognitive perception (fact-seeing) is its utilization for identification, classification, recognition, and so on. Seeing objects amount to taking in information about them<sup>23</sup> in an *analog* form. A piece of information is carried by a state in analog form when it is *not* the most specific information carried by that state, rather it is carried with other information it is nested into. For example, the experience of a cup may carry the information that the cup has coffee in it in an analog way, indeed it is not the *most* specific information carried to the subject by the experience (you also necessarily experience how big the cup is, where it is, what color is, and so on). On the contrary, the belief that the cup has coffee in it, has the fact that [the cup has coffee in it] as its *most* specific carried information. The same information carried by a perceptual experience in an analog way could be carried, for example, by a sentence in a digital way, when you come-to-know that the cup has coffee in it because you are told it. So the cognitive use of perceptual experience is an *extraction* or “digitalization” of information carried by experience in an analog way, it is an analog-to-digital conversion, but perceptual experiencing is *taking* information, not

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23 “E is a visual experience of x in S if E carries information about x, the information is extracted from light by photoreceptors in S's eyes, and this information is directly available for control of S's action” (Dretske 2006, 152)

extracting/converting it:

“Perception is a process by means of which information is delivered within a richer matrix of information (hence in *analog* form) to the cognitive center for their selective use [...] cognitive activity is the *conceptual* mobilization of incoming information and this conceptual treatment is fundamentally a matter of ignoring differences, of going from the concrete to the abstract, of passing from the particular to the general” (Dretske 1981, 142), but “perception in itself is cognitively neutral” (153).

Later on, Dretske 1995, 19ff., distinguishes *conventional* and *natural* representations – defined as states having indicator functions – on the one hand, and distinguishes natural representations into *sensory* and *conceptual* representations, on the other hand. Sensory representations (like experiences, sensations, and feelings) have *systemic*, innate and phylogenetically fixed indicator functions, whilst conceptual representations (like thoughts, judgements and beliefs) have *acquired* and ontogenetically determined indicator functions:

“Experiences are to be identified with states whose representational properties are systemic. Thought (conceptual states in general), on the other hand, are states whose representational properties are acquired” (Dretske 1995, 15)

This picture, though enriched with new bio-functional aspects, is consistent with the previous theory of seeing referred to above (1969, 1981). It still involves a clear dichotomy between sensation and cognition, where the cognitive element involved in perceptual knowledge is neatly distinguished from the sensory component and associated with conceptual capacities, involving belief and thought.

### 1.5.2 – *Two Ways aren't enough*

Now I want to argue that something essential must be missing in that view. In addition (next sub-section), I will show that the theory conflates into the same distinction (SS vs ES) two distinctions of a different nature. He starts from a

linguistic-ascriptive distinction in the first place, then he pretends to show that this ascriptive distinction tracks a real distinction between two different objective phenomena. Unfortunately, he then fatally conflates *two* different criteria of distinction, one of which is strictly epistemological, the other of which has to do with levels of cognition in a more liberal sense. Let us start from the more general criticism though.

What makes the view incomplete, is the total absence of an intermediate level between object-seeing and fact-seeing, namely, of what we have called *seeing-as* and semantically characterized with possession of PPC. Actually the position of that hybrid mode of seeing appears to be inevitable – and Dretske's view appears to be insufficient thereby – by considering the following intuitively evident facts:

1) Not every 'digitalization' is a conceptualization. To extract information from an experience so as to convert its analog and profuse content into more discrete contents, as it happens in perceiving something as F, I do not need to possess the concept F, nor do I need to have conceptual abilities at all. Non-conceptual animals can perceive object *as* being so and so, for example as moving or as being distant, without deploying the concepts [moving] or [distant]<sup>24</sup>. Especially if object-seeing is meant to be cognitively neutral, how then could a non-conceptual animal classify, identify, recognize objects over time and place, if the *only* cognitive use of perceptual information was conceptualization? So, there *must* be a 'general' perceptual content that is still pre-conceptual<sup>25</sup>.

2) To make the same point in other terms, not only conceptual animals *learn* from experience. Perceptual learning presupposes a cognitively loaded experience, namely, the possibility for a system's perceptual experiences to acquire new representational functions through repeated perceptual encounters with environmental objects and conditions. If perceptual learning is possible for non-conceptual beings, the assimilation of the sensation/cognition distinction to the systemic/acquired distinction and the conflation of both of them into the perceptual/conceptual distinction must be flawed, unless Dretske does buy into a

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24 On 'seeing x as an F' as being "conceptually undemanding", see also Johnston 2006.

25 Dretske 2003, 81, footnote 3, explicitly distinguishes "experience of M from *recognizing* (i.e. conceptually representing) something as M. The same assumption is made by Fodor 2007, for whom 'representing as' amounts to conceptualizing.

very undemanding view on concepts such that *any* form of acquired recognitional, classificatory and identificational capacity involves concepts<sup>26</sup>. In that case, *any* learning animal would be a conceptual cognitive system thereby, but in that way the concept of 'concept' entailed by that view would fatally fail to capture the cognitive richness of *our* conceptual abilities, insofar as they are connected with inferential abilities as well as with rationality as such (see II, 1-1.6). Anyway, Dretske does not take that extremely reductive approach, so the inconsistency remains.

3) Another way of saying the same thing is pointing out that not only beliefs are acquirable representational states, *pace* Dretske. No conceptual or inferential ability is involved in representing things as being a certain way through a perceptual experience in an ontogenetically acquirable way. A dog's experience of a doorbell ringing, if repeated, may well come to represent to the dog the presence of someone behind the door, for example, but none – or very few people – would credit a dog with the concepts [presence], [people], [being behind of], [door] and the like, or with a propositional belief *that* there is someone at the door. A representation with a certain content such that the subject having it needs not possess the concepts canonically used to specify that very same content, just *is* a non-conceptual content by definition<sup>27</sup>. So there must be non-conceptual but acquired and cognitively relevant content, there must be *seeing-as* in other terms. If we believe in the Kantian motto that intuitions without concepts are blind but concepts without intuitions are empty, we still need to posit an intermediate level of perceptual representation that is neither completely blind nor completely empty, which makes possible the application of concepts to 'intuitions'<sup>28</sup>.

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26 That there must be acquired but non-conceptual representational states (nonconceptual *seeing-as* states) does not entail that every seeing-as state must be ontogenetically acquired. For example, there seems to be evidence that in many mammals there is an innate (i.e. not acquired) recognitional ability, or perceptual category, for [animal movement] or [biological movement] as distinct from movement of inanimate, non-living objects. See Johansson 1973, Blake 1993, Vallortigara 2000, 46ff. Likewise it seem that the auditory perception-recognition of a [voice-of-a-conspecific] is also an innate ability: a non-acquired *seeing-as* indeed. Of course there are also views – as Fodor 1998 – on which concepts themselves may well be innate.

27 Cussins 1990 introduces non-conceptual content exactly like that.

28 Another important difference between perceptual *seeing-as* and full-fledged deployment of concepts in perception, is that the very same deployed concepts can be activated by the subject in many other non-perceptual circumstances, whilst basic seeing-as episodes may well be *passive*, domain-specific and context-dependent.

### 1.5.3 – *Two many distinctions at once*

Strictly speaking, cognition has essentially to do with *truth*, just like knowledge has to do with truth. A cognitive achievement is a successful way of being in the right relation with a certain domain in one's surrounding environment. For Dretske cognitive perception (see Dretske 1990, 133ff.) amounts to knowledge, for example cognitively perceiving a cat is visually acquiring the knowledge *that* the seen cat *is* a cat. On the contrary, simple seeing is not cognitive just because it *as such* does not have to do with truth (and knowledge): either you see the cat, or you don't, but in order to see it you do not have to come-to-know that it is a cat or anything else. You just simply see it in the first place. So you have a seen object (SS) and a knowledge about it (ES), i.e. *that* it is a cat or some other [F], and these are different episodes, even if an ES-episode presupposes an SS-episode and not vice-versa.

Now, there are but two ways in which something – a state, a process, an episode – can be characterized as cognitive. One way depends on the state/process/episode being an epistemic achievement, so on its being a success such that the state/episode/process is *true* or at least results in a true state. In that strict sense untrue states are not cognitive states by definition, nor are cognitive those states that are neither true nor false (like object-seeing). In another sense, a state/process/episode is cognitive because it has a certain role in the system's use of information that *normally* allows the system to behave appropriately or to produce reliable representations, maps, or 'views' on the surrounding environment. In that second sense, a state may well be cognitive and untrue at the same time. Indeed a cognitive failure is no less cognitive than a cognitive achievement. A state produced by a mechanism that has the function of producing knowledge or veridical representations of the environment, is a cognitive state even if it happens to be a 'bad' or an unsuccessful token of the type of states produced by that very mechanism. Dretske does not distinguish these two senses.

In addition, a certain state can constitute a cognitive achievement without being evaluable as true/false or as veridical/falsidical thereby. For example, it may be argued that seeing an object is a cognitive achievement, despite the fact that seeing an object is not something which can be characterized *as such* as true or false. Indeed you might fail to see an object that is at your visual reach, so seeing it is a successful

perceptual performance on your part.

With all that in mind, let us consider again Dretske's distinction between two ways of seeing. SS is non-cognitive insofar as it does not require knowledge of the thing seen, whilst ES is cognitive insofar as it is just the episode of acquiring knowledge that the seen thing is such and such. But that distinction cannot be confused with another distinction, between states that *can* be true-veridical (or false-falsidical thereby), on the one hand, and states which *cannot* be true-veridical (nor false-falsidical thereby). For example, a belief is a certain kind of mental state, which can be true or false, and more significantly it can be knowledge or not<sup>29</sup>. Now, you can see X and come to believe by visual means that X is a cat, or that x is square. That episode of belief-acquiring may or may not be an episode of knowledge-acquiring, for example surely it is not such in the case when the belief is false because X is not a cat, or X is not blue, as it seems to be to you in experience. So, for Dretske that episode should be non-cognitive, because the episode does not require knowledge of the thing seen! That conflation of two senses of 'cognitive' fatally undermines Dretske's global theory of seeing. For example, when he comes to talk of *seeing-as* – incredibly, the *only* time he has anything to say about *seeing-as* in the whole *corpus* of his writings is in a footnote! – he just leaves it aside as something unimportant:

“[Seeing-as is] a hybrid form of perception, a way of seeing that goes beyond sensory perception [...] but falling short of full cognitive perception (knowledge not being required). One sees a stick as a snake. The stick obviously does not have *to be* a snake for one to see it as a snake. Hence, this cannot be cognitive perception” (Dretske 1990, 133, footnote)

So Dretske only recognizes two levels of seeing, either “seeing X, that is an F” or “seeing *that* X is an F”. In the first case (SS), F is just one of the possible descriptions the ascriber can use to pick out the object seen by S. In the second case (ES) F is a concept possessed and exercised by S within the very propositional state which amounts to visually acquired knowledge. So in the second case exercise of F is ascribed, in the first case it is rather used by the ascriber to ascribe something else

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29 If the belief is true, it can be knowledge (given justification and some other ingredient), if the belief is false, it cannot be knowledge, since knowledge is factive.



With his purportedly exhaustive cognitive/non-cognitive distinction, where 'cognitive' is implausibly equated both to 'epistemic' and to 'conceptual', Dretske cannot see any independent way of seeing besides his insufficient dichotomy of seeing an object and seeing that an object is such-and-so. For this reason he assimilates cases of seeing “where the cat is”, or “how big the tree is” to cases of seeing that the cat is there and seeing that the tree is that big, so to cases of conceptual and propositional epistemic states of knowledge<sup>30</sup>. On the contrary, a dog can well see *where* the cat is, indeed it cleverly runs in a certain direction to catch it, although it cannot see *that* the cat is down there, provided that seeing-that-P involves a conceptualization of the constituents of the fact making P true, and the endorsement of the fully structured propositional content of P. There is pre-propositional cognition, there is pre-conceptual recognition, there is *seeing-as* between simple *object-seeing* and *seeing-that*, in other words. Dretske fails to give the right mediating role to *seeing-as* because its ascription is a non-factive context, but he does not consider that, just like successful belief may be knowledge, so successful *seeing-as* may be genuine recognition, 'animal knowledge' if you like<sup>31</sup>. *Seeing-as* stands to genuine recognition as *visually-coming-to-believe* stands to *seeing-that*, so to conceptual-propositional knowledge (based on visual perception). *Seeing-as* involves *recognitional abilities*, whereas *seeing-that* involves fully-fledged *concepts* able to be combined into *beliefs*<sup>32</sup>.

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30 Dretske holds that recognizing something as a triangle is seeing that X is a triangle (Dretske 1990, 131), where seeing-that involves conceptualization of the [triangle]-property. But that is too demanding a condition for recognition, as I am arguing for: any recognition would be conceptual by definition, which is highly implausible and empirically puzzling, given the overwhelming evidence for recognitional abilities of non-conceptual animals.

31 See Prinz 2006, 436ff. As Prinz notes, it sounds odds to say that S see a fork as a fork, because 'seeing-as' is more often used – as for example in Wittgenstein 1953 – for cases involving a special interpretive act, like that involved in seeing a cloud as a warthog, or a drawing as a duck. But seeing-as is more basic than that, it is any act of visual recognition of a type T whose correspondent ability is stored in memory: it is a recognition triggered by the present of a token of T, when successful, but it may well be triggered by an object which is not a token of T, when unsuccessful. Seeing-as may be wrong, differently from seeing-that and like coming-to-believe-that-P-by-visual-means. Since recognition is factive, visual recognition stands to seeing-that just like seeing-as stands to coming-to-believe-that-by-visual-means, from an epistemological point of view, but visual recognition stands to seeing-as just like seeing-that stands to coming-to-believe-by-visual-means, from the point of view of cognitive articulatedness of the state, so to say. Of course the unsuccessful cases are conceptually parasitic on the successful cases, insofar as *seeing* is a success-verb in the first place. You pick out a wrong case of seeing-as by reference to a positive capacity, you pick out a falsidical case of coming-to-believe-by-visual-means by reference to what it would be for such a mental state to be a case of seeing-that.

32 Also Tye 2000, 215 has a doxastic model of object-recognition: object recognition is taken to be

As I will argue more in detail, *seeing-as* is a necessary level to explain the epistemic value of perceptual experience, to its very possibility of producing perceptual knowledge. How could you know that *a* is F *by visual means* if such visual means are conceived as being just episodes of object-seeing? If seeing *a* as an F is not somehow included in the visual means by which S comes-to-know *that a* is F, that transition from simple perception to perceptual knowledge is a mystery from an epistemological, a semantical, and even from a phenomenological point of view. More on that, later.

## **Section 2 – Objects and Properties: How they Feature in Perceptual Content**

### *2.1 Back from recognition to discrimination*

In Chapter I (Section 1, 4.3-4-5) I have argued that *seeing-as* is recognitional and presupposes both possession and activation of a positive category or ability. That recognitional scheme is stored in memory such that recognition of an *a* as (an) F rests on a “matching” between the stored category and the perceived object *a*. Now, that capacity can concern different kinds of properties. I have argued that when F is not an SCM-property (a property constituting *a*'s visible profile), seeing *a* as F presupposes the appreciation of *a*'s sensible profile and the association of *it* to the property F. In other words, strictly visual properties must be appreciated in the first place in order to (literally) see *a* as F, when F is not itself a property that shapes *a*'s visible profile. So the basic capacity to consider is that appreciation, namely, the ability to see an *a* as having a certain visible profile, or as being F, G, H where F, G, and H are SCM-properties, like [red], [square], [big], [distant-from], [symmetrical-with] and so on. For example in order to see *a*, say, as a [prey], I must see *a* as [so-and-so shaped], [so-and-so colored], [so-and-so big], [so-and-so moving] and the like. Now, what does it take to see, say, something as [red], provided that *seeing-as*

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“a matter of seeing that such and such type of object is present [...] a matter of forming an appropriate belief or judgment on the basis of visual experiences [...] there are two components in visual recognition a belief component and a looking component”. The same view is that of Lyons 2005, 242: “to recognize an object, to categorize it, to identify it, is at least typically *to judge* it to be a member of a certain category”. Also for Fodor 2007 seeing *a* as F is *conceptualizing* it as an F, so forming the respective belief that it is an F. I am arguing that the two-component view is a consequence of neglecting the *seeing-as* level as a pre-doxastic one, a level which stands between these two alleged components (look and judgment). Recognitional acts are not necessarily conceptualizations or judgements that something is the case, otherwise non-linguistic animals could not possess recognitional abilities at all, nor could they ever learn.

concerning SCM-properties is more basic than *seeing-as* concerning non-SCM-properties? In order to see something as red or as square, you must possess the [red] or the [square] category, namely, you must be able to (non-conceptually) recognize red or square objects as tokens of a same type, say [red] or [square].

Call seeing-as concerning SCM properties '*basic* seeing-as'. Although, basic seeing-as is still recognitional and therefore involves memory, so a matching between a seen object and an already stored perceptual ability. All that presupposes an even more basic visual capacity which we need now to consider: *discriminating* SCM-properties is a more basic operation than *recognizing* SCM-properties. As is well-known, discriminatory powers outstrip memory. For example, I can recognize a shade of red as the same as the shade of red of an object I had seen on another occasion, but the shades of red I can presently discriminate are more than the shades of red I can retain in memory and use later for recognitional purposes. So discrimination is more fine-grained than recognition. In short, on the one hand recognition entails discrimination, on the other, discrimination outstrips recognition<sup>33</sup>.

If perceptual discriminatory powers can be associated with object-seeing and accounted for by appeal to *Scenario Contents* (see above), perceptual recognitional powers can be associated with seeing-as episodes, episodes involving memory and accounted for by appeal to *Proto-Propositional* contents.

How could one or more episodes of object-seeing enable respective episodes of seeing-as? To answer that question, we need to step back to object-seeing to see how reiterated object-seeing can prepare the constitution of a perceptual scheme which comes to be stored in memory as an acquired, recursively available recognitional ability. In order for that to be possible, there must be a way of visually representing an object *as* F already at the level of object-seeing. How does object-seeing involve representation of *properties* as possessed by seen objects? What is the semantic structure of the content possessed by states of object-seeing?

## 2.2 – *Object-seeing through property-discrimination*

Visual discrimination of an object through a property involves *pre*-recognitional representation of a certain property. Seeing an object O through discriminating its

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33 On that, see Tye 1995, Raffman 1995, Martin 1992.

contours – say, thanks to chromatic contrasts against the surroundings – is not yet seeing the object *as* having certain properties F, G, Z. Seeing-as is recognitional indeed. On the contrary, you can see an object thanks to being visually sensitive to a property of it, be it F, without explicitly recognizing the property as the property F you have a recognitional ability for, namely, without exerting the recognitional act of matching the perceived property to a category already stored in memory<sup>34</sup>.

So far I have been using 'seeing' as an implicative verb always having particular objects as its possible direct complements. Instead of talking of seeing properties, I prefer to talk of seeing objects through visually discriminating some of their visible properties. Whenever we are perceptually conscious of a property, we are seeing an object having it thereby<sup>35</sup>. That is why 'seeing properties' is nothing more than seeing particular objects that have those properties<sup>36</sup>. So, seeing a yellow object thanks to visually discriminating its yellowness amounts to visually representing a seen object as yellow, so, as it is.

But it may also happen that we see an object through representing it as having a property which it in fact does not have, still that circumstance can put us in a position to see the object. That is the case of visual illusion, which involves a seen object, although falsidically represented. If I see a red apple through visually representing it as green, I am undergoing an illusory experience, still I am having a perceptual experience *of* the apple, thanks to representing *it* as having a certain property which it does not have in fact. I am in a visual causal contact with the apple, my visual system represents that object as green, that visual representation is caused by the object and it is *about* it indeed, but the property the object is represented as having is not had by it.

So, object-seeing always happens through property-discrimination, but it may also

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34 See Prinz 2006.

35 Here I use the expression “perceptually conscious of” in a factive or implicative way, so that if you are perceptually conscious of a property, it is instantiated by an object perceived by you. The problem of *what* we are conscious of in illusion (when the property is not instantiated) or in hallucination (when not even an object is perceived), is another huge issue I will face later. I am just arguing that when you *perceive* a property, so when you are appropriately related to an instance of that property, you are perceiving an object thereby, that has the property.

36 See Chalmers 2006. That is an oversimplification: we see the sky, shadow, a rainbow, and other 'object's which are clearly not particulars. In addition, our experience is never *just* of an object as having a property. That is a very scholastic way to describe experience by abstracting away certain features from the concrete flux and organized totality of the experiencing a continuous, complex scene over time.

happen through representation of the object as having a property not had by it. Visual illusion is still a successful case of object-seeing, although it is an unsuccessful case of property-representation. Visual illusion is an intentional relation grounded in a *real* relation between the subject and the perceived environment<sup>37</sup>. It is just in being a real relation that it can be an intentional (falsidical) relation *about* the real, perceived *relatum*. In fact, visual illusions are perceptions, so whenever a state of visual illusion is instantiated, a case of object-seeing is *ipso facto* instantiated. Differently from visual hallucinations – which are not perceptions despite their perception-like phenomenology – perceptual illusions are always about environmental objects the subject is genuinely related to. But the object-less content of hallucinations will need to be treated in another chapter. So far, it is enough to remark that 1) object-seeing involves property-representation 2) property-representation needs not be *seeing-as* or recognitional seeing, and 3) also a case of wrong property-representation may well put the subject in the position of seeing an object.

### 2.3 - Which Basic Semantic Ingredients Do Shape the Content of Visual Perception?

Perceptual experiences are relations to environmental *objects*, given to the subject 'under' certain *properties* through a certain perceptual apparatus (vision, touch, hearing etc.) that also determines a *way* they are experienced. Call it a Mode. The very same property can be given in experience in a visual or in a tactile way (ex. [square]), in a visual or in an auditory way (ex. [overhead]), in an olfactory or in a taste-way (ex. [sour]), and so on. The Mode is not just a matter of which apparatus is causally involved, it is also a matter of which distinctive phenomenological effects that involvement has, so that seeing something and visually representing it as square is not like touching the same thing and realizing it is square, despite the sameness of perceived object and represented property<sup>38</sup>.

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37 As McGinn 1982, 50, notes “you do not cease to see a thing just because your experience credits it with properties it does not objectively has”.

38 That is why I call it Mode rather than Modality. Whilst perceptual modalities are individuated by mechanical facts, by the apparatus involved, the Mode as I mean it has to do with the phenomenological dimension related to a specific modality, not just with the modality. I agree with Lyons 2005, 241, on that “what distinguishes one kind of perceptual system from another, is the kind of information they process, rather than any phenomenal experiences they produce”, none the less the conscious character associated to each perceptual modality is different and exhibits a proper phenomenological salience. That such a salience is not the criterion for distinguishing perceptual systems in cognitive sciences, is another matter.

So a certain perceptual experience is a mental episode individuated by the following elements:

- 1) a *Subject* who/which undergoes the perceptual experience.
- 2) an *Object* in the environment the Subject is causally and perceptually related to.
- 3) a *Property* (or the Properties) the object is represented as having in the experience.
- 4) a *Mode* or a way in which both the object and its represented properties are given in the experience.
- 5) a Time in which the episode takes place.

So a certain perceptual experience PE could be individuated as follows:

in PE at  $t$  the object O is represented as being F by the subject S in the *Visual Mode*

We have an object-dependent Content, made out of the perceived object, on the one hand, of the properties the object is represented as having, on the other hand. Apart from the experiencer and the time at which the very experience takes place, the other element not involved in the Content is the Mode. Often it is said that, in perceptual experience, what is perceived is always given in a certain way, so a distinction is made between *what* is perceived and *how* it is perceived. The what/how distinction is very important and useful, provided that the two possible interpretations of it are not conflated or confused with each other. By “‘how’ O is given in experience”, one could mean: a) how the object is represented as being = the properties it is represented as having in the experience; b) how both the object and the represented properties are experienced = which Mode they are perceptually represented (visually, auditorily, and so on). I will call the first *content* and the second *Mode*. So, the *Content* (upper case) of a perceptual experience is constituted by its *object* and its *content* (lower case):

$$\text{content} + \text{object} = \text{Content}$$

The perceived object together with the properties it is represented as having, is then the Content of a given perceptual experience. The Mode does not directly enter to *constitute* the Content, even if it contributes to *determine* it. In fact the perceptual Mode constrains the range of properties that can or cannot be represented in a given perception. For example the Visual Mode determines that the experience will represent the object as having certain colors, but not as having certain smells<sup>39</sup>.

The Content of a perceptual experience (PE from now on) is that in virtue of which the PE is semantically evaluable as correct/incorrect, accurate/inaccurate, veridical/falsidical. The Content constitutes the world-to-mind *Conditions of Satisfaction* of the PE<sup>40</sup>, namely, the way the world should be in order the PE to be accurate-correct-veridical. The perceived object both causes the PE and constitutes its *target*, whereas the properties the targeted object is represented as having, the *content* (lower case) of the PE, are what is “measured” by the properties the target actually has. Thus the perceptual content exhibits an analogous structure with that of a standard propositional function, which can acquire a certain truth-value according to which argument it is 'saturated' with<sup>41</sup>. For example, {----- is wise}, can get the value (true) if it is applied to the individual Socrates, or the value (false) if it is applied to someone else who is not wise. So the argument for the Content of a PE is furnished by the world, namely, by the perceived object which causes the PE itself, and the value (accurate/inaccurate, veridical/falsidical) is given by the eventual *matching* between the represented properties and the properties actually possessed by the worldly target. If the seen object is F, a PE that represents *it* as F is accurate, a PE that does not, is inaccurate. So, worldly objects are *accuracy-makers* for perceptual

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39 Of course our perceptual activity is essentially multimodal and integrated, on the top of involving continuous income of information of a whole complex 'scene' over time, so this representation of 'a' perception as indexed to a specific Mode and involving 'an' object and 'a' property, is a philosophical abstraction. It is important to keep that in mind.

40 To use the language of Searle 1983, 1992, perceptual experience has a World-to-Mind direction of fit, differently from other types of intentional state. For example, a desire or an intention have a Mind-to-World direction of fit.

41 See Frege 1891/1980. Russell 1910, 28, defines a propositional function as “something which contains a variable *x*, and expresses a proposition as soon as a value is assigned to *x*. That is to say, it differs from a proposition solely by the fact that it is ambiguous: it contains a variable of which the value is unassigned”. Only when a value is assigned to the variable the function become a genuine, truth-evaluable sentence. In the same vein, only by considering the real object which is perceived, a perceptual representation becomes an accuracy-available semantic episode.

contents insofar as they possess or lack those very properties the PE represent them as having. Perceptual Contents are *de re* Contents.

I introduce the notion of *accuracy-maker* instead of talking about truth-makers, because that notion is compatible with the basic content of perceptual experience being neither conceptual nor propositional, as I have held and will argue it is the case. Only sentences, and sentence-like mental states like thoughts and beliefs, can properly be true and made true by truth-makers accordingly. But if truth and false are yes/no notions<sup>42</sup>, on the contrary accuracy may well come in degrees. Not only can a perceptual experience be accurate or inaccurate full stop, it can be semantically evaluated as more or less accurate or inaccurate. So it makes sense to evaluate *how* accurate a perception is, in a way in which it does not seemingly make sense to evaluate *how true* a proposition is.

So we have a worldly object O with its real properties, a certain set of represented properties putatively belonging to the perceived object, and a matching-relation between the set of real properties of O and the set of properties represented in the PE as had by O. The matching-relation can make the PE accurate (PE-content and object do match), inaccurate (PE-content and object to mismatch), or partially accurate (PE-content and object do match with respect to certain properties, but they mismatch with respect to other properties), according to the way the worldly *relatum* is.

We can stipulate that a PE is veridical when it is *fully accurate*, namely, when all the relevant properties the perceived object is represented as having, are actually had by it. Likewise a PE will be falsidical when it is inaccurate in many relevant respects, namely, in case many or all the relevant properties the object is represented as having by the PE, are not actually had by the object.

What matters though, is that accuracy comes in degrees, even though it can make sense and be theoretically useful to semantically characterize a PE as veridical or falsidical. Likewise, instead of considering global veridicality we can introduce the notion of veridical-with-respect-to-a-property, so that: the more accurate a PE is, the bigger the amount of properties with respect to which it is veridical. In any case, the Content of a PE consists of its accuracy-conditions, namely the objective conditions under which the PE would be accurate. Those conditions – the Content – involve the

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42 At least that holds in standard logic. Fuzzy logic and other non-standard logics admit degrees of truth, but I am not concerned with them here.



perceived object as a constituent, and the properties represented as had by the object – the content – as another constituent. Only together can they provide an accuracy-value for the PE.

## 2.4 – *Object-dependency and Singularity*

### 2.4.1 *Introducing object-dependency*

I have been arguing that perceptual Content is object-dependent<sup>43</sup>, insofar as it involves the perceptual object, a worldly particular, as one of its semantic constituents. That picture also fits with the transparent behavior and implicativity of object-seeing ascriptions, which depends on object-seeing being a real relation. If perceptual Content contains worldly particulars, then it is partially determined by external factors. Indeed holding object-dependency involves committing to Content externalism. Indeed there are external, extra-mental factors that co-determine perceptual Content.

It is difficult to deny that in perception we become conscious of worldly particulars. But is it necessary to hold that those worldly particulars also *constitute* the perceptual Content itself, instead of being just among the items that make the contents accurate/veridical?

In what follows, I will present some arguments for the necessity of including the particular worldly perceived entities in the Content of PE.

### 2.4.2 *The Generality Thesis*

As it has been made explicit in Chapter I, it is among the conditions of object-seeing the circumstance that the seen object must (appropriately) cause the very episode of seeing it. That object-dependency of perception does not only rest on our ordinary concept of perceiving. It appears to be necessary, from an intentional point of view at least, to make logical room for the very ideas both of non-veridical perception and

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<sup>43</sup> I have called Content of a PE the semantic structure involving both the object and the properties it is represented as having in PE. I have called content the set of these properties. So *by definition* Content is object-dependent. To avoid confusions, I want to argue that what is standardly called perceptual content in the debate, is object-dependent, and it identical with what I call Content. What I call content (the properties O is represented as having) is not object-dependent just because it is only an ingredient of the perceptual content standardly meant. The reason why I call such set of properties 'content' – at the price of raising some confusion in the reader – will become clear later.

of 'veridical' hallucination. A non-veridical perception is an illusion, for example a case where you see an object but your PE credits it with properties the object does not have. So, the content of your perception is non-veridical, but it is such just because it is non-veridical *of* the seen object, so the object makes the PE true or false insofar as it is seen.

Hallucinations are experiences where it seems to you to perceive an object with certain properties but there is no perceived object at all, so *a fortiori* those properties are not instantiated by anything you perceive. 'Veridical' hallucinations are cases where you hallucinate a scene that happens to match the real scene before you, but the latter is not (appropriately) causing your experience, so the experience is not an experience *of* it. Here is a well-known example by Grice 1962<sup>44</sup>: you are seeing a clock on the shelf, then a neuroscientist stimulates your visual cortex in such a way that you do not notice anything changing in your experience, so he removes the clock. As Grice points out, there is a strong intuition that you did not see the clock even when it really was before your eyes as soon as you began to be artificially stimulated, just because your experience started to be caused by the visual cortex stimulation rather than by the clock itself. 'Veridical' hallucinations are cases where the content of your experience perfectly *matches* the surrounding reality, but that matching is intuitively not enough for the experience to be a veridical perception. The properties the experience represents are actually instantiated, but they are not instantiated by a seen object, insofar as no object is seen, even though in the hallucination it seems that there is an object located there having this and that property. So, that is not veridical perceptual experience but a 'veridical' hallucination just because the causal factor, the environmental relation to an object, is missing. Accounting for the difference of their contents is a problem for those who hold that perceptual content does not involve particulars and that worldly particulars with their properties are what (may) *satisfy* the content rather than being part of the content itself. How can perceptual content of a PE be sensitive to its causes, if none of its causes is *part* of it? However, how could hallucinations be 'veridical' if they are completely detached from the environment they purport to present to the subject? According to the *Generality Thesis*, when a subject perceives the world the content

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44 On veridical hallucinations, see also Lewis 1980.

of her perception “is not to be specified by using any terms that refer to the object of experience” (McGinn 1982, 51)<sup>45</sup>:

*Generality Thesis* (GT) = perceptual content is always general and does not contain particulars

If GT is true, perceptual content must embed an existential component, for example a certain PE could be ascribed the following sort of content:

There is an object that is F, at location L<sup>46</sup>

So, GT entails that perceptual content is existentially quantified<sup>47</sup>. Although, that sort of content could well be satisfied by the clock on the shelf in Grice's thought experiment. Provided that content consists of accuracy- and veridicality-conditions of the PE, if there is something that is a clock located at a certain distance and direction from the cortex-stimulated subject, then her PE is throughout veridical. But if we are to save the intuition that it is a hallucination after all, we need to do justice to its 'strange', hallucinatory veridicality. Specially, it is implausible that the veridicality (or accuracy) of a perceptual experience could be evaluated independently of whether any object is perceived, and independently of which object it is that it is perceived by the subject<sup>48</sup>.

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45 Others who hold the Generality Thesis are Lewis 1980, Searle 1983, McLaughlin 1989, Davies 1992. In discussing the Generality Thesis, I will mainly follow the extraordinarily clear and insightful Soteriou 2001. I find that his criticism of the Generality Thesis is very convincing.

46 Location L should be specified egocentrically, like: 'at such a distance and direction from me', and so on.

47 McGinn 1982 states the Generality Thesis, Davies 1992 explicitly holds that if perceptual content is general, it must be existentially quantified. Such a transition seems to be inevitable. Either perceived objects are demonstratively presented and content is not general, or those objects need to be non-demonstratively present through the PE representing certain properties of them, where such a representation cannot be neutral about these properties being instantiated in the environment. But a property is instantiated when there is some object which possesses it.

48 On this point see Soteriou 2001, Sainsbury 2006. In addition, the Generality Thesis is also phenomenologically implausible. In perceptually experience it does not introspectively seem to us as if we were entertaining existential and general content, like there being *an* O that is such and so. The felt reality of perception involves that in experience we purportedly refer to particulars in a demonstrative way. We introspectively seem to experience *this* and *that* as such and so.

### 2.4.3 Searle's Account of Perceptual Content

Assuming that the content is general and then existentially quantified, in order to distinguish the accuracy-value of 'veridical' hallucinations from those of veridical perceptions we need to further enrich the general content with a *causal* element. That is, notoriously, Searle's move (Searle 1983, 1991)<sup>49</sup>. In Searle's view perceptual content must contain a reference to a causal element as well as a (self)-reference to the very perceptual experience the content is content of, on the following lines:

If I have a visual experience so that it visually seems to me that an F is G:

Visual Experience: [that the F is G and the fact that F is G is causing *this* visual experience]<sup>50</sup>

So we have a general, existential, causal and self-referential content of perceptual experiences<sup>51</sup>. There is an object O, which is F, and the object's being F is causing that very experience according to which there is an object O that is F. If the world satisfies all that, then the PE is true. Evidently that veridicality condition is not satisfied by a 'veridical' hallucination, insofar as the clock's being on the shelf out there is *not* causing the experience as of there was a clock on the shelf out there. Rather, the brain-manipulation is causing that experience. So, 'veridical' hallucinations are *not* veridical after all<sup>52</sup>, if the content of perceptual experience is articulated that way.

So, if GT is true and the veridicality of a PE has to do with the question of *whether* an object is perceived as well as with the question of *which* object is perceived, then the Searle's move appears inevitable: we need to embed into an existential content a causal and a self-referential component.

One could still reject the intuition that veridicality of PE must depend on whether an

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49 See also Chalmers 2004, 2006.

50 That account is exposed in Searle 1992, 288ff. See the critical discussion of that view by Soteriou 2001.

51 I will leave aside the idea that perceptual content is introduced as a *that*-clause. Searle holds that perceptual content is propositional. But that idea is relatively independent on its account of perceptual content as general and involving causation on the one side, and selfreference to the experience itself, on the other side.

52 'Veridical' hallucinations are not veridical *as* perceptual experiences. That does not prevent certain correspondent beliefs from being true. If I form the belief that there is a clock on the shelf at a certain distance from me in virtue of having a certain hallucination, I form a true belief, even though it is an unjustified belief of course.

object is perceived and on which object is perceived. However, that intuition can also be argued rather than stating that it is too strong an intuition to be dropped. Soteriou 2001 provides a powerful argument – based on cases of *veridical misperception* – for the view that visual experiences cannot be given accuracy-conditions independently on how we settle both the question whether an object is perceived and the question of which object is perceived. I freely and sketchy re-state it.

According to the Content View, if S misperceives a part of her surrounding environment, then S's experience represents that part as being different from the way it actually is. Now, suppose you are wearing displacing glasses such that you do see a round red object but it looks to you to be located to the left of where it actually is. So you misperceive the object by your PE representing it as being in a wrong location. At this point, if we put an identical round red object at the real location where your experience wrongly represents the seen object to be, we obtain a veridical misperception: a seen object is causally responsible for the experience, your experience is as if there is an object with such and such properties at a certain location, that is now the case, so that general content is satisfied<sup>53</sup>. So we have a 'veridical' misperception. But to really call it veridical entails treating it as fully accurate, therefore we should implausibly reject the following principle: if some part of the subject's environment is different from the way it is represented to be, the experience cannot be fully accurate, so it must be partially non-veridical. How is it possible that parts of the perceived environment are different from the way they are represented in the PE, and yet still the PE is veridical? It is not, it cannot be<sup>54</sup>. So, we

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53 If the new object is also perceived on the left of the location it actually occupies, we can put a third round object in the real location where the second round red object is represented to be by S's experience. Going ahead we will end up by constructing a perfect veridical misperception, as soon as the new object is displaced by the glasses out of S's visual field. Suppose the surrounding covered by S's visual field contains three round red objects  $O^1$ ,  $O^2$ ,  $O^3$  respectively at locations  $L^1$ ,  $L^2$ ,  $L^3$  and S's experience represents three objects as located at  $L^1$ ,  $L^2$ ,  $L^3$ , as it is the case. Although,  $O^2$  is located where  $O^1$  is represented to be,  $O^3$  is located where  $O^2$  is represented to be,  $O^3$  is not represented because it is out of S's visual field.

54 Soteriou's argument could be challenged as follows: actually in 'veridical misperception' there is *no* part of the environment that is represented as different from the way it is. Take an objective portion of the surrounding environment, and tell how it is according to your PE: you will correctly describe what is there. At L there really is a red round object, for example. Soteriou would reply that your PE represents *that* object you perceive, as being at L, not the object which actually is at L. But so he is re-stating that perceptual representation is demonstrative, namely, that it has particular contents. I do not want to say that the argument is fully circular or formally wrong. Rather, I take it as a good argument, but it is based on another intuition, namely, that if you perceive O and in virtue of that perception your experience represent that there is an object at L,

have a case in which there is misperception and so non-veridical perception, even if the general content is satisfied. This means that the veridicality-conditions of a PE cannot be settled independently of which objects are perceived and, *a fortiori*, independently on whether any object is perceived.

Another similar example is provided by Tye 2011. Suppose that unknown to you there is a mirror in front of you placed at a 45° angle, behind which there is a yellow cube. To the right of the mirror there is a white cube that is reflected on the mirror, but due to unusual lighting conditions it looks yellow. Now, in your PE it looks to you as if there was a yellow cube at a certain location, and that is the case, since there really is a yellow cube at that location, therefore the existential-general content is fully satisfied. If that was the content of PE, then that PE should count as fully accurate, despite the evident fact that you are perceiving a white cube as being yellow, and as being in a location where it is not. So, if the question of veridicality could be settled independently of which object is being perceived, we should treat as accurate experiences which clearly represent certain objects as being other than they are<sup>55</sup>. We need to do justice of the intuition that I misperceive *that* cube, that I misperceive *that* round red object, so the experience is a misperception insofar as that cube is not as it seems to me, that that red round object is not where it seems to me to be, even though *another* cube is the way PE represents that cube to be, and *another* red object is where PE represents that object to be.

As the above examples neatly show, there are no strictly speaking either veridical perceptual hallucinations or veridical misperceptions – given that veridicality entails accuracy – even if the world satisfies a certain general content associated to them, like 'there is an O that is F at L'<sup>56</sup>. Something is missing from that sort of content: the

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then your experience represents *that* perceived object as being at L, not just that there is an object at L. It is still a (legitimate) appeal to our intuitions.

55 As in the previous example by Soteriou, that case is not a knockdown argument, rather it is a way of making our intuitions more evident and compelling. If fact if you hold that perceptual content is general and existential, you may hold that the above PE *is* accurate. The intuition that it is inaccurate depends on the intuition that your PE represent *this* particular as being such, not only that there is *a* particular which is such. But that is exactly the thesis to be argued for, therefore it cannot be used as a premise to defeat the opposing view. Although, the intuition is so strong that abandoning it entails abandoning *in toto* our ordinary notion of perception as well as our relative spontaneous ascriptions of accuracy/inaccuracy. *That* can constitute an argument to the best explanation, in my view.

56 One could defend the Generality Thesis by arguing that a hallucination which perfectly matches the surrounding environment is 'veridical' after all, at least in some sense, and if perceptual content is to be evaluated by reference to a perceived object, then hallucinations would be not evaluable,

very perceived particulars seem to be the best candidates for filling that semantic gap.

Alternatively, Searle's causal *plus* self-referential conditions provide the resources to make these cases of misperception *non-veridical*, because the experience that there is an object O at location L is *not* caused by the object that is at location L. So it is true that there is an object that is F and G at location L (the general-existential content is satisfied) but it is not true that there is an object F and G at location L *and* that object is causing this very experience of there being an object F and G at location L. Given Soteriou/Tye argument summed up above for the view that veridicality cannot be settled independently on which object is perceived and on whether an object is perceived, then we need either to drop GC itself – so to admit particulars into the content – or to accept the causal and self-referential characterization of experiential content provided by Searle. No other way.

#### 2.4.4 *The Implausibility of Searle's Account*

Now, Searle's view is implausible for many respects. Some weaknesses of it have been emphasized by many opponents, including Soteriou himself<sup>57</sup>. Let us consider the most embarrassing ones.

Firstly, there is an issue of phenomenological adequacy<sup>58</sup>. If perceptual content has somehow to reflect perceptual phenomenology<sup>59</sup>, then it is really hard to accept that the immediate phenomenology of perceptual experience involves our awareness of a causal relation between the apparent object and the experience itself. From that point of view, the self-referential component is even harder to accept than the causal one<sup>60</sup>. Can we really make sense of a child or a non-conceptual animal having an experience whose content involves a reference to its very experience being caused by an object's being such and so? Such an articulated content seems to be adequately

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neither as 'veridical' nor as 'falsidical'. As I will argue for later (see Chapter VI, Section 2.5), in fact hallucinations are neither veridical nor falsidical, and the intuition that a 'perfect' hallucination is veridical at least in some sense, depends on the veridicality of the *beliefs* immediately produced by hallucinatory states as their natural cognitive effects. A *belief* that 'there is an O that is T at location L' is well veridical and truth-evaluable, but it is not the case for the hallucination the belief is brought about by.

57 See Soteriou 2001, Armstrong 1991, Burge 1991, McDowell 1991, Millar 1991.

58 On that see also Chalmers 2006.

59 On that, see Section 1 of the next Chapter.

60 For example, there are people, like Siegel 2006, 2010 and Butterfill 2011, who hold that in visual experience we do represent causal relations.

ascribed only to cognitive systems endowed with introspective powers and capable of structured propositional attitudes.

A possible defense could insist that just because perceptual content is non-conceptual, therefore the subject does not need to possess the concepts of [causation], [one's own experience] and the like, in order to have a mental state with these objective contents<sup>61</sup>. Nonetheless, even if perceptual content is non-conceptual, there is a threshold of semantic complexity that cannot be crossed in ascription of intentional mental states to non-conceptual beings. In order a mental state to have *certain* contents, at least the subject credited with that mental state must be a conceptual being. You cannot entertain the content [quark] or [neuron] or [toaster] if you don't possess conceptual abilities at all. Likewise, it is implausible that the self-referential content [myself being caused by the object's being the way I represent it to be] can characterize the perceptual experience of an animal or a child. As a matter of fact, from a developmental point of view our experiences have contents before we as children begin to entertain the very content of [experience]<sup>62</sup>, be it conceptually or non-conceptually.

In addition, there is also the issue of deviant or non-standard causal chains to be considered<sup>63</sup>. An object being a certain way may well cause my experience of that object being that way, but in an inappropriate way. So, either these cases of non-standard causation satisfy the content and make PE veridical and accurate, or the normative clause of appropriateness should also be included within the content, to the effect that a PE has a content like: that F is G, and the fact that F is G is causing this very experience that that F is G *in an appropriate and non-deviant way*. Is this not too much?<sup>64</sup> As is well-known, it is very problematic to spell out what that 'appropriateness' amounts to<sup>65</sup>. Such a highly theoretical notion, which is so puzzling even for the thought itself, should be an experiential content! So, the

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61 This line of defense is taken by Chalmers 2002.

62 On children's development of the power to ascribe and self-ascribe experiences and perceptions, see Nudds 2011.

63 See Grice 1961, Lewis 1980.

64 On this point, see Tye 2011.

65 As it is well-known, that is perhaps 'the' problem for causal theories of content. If the content of a mental state is taken to be determined by what causes it in 'normal conditions', or in 'appropriate causal chains' and the like: the problem is just such notions of 'normality' or of 'appropriate causation' are normative notions which go beyond the merely causal characterization, against the reductive intentions of the causal semantics theorists.



Phenomenological Adequacy Constraint is violated, on the one hand, and the view is developmentally implausible, on the other. Indeed, the content of perceptual experiences of children and non-conceptual animals should contain a sort of sketchy theory of perceptual experience, including clauses of appropriateness in causation!

Secondly, content ascription should be constrained not only by phenomenological elements, but also by considerations about explanatory relevance with respect to behaviour and observable cognitive abilities<sup>66</sup>. Ascribed contents should not be oversophisticated with respect to the discriminatory abilities shown in behavior, especially by non-linguistic animals<sup>67</sup>, if such contents are posited just to *account for* these very abilities<sup>68</sup>. Thus, not only are causation and self-reference not testified to in our visual phenomenology, they are not even necessary to explain discriminatory abilities of perceivers.

So, the Phenomenological Adequacy Constraint and Behavioral Discriminatory Constraint may be thought as not absolutely normative, if considered distributively, so to speak. For example, it may well be the case that certain visual contents are not testified to in our visual phenomenology<sup>69</sup>, but they are to be postulated in order to explain certain discriminatory abilities we have. Vice-versa, our visual phenomenology may make our experience seem more rich and detailed of contents than it really is. So nothing prevents visual content from being richer or poorer than what phenomenology and introspection 'tell' us. Nonetheless, we assess that gap just by evaluating certain discriminatory abilities or certain discriminatory inabilities. But if a certain content does not explain *either* distinctive features of phenomenology *or* any discriminatory ability, then ascribing that content is explanatorily redundant. What I am arguing for, is that the two constraints for content ascription introduced above are *weakly* normative if each of them is considered independently, but they become *strongly* normative if taken together, to the effect that: if a certain content-ascription violates one of them, there must be a good reason to violate it, and that reason must be grounded in the necessity of respecting the other constraint (for

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66 This point has been duly emphasized by Soteriou 2001.

67 Obviously, in evaluating cognitive abilities of non-linguistic animals we only have their observable behavior.

68 As Soteriou 2001, 183, points out: "What discriminatory abilities are left unexplained if one does not include the causal component in the content of visual experience?"

69 For example, I have considered the cases of Blindsight, Inattentional Blindness and the Sperling Effect. See Chapter II, Section 2.

example, to explain certain discriminatory abilities or inabilities it can be necessary to 'discredit' certain elements of our visual phenomenology). But an ascription that violates both constraints must be mistaken or arbitrary at the very least.

Thus, no independent reason other than the necessity of saving GT can support Searle's account of perceptual content. But the implausibility of that account is theoretically much more pressing than the opportunity of saving GT<sup>70</sup>. If perceptual content is purely general, we need to buy Searle's implausible account. *Therefore*, perceptual content is not purely general but contains particulars<sup>71</sup>.

## 2.5 – Demonstrative Contents and Semantic Gap

Given this argumentative vindication of the particularity of visual perception, we can go back to our Content/content distinction introduced above. The object-dependent Content of PE is made out of the object plus a content (= properties the object is represented as having). A *De re* or demonstrative Content takes the following form:

*Of/about O*: PE represents properties F, G, H

At least when there is a perceived object, perceptual Content is object-dependent. If the object is an accuracy-maker, it is such only insofar as it has certain properties. It can be an accuracy-maker by being part of the evaluable content, because, strictly speaking, its properties are the entities whose eventual matching with the experience needs to be evaluated. So, the object is what the experience is an experience *of*, that of which the represented properties belong to, if the experience is accurate. To be more precise, the object does not make the experience accurate/inaccurate, rather it makes the experience accuracy-evaluable by being part of its Content, whereas the

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70 As Tye 2011 notes, in any case the Generality Thesis cannot commit to a *purely* general content, rather it is inevitable to refer to some demonstrative elements in specifying that general, existential content. For example there must be a reference to a particular time, like now, as well as to a particular subject, *me*. For example, according to my PE there is a red round cube at a certain distance and direction from *me*, *now*, not yesterday or with respect to another point in the space. So a particular subject, a particular time and a particular egocentrically specified place need to influence the accuracy-conditions of the PE, so its content. Even if content was general, it should be impurely such. If there was no reference to *perceived* particulars, still there would be reference to other particulars.

71 For further arguments in favor of the particularity of visual perception, see Sainsbury 2006. Chalmers 2004 and Siegel 2010 have a mixed view, according to which PEs have both singular and non-singular contents.

accuracy depends on the matching-relation between the content of the PE and the properties of the perceived object<sup>72</sup>.

Illusions are made falsidical not by the object, rather by the properties belonging to the object the perception is a perception *of*. The seeing-relation fixes the aboutness of the representational episode involved in that seeing, where such aboutness is not itself represented, not even in terms of causal factors, *pace* Searle. Seeing-episodes are contentful episodes in which certain properties are represented as possessed by the very seen object, even if it is only by representing some properties of it, that a seeing-episode can take place. So seeing-episodes have an object in virtue of having a content, but they have a certain Content in virtue of having a certain object as a part of that Content itself. Change the seen object, and the Content changes. That is the object-dependency of PE. Relationality is essential to their Content.

There must be an object not only for a PE to be accurate, but also for a PE to be inaccurate. Misperceptions are inaccurate representations *of* the respectively perceived object in question.

What are hallucinations inaccurate representations *of*? That delicate question calls for a different treatment of illusory Contents on the one hand, and hallucinatory 'contents' on the other. Illusions are perceptions, hallucinations are not. Perceptual illusions and veridical perceptions have the same semantic structure, an object-dependent Content made accurate or inaccurate by certain properties had by the very perceived object.

To recall our analysis of *look*-ascription in Chapter I, perceptual Contents are fittingly expressed by ascriptions like "O looks F to S", instead of by ascriptions like "It looks to S as if O is F". The latter, indeed, is neutral on the existence of O as well as on S's PE being a perceptual relation to O<sup>73</sup>.

Particularity of visual experience also fits with visual phenomenology. In perceptual experience it is not just as if there was an X that is such and so, rather we seem to be demonstratively related to particulars, to *this* and *that*, so that this and that visually

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72 The perceived object needs not be a thing like an apple or a table. There can be objects like a rainbow, the sky, or a foggy area in the air, or whatever. Normally perceptual experiences are relations to of an objective global scene populated with many objects having properties and entertaining relations with each other. So, when I talk of 'the perceived object', it is just an oversimplification to make the exposition and the reasoning more clear.

73 See Chapter I, Section 5.3.

look such and so. Perceptual awareness is the basic way of being acquainted with worldly objects. If perceptual content was general and existential, our perceptual access to the world would be description-like, not an acquaintance.

Although, the issue of hallucinatory contents, hinted at above, specifically arises by considering that hallucinations have a 'demonstrative' phenomenology as well, despite the absence of object and therefore despite the absence of Content (object + content). If perceptual Content is object-dependent, the ascription of hallucinatory content, if any, opens a big puzzle, since hallucinations are objectless states by definition, they are non-relational states. They are not perceptions, in short.

In addition, there is a strong intuition that hallucinations are inaccurate, but that does not fit with the real properties of a perceived object being the accuracy-makers of perceptual experiences. By definition there is *nothing* whose properties can make an hallucinatory content accurate or not, just because there is nothing hallucinations are perceptions *of*. If in order to be inaccurate an experience must be accuracy-evaluable in the first place, but in order to be accuracy-evaluable it must involve an object in its content, we should conclude, against a strong intuition to the contrary, that hallucinatory experiences are neither accurate nor inaccurate, rather they lack semantic value.

Object-dependency of perceptual content together with the absence of object that characterizes hallucinations, leads to what I will call the puzzle of the *Semantic Gap* expressed by the following scheme:

<u>Perceptual Experience (PE)</u> <sup>74</sup> :	<i>object + content</i>	=	<i>Content</i>
	<i>accuracy-value</i>		
a) <i>Veridical PE</i> : content exemplified by the object	→	satisfied	veridical
b) <i>Illusory PE</i> : content not exemplified by the object	→	not satisfied	falsidical
<u>Hallucination (H)</u> :	----- + <i>content</i>	=	? falsidical?

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<sup>74</sup> Even if it is unusual in the literature, I will use 'perceptual experience' only for illusions and veridical perceptions, not for hallucinations. The reason is that perception is a relation to the world, hallucinations are not genuine relations, so a perceptual experience is really perceptual only if it involves a perception. A visual hallucination is an experience which is indiscriminable from a perceptual experience. That indiscriminability, though, is not sufficient for making it a perceptual episode. A hallucination is an experience *as of* a certain perceptual experience was taking place. That experience is perceptual, so to say, only from the very (misleading) point of view of the experimenter.

The Semantic Gap is a problem which any view on Perceptual Content faces, which takes particular perceived objects as essential ingredients for the truth- or accuracy-evaluable Content of PE. If the object is essential to Perceptual Content, hallucinations should be Contentless mental episodes insofar as they are objectless mental episodes. That is highly counter-intuitive though, since in hallucination the world seems to us to be certain ways – at least it seems *to seem* so – and hallucinations may be subjectively indiscriminable from genuinely perceptual experiences. So, how can they have same phenomenology but no Content? How could they be Contentless in the first place? If these problems were not satisfactorily addressed, the Particularity Thesis would be flawed.

Actually, GT straightforwardly avoids the problem of Semantic Gap: if perceptual Content is existential and general, hallucinations are not semantically gappy at all, instead they are just like veridical and illusory perceptions. Hallucinating a red cube, veridically perceiving a red cube or perceiving a green cube that falsidically looks red, would be states with exactly the same existential content, namely, that there is something which is red, which is a cube, which is located at L. But, as we have seen, in order to distinguish 'veridical' hallucinations from both illusions and veridical perceptions the view must implausibly embed a causal and self-referential element into the content.

So we are left with a dilemma: the Generality Thesis (in its existential version) is implausible, the Particularity Thesis seems much more plausible – for the many reasons hinted at above – until it is asked to account for the possibility of hallucinatory Contents.

A reason for GT, sometimes stated and more often presupposed, is the intuition that if two experiences are phenomenally identical they must have the same Content. For example McGinn 1982, 39, argues that perceptual Content must be general “on pain of denying that distinct objects can seem precisely the same”. Take two experiences  $PE^1$  and  $PE^2$  with respective objects  $O^1$  and  $O^2$ , where  $O^1$  and  $O^2$  are visually identical. Now, if Perceptual Content is object-dependent then  $PE^1$  and  $PE^2$  have different Contents, since  $PE^1$  is of  $O^1$ , whilst  $PE^2$  is of  $O^2$ , even though they are phenomenologically identical because  $O^1$  and  $O^2$  are visually indistinguishable. The

properties  $O^1$  is represented to have in  $PE^1$  and the properties  $O^2$  is represented to have in  $PE^2$  are the same properties, then the experiences share their phenomenology but their Content is different since it involves different environmental objects whose properties are respectively represented.

The example of the twin objects  $O^1$  and  $O^2$  can be put together with the case of an hallucination of an object identical to them. Again, the hallucination has *ex hypothesi* the same phenomenology of  $PE^1$  and  $PE^2$ : in having it, it seems to S that there is an object  $O^3$ , and  $O^3$  “seems the same” as  $O^1$  and  $O^2$ .

Though, that internalist intuition in favor of GT is not necessary. Externalist theories of Content just deny that: a causal, external factor contributes to determine the Content in a way that may be not reflected in phenomenology. After all, it is  $O^1$  that is represented in  $PE^1$ , not  $O^2$ . After all, an hallucination 'of'  $O^3$  is not a perception, still it introspectively seems exactly the same as a PE.

Two different but connected principles seem to me implicitly at work to make people find GT so compelling. One could be called Cartesian Principle: according to it the very nature and type of a certain conscious experience must be fully available to the subject by introspection, so that:

*Cartesian Principle (CP)*: If two mental states are subjectively indiscriminable, they have the same nature and the same type

The Cartesian Principle entails that a veridical experience VE and a hallucination H subjectively indiscriminable from VE must be the same kind and type of mental state<sup>75</sup>. So, if we combine that principle with the intentionalist idea that the Content of a mental state individuates it and is *essential* to it, then we are compelled to conclude that a VP and an indiscriminable H must share their Content.

According to another principle which could be called the Accessibility Principle, the Content of a certain experience must be fully available by introspection, so that:

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<sup>75</sup> For a strong criticism of what I am calling Cartesian Principle, see Martin 2002, 2004, 2006. Martin argues against a similar principle to support a disjunctive, naive realist view of perceptual experience. As I will argue later on (see Chapter VI), not only may such a principle be denied by an intentionalist, but it *must* be denied by a coherent intentionalist.

*Accessibility Principle (AP)*: If two experiences are subjectively indiscriminable, they must have the same Content

According to the Cartesian Principle, if a veridical perception indiscriminable from a given hallucination is a contentful state, then the hallucination is a contentful state thereby. It is ruled out by that Principle that a state could subjectively *seem* to be contentful without being such.

According to the Accessibility Principle, not only being indiscriminable from a contentful state is sufficient for being contentful, but also being indiscriminable from a state that has a certain Content is sufficient for the state having exactly that Content<sup>76</sup>. That rules out object-dependency, because not only an hallucination could be indiscriminable from a perception without having objects at all, but also a perception of a qualitatively identical but numerically different object than the object of a given perception could be indiscriminable from that perception.

So hallucinations must be contentful, experiences of identical objects must be identical in Content, therefore perceptual Content cannot involve particulars. So GT must be true, if CP and AP are true.

Now, both principles are false, as I will argue at length later on<sup>77</sup>. I will argue that hallucinations are contentful states in a certain special sense, but not because of the truth of the Cartesian Principle. Indeed, the Cartesian Principle is false and hallucinations are mental states of a different kind from perceptions, be them veridical or falsidical. The Generality Thesis must be rejected for the reasons already provided above, on the one hand, but it is important to make clear that the implicit Principles that seemingly make it seem so compelling are false Principles, on the other hand.

Before saying something more on hallucinatory contents, I want to stress a relevant consequence of the Particularity Thesis with respect to the relation between intentionality and phenomenology, between representational content and phenomenal

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76 It could be though that Accessibility Principle 'screens off' Cartesian Principle in being sufficient to rule out that two subjectively indiscriminable states are of the same nature and type, as well as that they have the same Content as well. But without Cartesian Principle, Accessibility Principle could well allow that two indiscriminable states have the same Content without being of the same kind and type. For example, one could be a perceptual experience with content C, the other could be another type of contentful state (say a desire, an intention, a belief) with content C.

77 See Chapter VI, Section 2.5.

character. Intimate as the relation is between perceptual Content and phenomenal character, that relation cannot be one of identity. At least the Content can change despite constancy of phenomenal character, for example you can remove  $O^1$  and substitute it either with  $O^2$  or even with nothing, if you rightly stimulate the subject's brain so to bring about a matching hallucination. Content changes, phenomenal character does not: for sure this is plainly incompatible with the identity theory, often called strong representationalism<sup>78</sup>.

Therefore perceptual Content, as involving the perceived object, is *wide*, insofar as it depends on the world the subject is causally connected to, namely, on *which* object she is perceiving as well as *whether* she is perceiving anything at all. Whether what I have called content – the properties the perceived object is represented as having – is wide or narrow, is another huge but independent problem<sup>79</sup>. Even if it was narrow, that could not prevent the Content it is a part of, from being wide.

In the next section I will treat the issue of the relation between phenomenal character and representational Content in a general way, in order to finally face the problem of hallucinatory contents – the Semantic Gap Problem – we are left with by now. Although, to be able to treat the Semantic Gap Puzzle in detail we will have to patiently wait until Chapter VI.

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78 Byrne 2001 distinguishes weak representationalism (the supervenience-thesis) from strong representationalism (the identity thesis) about phenomenal character. Another relevant distinction is that between *intermodal* and *intramodal* representationalism: for intermodal representationalists (Dretske 1995, Tye 2000) the represented properties fully determine the phenomenal character, so seeing something as [overhead] and hearing something as [overhead] is phenomenally different only because in each case *other* properties are represented besides the [overhead] property (for example, colors in the first case, pitch, volume and tone in the second case). Another distinction is that between *restricted* and *unrestricted* representationalism: according to the first, *any* conscious experience has a content which determines its character (Dretske 1995, Tye 2000, Bain 2003), according to the second only certain phenomenal states (like perceptual experiences) have content, and it determines the respective phenomenal character of the state. Here I am arguing for a *weak* and *intramodal* representationalism. I find the unrestricted representationalism very implausible, but since I am concerned with perceptual experience, that issue will be not relevant: what matters, is that perceptual experiences are contentful states and their contents determines their conscious character.

79 To report Chalmers' clear and simple definition: "A property is *narrow* when necessarily, for any individual who has that property, an intrinsic duplicate of that individual has that property (regardless of environment). A property is *wide* when it is possible for an individual to have the property while an intrinsic duplicate lacks that property" (Chalmers 2004, 108). So, if the instantiation of a mental property, like having a certain content, or having a certain Content, depends on external factors, that property is wide. If it is independent on external factors, then it is narrow.



We are left with the hard problem of the Semantic Gap. As we will see in the next Chapter, Phenomenal character is determined not by the Object but by the properties the PE represents the Object as having, so Content is object-dependent but phenomenal character is not. Now, also the properties the PE represent the Object as having, are 'wide' in another, further sense from the sense in which the Content is wide as being object-involving: they depend on external factors in a historical way which is still to be explored. In any case, given that the Object does not determine the phenomenal character, we still need to account for the content of hallucinatory states, namely for the semantic evaluability of objectless mental states which are phenomenally identical to perceptual states whose evaluability essentially involves perceived objects. Before finally facing that problem (see Chapter VI), in the next Chapter I will complete my positive articulation of the Content View on perceptual experience.

## CHAPTER V: Phenomenal Character and Kinds of Perceptual Content.

### Section 1 – Phenomenal Character and Representational Content

#### 1.1 – *Reconsidering Looks within the Content View*

The Content View can vindicate a relevant sense of ordinary ascriptions of 'O looks F' by equating them to ascriptions or self-ascriptions of experiences that *represent* a seen object as being F. That is the sense I have called epistemic, following Chisholm and Jackson among others<sup>1</sup>. Something O looks F when it looks *to be* F according to one's experience of it, so when there is *prima facie* visual evidence that it *is* F. Such *look*-attributions are objective. O exhibits a certain objective look, a way of appearing, which may well justify the proposition that O has a certain property, the very property it looks to have.<sup>2</sup> When O looks F in that sense of looking, F is the objective property the experience attributes to the seen object. The Content View suitably accommodates the idea that something can look F without being F: representational contents may be not satisfied by the world.

So, when O looks F to S, S has a visual experience of a perceived O, that represents O as F, where O is the object, F is the content and the couple [object + content] together compose the Content.

Now, the Content of a PE consists of its veridicality-conditions. So if the seen object has the property the PE represents it as having, then the PE is veridical, or accurate, which means that the represented property is the very same property actually had by the seen object, *if* the PE is accurate.

Properties or relations like F could be [red], [square], [moving to S's direction], [distant from S], [bigger-than], and the like: they are *intentional* properties, or representational properties shaping the Content of PE, together with the perceived object/objects.

A PE is a conscious episode with a phenomenal character, with a way it is like to be in it. Let us call a property, among those which constitute the phenomenal character of a PE, a phenomenal property<sup>3</sup>. So, a PE has *intentional* properties and *phenomenal*

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1 Actually it would be more opportune to call it *doxastic*, because calling it epistemic may give the impression that it has to essentially do with knowledge, whereas it has to do with *prima facie* evidence for beliefs or belief-like states instead. Moreover, it could be confused with Dretske's 'epistemic seeing', with which it has nothing relevant to do.

2 If other collateral knowledge does not defeat that evidence, other things being equal, and so forth.

3 See Chalmers 2006, Siegel 2010.

properties. Intentional properties are those in virtue of which the PE is accuracy-evaluable so it is a contentful state, phenomenal properties are those in virtue of which the PE is a conscious episode, so it has a certain subjective character.

What is the relation between the intentional properties and the phenomenal properties of a PE? How are we to pick out the ones and the others, in a given PE? How could we ever assess whether and how they are related, whether they are identical or different, whether they overlap or not?

A way to get into the matter, is that of considering the other ordinary *look*-ascriptions analyzed in Chapter I, in order to realize whether and how the Content View can vindicate also those other uses<sup>4</sup>, or whether it may be compatible with them at least. It may well be that the non-epistemic uses – other than (*prima facie*) 'looking to be' – somehow map or track other non-intentional features of PEs.

The comparative use attributes to two things a common or similar distinctive appearance, as in "A looks like B". Attributing such a commonality of appearances is by no means representing a sameness of the compared things. A can look like B without that being an evidence that they are objectively the same in some respect, apart from that partial sameness in their appearances themselves<sup>5</sup>. I have already argued that comparative look-ascriptions presuppose another non-comparative use of 'looks', otherwise the very comparative use would be circular: A looks like B, but how does B look? Like A, of course, but how does A look? Like B? If B looks like C, well, how does C look? And so on and so forth. There must be *a* way A and B look on the basis of which the very comparison is made, and that 'way' cannot be a way attributed by an epistemic *look*-ascription, because if it was, then 'A looks like B' would amount to 'there is (*prima facie*) evidence that A is F and there is (*prima facie*) evidence that B is F as well'. But that would amount to 'there is (*prima facie*) evidence that A and B are the same, namely, items of the same kind or type F'. But we had ruled out the idea that comparative looks involve such objective commitments, as if you looking like a poodle – in certain circumstances – should

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4 Of course, the issue of the relation between phenomenal character and representational content, is an issue internal to the Content View. Indeed, only for those who hold the Content View PE have representational content at all.

5 If something *a* looks like something else (an F) they must have something in common, but not necessarily the property F used to specify what *a* looks like. For example, *a* looks like an F, so it must have some property in common with F (at least a certain distinctive appearance), but that property needs not be the property F itself.

entail a *prima facie* evidence that you are a poodle!

This non-epistemic and non-comparative use of 'looks', implicitly involved in both these uses<sup>6</sup>, is what I have called the *phenomenological* look. The existence of a phenomenological look explains why something can look red without looking *to be* red, something can look elliptical without looking *to be* elliptical, and so forth. This look does not seem to directly concern *intentional* properties, since intentional properties shape perceptual Content, and perceptual Content consists of the PE's veridicality conditions, O's being F would make veridical and accurate the PE according to which O looks F, but in that case 'looks F' should amount to 'looks *to be* F', given that the PE is true if O *is* F.

## 1.2 - The case of Perceptual Constancy

### 1.2.1 – Perceptual Constancy and the Ways of Looks

The well-known phenomenon of perceptual constancy is a good example from which one could account for such a non-intentional use of 'looks'. Standard cases of perceptual constancy, for example, are provided by Peacocke 1983, 2007 as evidence for the existence of 'primed' or 'sensational' properties, namely, of properties that subjectively characterize the perceptual experience without being represented in the experience as *had* by the perceived objects themselves, as instantiated by the perceived world: ways things look which are not ways things look *to be*.

Here is an example which is not a case of perceptual constancy but still it involves it. You see two trees, the bigger one is far away from you, the smaller one is very near to you. Still, there is a seemingly legitimate sense in which their sizes *look* the same from your point of view, without looking *to be* the same<sup>7</sup>. Actually that is the same visual phenomenon involved in *size-constancy*, only comparatively considered. In virtue of size-constancy, when you see an object moving toward you, even if it comes to occupy a bigger and bigger portion of your visual field as soon as it gets

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6 As I have made clear in Chapter I, also the epistemic look involves the phenomenological look. The visually acquired evidence that a is F, in "a looks F", is *visually* acquired indeed: such a visual acquisition of evidence about how the world is arranged must consist in a conscious appreciation of certain visible ways things appear. That does not prevent the phenomenological use to be dependent on the other uses as well (specially on the epistemic or intentional one). The uses are deeply interwoven, without any of that being causally or explanatory prior to the other.

7 Peacocke 1983, 12, calls it the "problem of Additional Characterization". See also Byrne 2001, 221ff.

nearer, despite that phenomenological change your PE represents it as being constant in size. But even if it looks *to be* the same in size, nonetheless it seems to look different as well, at least it looks different as given in visual phenomenology. Something changed in the way the object appears.

Imagine the object is round, but while moving toward you it slowly rotates in such a way that at certain moments its oblique orientation makes it change the ways in which its actual size occupies your visual field, so that the region of your visual field it occupies sometimes is an ellipsis<sup>8</sup>. So, despite the phenomenal changes due to the respective changes in orientation when the object is rotating, your PE keeps representing the object as being constant in shape, namely, as round. Still, it is hard to deny that at certain times the object 'looks' elliptical as well, even though your PE represents it as being round and makes you believe that it is round.

Imagine also that this rotating object has parts of its surface perfectly illuminated by the sun and other parts on which shadow is cast. There is a sense in which your visual experience of the object is not chromatically homogeneous, indeed you notice a sharp difference between the fully illuminated parts and the shadowed parts. Suppose the object is yellow. Your PE represents the object as being yellow, but the shadowed parts of it look 'greenish' in some sense, despite no doubt the fact that they look *to be* yellow in the first place. Even if distribution of shadowed and non-shadowed parts changes during the rotation, that phenomenal change does not amount to your PE representing parts of the object as suddenly changing their colors. This is color-constancy.

Why should size-constancy, shape-constancy, and color-constancy make a case against the idea that the only properties of perceptual experiences are their intentional properties? Because your PE represents things as being the same through time or space, but something else, something phenomenally relevant, changes through time or space<sup>9</sup>. Vice-versa, your PE may represent things as changing

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<sup>8</sup> On sensational properties as irreducible to represented properties, see Peacocke 2007.

<sup>9</sup> It is important to remark that the sameness of size, shape and color despite other phenomenal changes, is not just *judgmental*, rather it is phenomenologically given in PE. I do not just judge that the tilted coin is round 'despite the appearances', rather the coin visually *appears* to be round (despite it presents, in another sense, also an 'elliptical appearance'). If it did not violate the phenomenology, treating the sameness as result of a judgment could have been a way out. But it is not an available way, given perceptual phenomenology of constancy. Indeed your judgment of sameness does not contradict your experience at all, as it may happen in cases of perceptual illusions

despite a sort of phenomenal sameness of their visual look. Suppose an object is getting smaller and smaller such that its moving toward you is 'compensated' by its getting smaller so as to 'look' to you constant, in a certain sense of 'look' at least. Suppose you experience a wall whose surface phenomenally looks uniform despite the fact that parts of it are clearly shadowed. Suppose a round object really gets elliptical but at the same time it changes its orientation in a way that the portion of your visual field covered by it is constant, such that it 'looks' to you constant. Same represented properties with phenomenal change, different represented properties without phenomenal change. So, there must be phenomenal properties beyond the representational ones, which are irreducible to them, in PE. This is the inference, in short. If A and B do not systematically co-vary, they cannot be either identical or related by a relation of supervenience. Given A, it is not given B thereby, and vice-versa. After all, if both the 'look'-properties were representational, our PE would have contradictory contents. The same object would be represented by the same PE as being round and elliptical at the same time, as being big and small at the same time, as being yellow and green at the same time. But that is impossible, not so much because PEs with contradictory contents are a priori impossible<sup>10</sup>, but because we experience that phenomenon of sameness-despite-phenomenal-difference and difference-despite-phenomenal-sameness, as something quite natural, as what exactly is to be expected in PE, as something far from requiring contradictory beliefs to be endorsed by us!

In addition, if the *same* objective color can look *many* ways (ex. green, yellowish, orange), then “looks F” cannot just individuate one objective color represented as had by an object in the PE. The same goes for sizes and shapes. Vice-versa, if a certain way of looking (be it F) can represent to the subject different objective colors (or shapes or sizes), F cannot be a representational property such that the PE representing it is true if the perceived object is F full stop.

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known as such, rather it endorses the experiential content itself. On the contrary, it is only *by reflection* that I become conscious of the 'elliptical appearance' of the tilted round object, of the 'different appearance' of the shadowed and unshadowed parts of the surface, of the different 'size-appearance' of the same object seen from near and from far away. Instead, perceptual constancy is easily achieved by infants much before any showing of introspective abilities. On perceptual constancy in infants – even in few-days infants! – see Slater 1998.

10 On the contrary, there are experiences with contradictory and/or impossible contents. For example, Escher figures, the Waterfall Illusion, the Penrose Triangle, and so on. Cfr Crane 1988, Ernst 1996. For experiences of impossible colors, see Churchland 2005.

The story about the relation between the phenomenal level and representational level of PE must be more complicated, so it is in need of a positive account. So let us ask: given that there are phenomenological looks which are not directly and straightforwardly amenable to intentional looks, what is the relation between the first and the second looks? What are phenomenal properties in the first place?

Given all that, it would be natural to think that the phenomenological look is irreducible to the epistemic look the same way as the phenomenal properties of PEs are irreducible to their intentional-representational properties. But still there are some ways one could reply to that idea.

### 1.2.2 - *A possible Reply Against Representationalism*

A radical counter-move is that of plainly denying that there are ways things look without them looking *to be* these ways thereby. Therefore, if O really looks F in S's PE, then O looks to be F, such that if O was F, S's PE would be accurate and veridical. There are only intentional properties in PE's phenomenology, there are only intentional looks which can be correctly attributed to the world as experienced.

For example: when you see the two trees in the case above, the far one looks *to be* much bigger than the near one, whereas there is no clear and independent sense in which the two trees look the same size. They just *do not look* the same in size at all, because distance is visually represented, so the distant tree appears the way distant trees of a certain size are supposed to appear to an observer. So appears the near tree: as it should appear when seen from here.

When you see a tilted round object, it just looks to be circular, there is no sense at all in which it looks elliptical. Orientation in space is visually represented, so the way the object looks is the way a tilted round object is supposed to look to an observer so positioned. Nothing looks elliptical then<sup>11</sup>.

When you see a yellow object whose surface is partially shadowed, the surface looks

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<sup>11</sup> One could reply that the retinal image produced by the tilted round object is in fact an ellipsis. But that is a bad reply: why should the way something looks be the same shape as the retinal image? The retinal image is just a certain gradient of light distribution, it is a step of the total information-processing involved in vision, nothing more. Of course the retinal image has to do with the final conscious vision of the object, so also with its distinctive looks in experience. But there is no need of a shape-similarity between looks and causal-physical basis of the visual episode. Otherwise, why don't we argue that the way O looks must share a shape with the excitation of the optical nerve at a certain point? On the inappropriateness of calling 'image' the retinal information, see Nöe 2004, Chapter 2.2.

chromatically uniform, it looks to be yellow indeed, it does not look differently colored in its parts. Illumination conditions, as well as shadows, are visually represented, so the way the surface looks is the way a yellow partially illuminated surface is supposed to look to an observer. So, nothing looks greenish at all<sup>12</sup>.

In short, it is *not* true that there are phenomenal changes without representational changes, in perceptual constancy. What phenomenally changes depends on representational changes, for example on variations in represented distance, orientation, illumination, and so forth. Phenomenal differences despite constancy are differences in *what* is represented by PE rather than differences in *how* PE represents. So there is no phenomenological look which is not amenable to an intentional look: phenomenal properties are *completely* exhausted by representational properties. That is the representationalist version of the Content View. On that version of CV, not only are perceptual experiences representational episodes, but also their representational properties are the *only* properties we are aware of in PE. So the phenomenal character of a PE is *completely* determined by its representational content. Thus, nothing looks F in PE unless it looks to be F according to the PE.

### 1.2.3 *A counter-reply*

I do not want to argue against that reply, rather I want to point out its insufficiency. Indeed, that view overlooks a genuine phenomenological feature of visual experience. It is true that the trees do not properly look the same size, that the surface does not properly look differently colored in its shadowed and unshadowed parts, that the object does not properly look elliptical. Although, provided that that way of ascribing looks is linguistically inappropriate, still we understand what it means that in experience the trees 'look' the same size, the surface 'looks' differently colored, the object 'looks' elliptical. That immediacy in understanding, or at least vaguely grasping, that even strange way of speaking must be somehow rooted in phenomenology and calls for an explanation. Just getting rid of it sounds

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12 Besides the example of the shadowed surface, color-constancy is responsible for our experiences of colors being relatively independent from the time of the day. For example, both in daylight and in the dark, red surfaces appear to be red despite change of illumination, just because the illumination conditions are visually represented. Also in that case one could reply that in daylight as well as in the dark, red surfaces just look to be red, so *any* look is intentional. So it is a mistake to take it that red things look brown when scarcely illuminated. Instead they look scarcely illuminated red surfaces, and they look *to be* such.



unsatisfactory.

So, what do we grasp in the idea that the trees look the same size, the surface looks differently colored, the object looks elliptical? As I have already argued in Chapter I (5.5), we grasp a certain *partial* similarity between our actual experience and another eventual experience of something different. For example, *if* I was seeing a small but near tree, in *some* respects my experience would present it in a similar way to the way my actual PE presents that big but far tree. Of course distance is visually represented, indeed that similarity holds only in some respects and not in others: for example, that comparison abstracts from focus, perspectival relations with other objects, and any other features of my PE that are cues for appreciating distance-properties<sup>13</sup>. Grasping such a hypothetical similarity rests on a highly sophisticated counterfactual operation, but it is grounded on our introspective powers of comparing actual and possible (or past) experiences. Likewise, illumination-conditions and shadows are visually represented, but that does not prevent a subject from appreciating that the actual experience of a portion of shadowed yellow is similar in some respects to a hypothetical experience of an unshadowed green<sup>14</sup>. That comparison abstracts from illumination conditions, shadows and so forth, but it is grounded in my actual experience anyway. There is nothing illegitimate in appreciating that that yellow surface with distributed shadows on it looks the way an unshadowed surface colored with green and yellow parts would look *to be*.

In the same vein, a round tilted object is present in my PE in a partially similar way to the way in which an elliptical non-tilted object would be presented by *another* hypothetical PE. Of course orientation is visually represented, so in order to make that comparison the subject needs to disregard those visual properties which make her appreciate the orientation and so make her take the object as round instead of as

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13 We could distinguish a *holistic* phenomenology of PE, and an *atomistic* phenomenology. The overall visual phenomenology of a PE, is such that distance is represented together with sizes, color is represented together with illumination, shapes are represented together with orientation, and so forth. Besides that spontaneous, holistic phenomenology, an introspective focus on details and particular features of our experienced scene may allow us to isolate certain 'apparent properties' in abstraction from their relations to the global visual experience. So we can take a sort of 'atomistic' attitude toward our own experience, and even compare two phenomenological atoms, so to say, belonging to different PEs. That sophisticated operation underlies our mastery of phenomenal looks- ascriptions.

14 I want to point out that it is an *objective* fact about yellow surfaces and green surfaces, that a yellow surface in the dark is similar to a green surface under the sun. Nothing *intrinsically* private is involved in that circumstance.

elliptical. Still, with certain respects, an elliptical frontally-oriented object would be present in a PE in a similar way.

What does all that amount to? Is the meaningfulness of that comparative talk about lookings and visual experiences, evidence against representationalism?

Different representational properties may be phenomenally similar, and vice-versa, but picking out a phenomenal property F is possible only by reference to a paradigmatic experience in which something is *represented* as F. So, there seems to be a way something looks without looking *to be* that very way, but only insofar as it looks the way something *else* would look *to be* in *another* PE.

That asymmetry is of the greatest importance, but what matters here is the possibility of comparing two different representational properties as being 'experientially' similar despite their objective difference. If yellow things in bright light, in some respects, look the way green things in dark light look, then two things can look *to be* different despite looking similar in that very respect.

In Chapter I I have argued that the comparative use presupposes a phenomenological use of 'looks', otherwise the comparative use would involve a *regressus*. Given that A looks like B, how does B look? So there must be *the* phenomenological look of A and that of B in order for them to be compared.

Now we have just seen that the attempt to reduce the phenomenological look to the intentional look ('looks F' to 'looks *to be* F') is blocked by the possibility of comparison between PEs that represents different properties. I think that the following moral could be drawn from all this:

If you reduce the comparative look to the phenomenological look, then you need to admit the phenomenological look as distinct from the intentional look. If you reduce the phenomenological look to the intentional look, then you need to admit the comparative look as distinct from the intentional look. In any case, the intentional look alone does not cover our ascriptive uses, our intuitions, our phenomenology. As a consequence, the phenomenological look is *dependent on* but *irreducible to* the intentional look, and that irreducibility despite the dependency is what makes also the comparative look irreducible to the intentional. The phenomenon of elliptic-looking of the tilted penny, so the phenomenological variations of 'apparent shape' despite perceptual constancy of roundness representation, testifies that irreducibility

of the phenomenological look to the intentional look. Their dependency has been argued for before (Chapter I, Section 5.5): something phenomenologically looks elliptical if experiencing it is, for some specific respect, as if one was seeing an elliptical object from a privileged (frontal) perspective, in paradigmatically optimal circumstances.

So, even if we assume we are aware just of representational properties in PE, our introspective access to our PEs allow us to compare and couple certain *ways* these representational properties are given to us in different PEs. That is true even if we pick out those 'ways' as ways a certain object was represented *to be* in another paradigmatic experience. These 'ways of being given' are not reducible to ways the world is represented to be in a certain PE, even if it is picked out only by reference to the content of another PE. We can meaningfully claim that *a* looks F (without looking to be F) in the actual PE, because we know what it is for something (else) to look *to be* F, because we know what it is like to experience an F, in other terms.

That view gives explanatory and phenomenological priority to representational properties: what is fundamentally given in PE are objects and the ways they are represented as being. But our introspective powers, conjoined both with a sophisticated counterfactual capacity and with memory/imagination of a non-actual experience, allow to us to compare two experiences having different representational properties, under certain respects. So, no phenomenal property could be picked out if it was not a 'potential' representational property<sup>15</sup>.

That view is well compatible with *transparency* of PE. In introspectively attending to your own experience of a red round vase of flowers, you will find the properties that characterize the vase according to your PE of it. That is true, but the [roundness] represented in your PE can be taken by you as being represented in such a way that it has *some* distinctive appearances in common with the way an elliptical, frontally oriented vase would have *if* you experienced it. The property [elliptical] is not directly represented in your PE, but that way of the property [round] being given can remind you of the way “it would be like” to see an ellipsis differently oriented<sup>16</sup>.

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15 That fits well with the conceptual and explanatory dependence of “looks” from “is”, I have argued for – with Sellars – in Chapter I (5.6).

16 That is why these apparent properties, like the elliptic look of an object which looks to be round, are no less *public* properties than the properly intentional properties of the PE, like [round]. The 'elliptical' way of appearing of a tilted round object is something intersubjectively assessable, it is

#### 1.2.4 PEs are Egocentric Representations

The complex properties of being [round + at-that-orientation], [big + at-that-distance], [red + in-that-illumination-condition] are representational properties throughout then. They belong to the Content of PE. Skipping over the color-case for the moment, let us notice that something with a certain size appears differently according to its distance from *me*, something with a certain shape appears differently according to its orientation with respect to *me*. So, even if we accept the argument that the respective phenomenological variations are representational variations (change in distance or in orientation), still these represented spatial properties must be represented egocentrically, as ways the world is with respect to *me*, rather than allocentrically, as ways the world is full stop<sup>17</sup>.

If the phenomenological change of the cases above is accounted for in terms of representational change, then the very same perceiver must be somehow involved into the Content itself. If perceptual constancy does not speak in favor of the awareness of non-representational properties in PE, and so *any* phenomenal variation is in fact a variation in Content, then *any* phenomenal feature of the PE which is clearly dependent on my actual point of view, must be accounted for by including myself, the perceiver, in the Content.

The availability of the world for our action is the fundamental character of our perceptual encounter with the world, so it is quite natural that perceptual representations are egocentric and subject-indexed. Something is represented as being at a certain place, distance, orientation, with respect to *me* and to my body. When something is distant, it is distant from *here* in the first place, not from a neutral point among the points in the represented surrounding space. The location of my body is not one among other places that my PE represents, rather it is where *all* the other places are represented to spatially relate with, in the first place. Likewise, a coin is tilted or not just from *my* point of view.

Although this *to-me* component of perceptual phenomenology is something we are

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an objective feature of the perceived entity. There is nothing intrinsically subjective in these apparent properties. So, they are not *qualia* in the strongest sense, rather they are ways-things-seems-to-be-from-that-point-of-view, where anyone else could occupy that point of you.

17 On PE as having an egocentrically-indexed content, see Burge 2005, 68ff, Peacocke 1992, 70ff, Evans 1982, Chapter 7. See also Dretske 2003, 78ff.

aware of<sup>18</sup>, it is not a non-representational property of our experience of the world we are aware of, it is rather a property of the way the world is represented *in* the experience. So, a representationalist view could accommodate that egocentric aspect by including it within the *representatata* we are aware of in PE, without having to accept that it is a property of the representation itself, namely of the state.

As Dretske 2003, 78, notes, nothing prevents a perceptual experience from having 'egocentric' properties among its contents. For example, the trees can be represented as being one smaller than the other and nearer than the other, on the one hand, and as occupying the same portion of the subject's visual field – what we have called 'looking the same size' – on the other hand. The ways the trees 'appear' to the subjects are represented properties, which make the representation have egocentric contents besides its allocentric contents. Relational properties are then represented in PE, properties that characterize the objective spatial relation between the perceived objects and the perceiver. The *point-of-view* we have on the world in experiencing, is something we access in experiencing and in being aware of the egocentrically specified properties of the perceived world, it is not something we access by being 'directly' aware of the experience itself, of its alleged phenomenal, non-representational properties. For example, the perspectival properties of the visual appearances are ways in which PE represents objective features with respect to our actual location, so “from here”, they are representations of objective relations between us and the perceived world.

So, neither the phenomenon of perceptual constancy nor the egocentric character of PEs seem to be enough to make up an argument against representationalism. If we are able to compare ways of appearing of different properties, it is because our PEs have a Content involving information about the relation between us and the world, regardless of the information about the world as such. So a coin tilted if seen-from-here looks a bit like a coin non-tilted but seen-from-there.

Movement-perception is another good example of spatial representations being subject-indexed and therefore relational. The very idea of an objective space rests on the immediate grasp of the difference between certain apparent movements as due to the movement of the perceiver, and other apparent movements as due to objective

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18 On the *to-me* component of perceptual representations, see also Crane 2011.

movements of perceived things<sup>19</sup>. In addition, the appreciation of objective movement also depends on the movement of the eyes. If you track a constantly moving object by gradually turning your head, your retinal image of the object is constant, but you see it moving because the brain receives coordinated information of movement of your eyes as well as of your head. So visual representation of movement involves a complex representation of the relative spatial relations between the perceiver's body, the perceiver's eyes, and the moving object.

To draw an overall conclusion: perceptual constancy does not speak in itself in favor of the existence of phenomenal non-representational properties of PEs we are allegedly aware of, but it shows that: 1) in our PE's representing the world as being a certain way we can have at a time an introspective access to a) certain *egocentric* elements, which are themselves represented rather than being properties of the representational state itself; b) certain *relational* properties connecting us and the world, which are also represented *in* the experience rather than being properties of the experience.

We have the capacity to compare these 'egocentric ways' across experiences with different representational properties. We *are* points of view on the world, and our being such is introspectively accessed by us through visually experiencing the world, not through seeing our own experience of the world as some sort of internal eye<sup>20</sup>. There is no need of being aware of non-representational, qualitative properties of the experience itself, to become aware of the perceived world as perceived from a (certain) point of view.

### 1.3 How are we aware of the PE's Mode?

The phenomenal character of PE cannot be identical with its Content, because PE's Contents are object-involving, whereas the phenomenal character of a given PE can

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19 See Evans 1982, Chapter VI. In the very phenomenology of PE objects are given as *subject-independent*, on the one side, and the experiential relation to the perceived world is given as *perspectivally connected*, on the other side (see Siegel 2010, Chapter 7, on that). If I change my perspective on the object, I do not take the object to be moving thereby (subject-independence). Instead, if I change my position, my phenomenology will change as an effect of that, so in changing my position I expect certain distinctive phenomenological changes (perspectival connectedness). Subject-independence and perspectival connectedness are two sides of a same coin.

20 To get how it is possible to go beyond the perception-model of introspection, I have benefited of the reading of the PhD by Conor McHugh, *Self-knowledge in Consciousness*, Edinburgh 2008, available online.

be shared both by another PE of another visually indistinguishable object and also by an objectless hallucination<sup>21</sup>. But a representationalist could still argue that the phenomenal character of a PE is identical with its content rather than with its Content: it may be that the properties the PE represent the (putative) object as being – which constitute the content, so compose the Content of a PE together with the object the PE is *of* – are identical with the PE's phenomenal properties, namely to the PE's phenomenal character. In other words, it may be the case that, even though Perceptual Content is object-dependent in a way in which phenomenal character is not, so they cannot be just identical, still the phenomenal character is identical to the content, namely, to the properties the PE represent the (putative) object as having. For example: I see an apple and my PE represents it as round and green. The phenomenal character cannot be identical to the Content, because another identical apple or even a hallucinated apple could be the 'object' of PEs with the same phenomenal character. Nonetheless, the phenomenal character could be identical to the [round]/[green], to the represented properties.

We have just been considering this hypothesis (representationalism about properties). We have noticed that the represented properties are always egocentrically represented, from a point of view and in relation to the perceiver. Properties like [distant-from-here], [so-oriented-with-respect-to-my-position] and the like, are represented relations involving *both* the perceiver and her surroundings as *relata*. In experience we are perceptually aware of the *world* from *our* point of view.

If that point-of-view is 'made out' of the properties things are represented as having, then property-representationalism is true. Now, it seems that any representation of properties as objectively related in certain ways to the perceiver cannot exhaust alone the *egocentric representation* of the objective properties themselves. Let us more closely explore that apparent gap between represented egocentric features and elements, on the one hand, and the egocentric *way* of representing features and elements, on the other.

In visual perception, *any* worldly objects and features are represented within an egocentric frame of reference, within an egocentric space<sup>22</sup>. The perceiver is not just

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21 Disjunctivists about phenomenal character deny that (see Martin 2006, Fish 2010). I will argue later why they are wrong in that (see Chapter VI).

22 See Evans 1982, especially Chapter 7. "There is only an egocentric space, because there is only a

represented as an object among other objects: that would be an allocentric representation including myself within its targets. Likewise, whenever I hear a sound coming from a certain direction, I am immediately disposed to do various things, so my spatial representations are egocentric in a strong sense, they are not just objective representations of many things among which there is also myself or my body as occupying a certain position in the objective space. Rather, *all* perceived things are perceived in a way which presents them from my point of view, for me, to me, for my action, for my further exploration. The primitive connection of perception to (possible) action deeply influences the way the information is taken in, and that is reflected in perceptual phenomenology as well. There is 'up' and 'down', 'left' and 'right', 'in front' and 'behind' just by reference to myself as an agent, in a way which is completely different from the way my PE may well represent an object as behind another object, under or above another object, as to the left or to the right of another object. In these cases, both objects would be represented from my point of view and in spatial relation to myself anyway, but not the other way round. So there is an asymmetry between myself and the represented surroundings, we cannot account for by appeal to the mere fact that I am also represented as occupying a place just like the other objects my PE is of. Indeed, there is not even the need that my body is visually represented in order for my visual PE to egocentrically represent all the surrounding objects and their properties, namely, to represent them with respect to myself. On the contrary, my own body is usually not represented in visual PE, whilst anything is *perspectivally* represented. The very fact that PE's phenomenology exhibits certain ways of appearing of objective properties besides the properties themselves – for example, the 'elliptical' mode of presentation of the tilted round object – is due to the fact that PEs are egocentric ways of representing the world, not *just* representations of the world which include the subject within their many contents. That 'to-me' dimension is more than having me as a content.

To couch that point in other terms, it seems that *the egocentric aspect of PE's phenomenal character cannot be exhausted by the egocentric contents of PEs*, which anyway explain many aspects of the first-person phenomenology of PEs. In PE, relations are represented, not only between perceived objects and their represented

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behavioral space”.



properties, but also between objects, their properties and myself, the perceiver. Nonetheless, that important fact is not sufficient to explain the egocentric character of perceptual experience. Where does that special first-person character come from, if not from the content? Should we concede that in PE we are aware of *qualia* or property of the experience in the first place?

There is a third way between reducing phenomenal character to represented properties and accepting the existence of *qualia*-like entities as direct objects of perceptual awareness.

In Section 2.3 of Chapter IV I have introduced the basic ingredients for individuating a certain PE: a *Subject*, an *Object*, a set of *Properties*, and a *Mode*. I have ruled out that the phenomenal character of PE depends on the Object, so from the Content as composed by Object and content. Now I have argued that the egocentric component of PE cannot be exhausted by content alone either. In other words, the egocentric *content* of PE cannot alone account for the egocentric conscious *character* of PE. There is another element left, which may be the key-element to explain the gap between representational content and phenomenal character. That element is the *Mode*.

A perceptual experience of an Object, with a certain content, is a different mental state from a belief about the very same object and with the same content. The two intentional states differ in their Modes, they are different kinds of attitudes toward the same Object and content, so toward the same Content. Now, by 'Mode' I do not just mean the kind of attitude, like perceiving or believing or desiring or hoping or fearing<sup>23</sup>, but also the determinate perceptual modality of the determinable 'perceptual' attitude<sup>24</sup>. For example, vision is a different Mode from hearing or tasting. So, a perceptual experience in the Visual Mode can share an Object and a content (so a Content) with a perceptual experience in the Auditory Mode, or with a perceptual experience in the Tactile Mode. Seeing something moving is different from hearing something moving, seeing a square is different from touching a square,

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23 What I call Mode here, with Crane 2007, is called *quality* by Husserl 1901, and *manner* by Chalmers 2004, 2006.

24 By 'attitude' I do not mean *propositional* attitude but semantic attitude in general. An attitude toward a content does not have to be a propositional attitude, insofar as there are non-propositional contents. If perceptual content is not propositional, as I have argued for, above, then the 'perceptual attitude' is not a propositional attitude although it is a certain attitude toward a content.

and so on. Is the Mode of a PE relevant for its phenomenal character?

As Chalmers 2004 and Crane 2007 put it, we can distinguish a *pure* and an *impure* representationalism. According to pure representationalism, the content of a state fully determines its phenomenal character (*weak* pure representationalism) or it is identical to it (*strong* pure representationalism). According to impure representationalism, the content of a state together with its Mode fully determines its phenomenal character (weak impure representationalism) or it identical with it (strong impure representationalism)<sup>25</sup>. I will argue for weak impure representationalism, namely for the view that the Mode co-determines PE's phenomenal character together with the content<sup>26</sup>. I will then argue that the egocentric character of PE also depends on its distinctive Mode, besides its egocentric and relational contents. Phenomenal character is not fixed by content alone.

If the Mode is sufficient for explaining the phenomenal difference between PEs with same content, then there is no need to appeal to phenomenal, non-representational properties, namely, to *qualia*-like properties of the experience we would be conscious of in the first place, when we enjoy a PE<sup>27</sup>.

It strikes me as a compelling evidence that visual awareness of a property 'feels' different from auditory or tactile awareness of the same property. Seeing a square feels different from touching it, hearing something moving toward me feels different

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25 A parallel distinction similar to the pure/impure one, is that between *intermodal* and *intramodal* representationalism, proposed by Byrne 2001. According to the first view, phenomenal character is fully determined by representational content, *given* a modality (see Lycan 1996, Harman 1996). For example, two visual perceptions with same content must have the same phenomenal character. According to the second view, sameness of content fully determines sameness of phenomenal character independently on modalities (seeing, hearing, tasting and so on). Another distinction is that between *unrestricted* and *restricted* representationalism. On the first view (Dretske 1995, Tye 1995, Bain 2003), any conscious state is a representation, so it has a content, included orgasms, tickles, moods, depressions, physical pain and so on. On the second view, only certain kinds of conscious state have content and intentionality, like perceptions, beliefs and thoughts (McGinn 1988). I think that unrestricted representationalism is very implausible, but I will not try to argue against it. Instead, my concerns are perceptual content and perceptual experience, not consciousness in general or intentionality in general. Here I am not interested in whether depression has an object or a content of any sort.

26 Also shifts in *attention* can change the phenomenal character of a PE. But attention may be taken to modify phenomenal character *via* determining which, among the properties falling under your visual field, are represented and which are not. In addition, each perceptual Mode allows and enables certain distinctive shifts in attention. In any case, differences in content as given under the Mode, account for phenomenal differences due to attention. On attention as co-determining phenomenal character, see Fish 2010, 58ff., Price 2011.

27 *Qualia* realists are Block 1990, 2003, Shoemaker 2006, Thau 2002.

from seeing something moving toward me. That primitive intuition is not shared by everyone, though. Pure representationalists (Dretske, Tye, Lycan, Bain) usually account for that phenomenal difference in terms of difference of represented properties<sup>28</sup>. For example, when you see a square your PE also represents its color, when you touch a square your PE also represents its texture, at least the PE represents the texture much more fine-grainedly than a visual PE would do. So, the represented properties vary. It is just a contingent fact that vision does not represent pitch and timbre, that touch does not represent color, that hearing does not represent texture, and so on. Still, the Mode has only an indirect role in determining phenomenal character, insofar as the Mode determines *which* properties are represented, so it determines representational content. It remains true that phenomenal character is fully fixed by representational content alone.

That reply, although apparently straightforward, seems to me to deeply violate our phenomenological intuitions. Of course we will never have an auditory PE of a moving object without a related perception of timbre, pitch and other auditory properties. We will never have a visual PE of a moving object without any perception of some chromatic contrast or of some other morphological properties of the moving object, and so on. But the distinctive phenomenal character of a visual experience of a square does not introspectively *seem* exclusively due to other concomitantly seen properties like colors. Likewise, touching a square does not *seem* to feel different from seeing it *just* because you also perceive texture and fail to perceive colors. There is a distinctive phenomenology of seeing certain properties which cannot be reduced to the experience of that property being or not being accompanied by simultaneous experiences of other properties.

Moreover, in having a visual experience of an F you are in a position to immediately self-ascribe not only a mental state with that *content* (an F), but also a mental state with that *Mode* (a Visual Perception). Just by seeing something you become

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28 That argument is put forward by Dretske 1995, 2003, by Tye 2006, by Bain 2003, Byrne 2001. Byrne provides an argument for pure intentionalism, which unfortunately begs the question: 1) if S has two consecutive PE which differ in phenomenal character, she will notice the difference 2) If she notices the difference, the way things seems to her will change 3) The way things seems to S in PE is the content of the PE, so difference in phenomenal character entails difference in content. The argument does not work because it presupposes that a change in phenomenal character is identical with a change in the way things seem *to be* to the subject. But that assumption just amounts to the assumption of pure intentionalism itself! For a similar criticism, see Chalmers 2004, Crane 2007.

immediately aware that you are seeing it, instead of hearing or touching it. That primitive fact can be hardly explained by appeal to presence or absence of certain other represented properties. In being immediately and non-inferentially conscious of enjoying a visual experience, I do not 'check' the range of properties my PE is representing, I just feel myself seeing and just enjoy the distinctively *visual* appearance of the seen things<sup>29</sup>. My awareness is awareness under a certain Mode, even though, of course, my overall experience is normally an integrated and multimodal flux. Consider seeing and hearing an object moving toward you. If you focus your attention just on that property of moving toward you, still you may well introspectively tell apart the Visual and the Auditory phenomenology of that very same property. That is not to deny that there is distinctive phenomenology of the complex, bi-modal experience of seeing-with-hearing that movement, that is rather to claim that we can introspectively attend to the basic 'mono-modal' elements of that complex phenomenology in a separate way<sup>30</sup>.

In addition, we do not have any imagination of what it could be like to *hear* colors, or of what it could be like to *see* pitches and timbres. So it is distinctive of the visual phenomenal character, that there are certain exclusively visual properties like colors, not the other way around. In hearing a moving object from the left overhead down to the right and in seeing the same moving object, we have two PEs which partially share their phenomenal character and partially do not share it. They share it insofar as the phenomenal character is determined also by the content. They do not share it for two reasons: firstly, the Mode is different so also the shared represented properties are given under a different Mode, under a different phenomenal character; secondly, there are other properties which are represented in a PE and are not

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29 Noë 2004 points out that being visually conscious of a property involves appreciation of certain sensory-motor dependencies of visual sensations from certain possible bodily movements, and such dependencies will be different in case you are conscious of the same property through touch. Noë's so-called enactive theory is not in principle incompatible with the Content View, rather it is a view on *how* perceptual content is determined. I will not be concerned with enactivism, but that remark about the dependence of qualitative character of perception from certain expectations connected to bodily movements, well explains the influence of the Mode on the phenomenal character.

30 Imagine you close your eyes when hearing that the object – be it a small toy plane – is moving toward you. If you are attending just to the object and its movement, the phenomenal difference before and after closing your eyes, does not seem to be reducible to the fact that you do not see colors or other visual properties anymore. There is a further element which makes a phenomenal difference: you are not *visually representing that property* anymore.

represented in the other PE. So, the difference in represented properties does determine a difference in the overall phenomenal character of the two PEs, but that fact does not account alone for the difference in phenomenal character of perceptual representation of the *common* represented properties (like: [object moving from my left overhead down to my right]). For example, the perspectival representation involved in vision, is something which does not characterize in the same way the phenomenal character of touch. You can very well represent something as round by touch, but it will not 'look' elliptical at all, not even in the sophisticated sense in which I have claimed it is legitimate to talk with respect to visual appearances<sup>31</sup>. So, the same represented property, can have a different 'look' of that very represented property. Phenomenal looks depend on Modes, besides the content, that is why they are irreducible to intentional looks.

So, the phenomenal character of PE depends both from the content and from the Mode. In particular, the Mode determines the relevant egocentric character of the PE, the '*to-me*'-component of the character.

That the phenomenal character is determined by the Mode, does not entail that we can introspectively pick out certain properties of our experience independently of the content of our PE. When we attend to our visual experience, we find out properties things seem to have, but we are also aware that they are properties things *visually seem* to us to have<sup>32</sup>. That awareness is essentially intertwined with the awareness that they are properties things seem to have '*to me*', or from my point of view, with respect to me. The egocentric aspect of PE is essentially determined by the Mode. It is by having a Mode, that PE is not just a representation of the way things are, but it is a *point of view* on the way things are<sup>33</sup>. It is to the subject, that things seem a

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31 See that Chapter, 3 1-2.

32 Lycan 2003, a pure representationalist, admits that the modes or 'guises' can be "phenomenal properties of some sort, perhaps higher-order properties" of the intentional properties of PE. But, he remarks, these guises cannot be supposed to come apart from the intentional qualia they present. Fair enough, the property of *visually seeming F* cannot be told apart from the property of seeming F in the first place, still, visually seeming F is phenomenally different from auditorily seeming F, for example. I cannot get how Lycan can maintain a *pure* representationalist view, if for him phenomenal character may depend on 'guises' in which the intentional properties are presented. The core-principle of pure representationalism is the supervenience claim 'same content → same phenomenal character'. But that does not work if 'same content + different Mode → different phenomenal character'. If something which is *not* the content (the Mode) makes a phenomenal difference, then pure representationalism must be false, full stop.

33 On that constitutive point-of-view-ness of PE, Crane rightly insists in Crane 2007, 19ff.

certain way, in a PE<sup>34</sup>. But we are never aware of a Mode as such, independently on what is given under that Mode, on the properties the PE represent things as having. So we cannot ever be 'directly' conscious of a perceptual Mode, rather we become conscious of the represented properties as given under that Mode, for example, of [square] as *visually* given. That is why the contribution of the Mode in determining phenomenal character does not entail that we are aware of intrinsic properties of our PEs independently of our PE's having the contents they have. A Mode is always a Mode for *intentional* properties to be given in experience. This is why that view is still a form of representationalism, though 'impure' or non-reductive.

The idea that phenomenal character is co-determined by content and Mode, may also account for certain features of perceptual phenomenology which seem to be non-intentional at first. A quite usual example is that of blurry vision<sup>35</sup>. As soon as you take off your lenses your visual experience becomes blurry, without but attributing that blurriness to anything in the world. So, some argue, *voilà* a property we are aware of in visual experience, which does not belong to its representational content, namely, to the ways PE represents the perceived world as being. Since blurriness is not attributed to anything perceived, it must be a phenomenal property of the experience itself: a *quale*.

Now, that property could be rather accounted for as a property of the Mode, namely, blurry is the Mode through which your PE represents the world. The *vision* is blurry, not the world, according to the PE. You do not perceive your own vision, but the visual Mode immediately contributes to your 'blurry' phenomenology in such a way that you come-to-take the seen world not as blurry, rather as 'blurrily' seen by you. So, only an *impure* representationalism can handle cases like blurriness.

Since your conscious PE involves an awareness of the Mode besides the conscious entertainment of the content<sup>36</sup>, the experienced blurriness rests on the Visual Mode

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34 As Crane 2007, 22, remarks, impure representationalism is more plausible than pure representationalism because "impure representationalism accommodate the way in which the 'seeming' itself can enter into the phenomenal character of the experience". Within the framework of impure representationalism, the irreducibility of phenomenal look to intentional/evidential look can be accommodated, without need of committing to *qualia* (Block, Shoemaker, Peacocke), on the one hand, but also without need of reducing the phenomenology of visually representing certain properties to the very properties represented (Tye, Dretske, Stalnaker).

35 See Bach 1997, Boghossian and Velleman 1989, Baldwin 1990, Dretske 2003, Crane 2006.

36 It is important to emphasize that consciously entertaining a content and being aware of the Mode under which that content is given, are two inseparable and intertwined elements of a conscious PE.

rather than on special *qualia* as primary objects of awareness. Blurriness is not a represented property, it is a feature that characterizes the Mode of representing, namely the visual vehicle of perceptual information, and that feature of the Mode is reflected in phenomenology<sup>37</sup>. So such a phenomenon does not speak against representationalism as such, at the very least it speaks against *pure* representationalism, according to which the represented properties exhaust the phenomenal character of PE.

So, impure representationalism is phenomenologically adequate, and is compatible with the transparency of PE. In attending to your PE you always find out the properties things are represented as having, but in experiencing you are conscious that represented properties are under a Mode, where that Mode contributes to shape the distinctive phenomenology of your PE.

This view is different both from pure representationalism about phenomenal character, on the one hand, and from *qualia*-realism, on the other. By *qualia*-realism I mean the view that in PE we are aware of intrinsic properties of our own experiences, something like a 'mental paint' (Block 2003), or nameless 'appearance-properties' (Shoemaker 2006, Thau 2002)<sup>38</sup>. Pure representationalism does not do justice to certain fundamental phenomenological features of PE, *qualia*-realism does not do justice to transparency of PE either: PEs seem to attribute intrinsic properties to things, exactly those properties we are thematically aware of as soon as we introspectively attend to our own PEs. Moreover, *qualia*-realism is unsatisfactory in explaining the intimate, seemingly non-arbitrary connection between the

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You are not aware of the Mode as a *quale*, as an entity, rather your consciously entertaining a content under a certain Mode, puts you in a position to immediately and non-inferentially know that it is under that Mode, that you are entertaining that content. You would never introspectively pick out the Mode, if that Mode was not a Mode for a determinate content to be perceptually given to you in experience. The irreducibility of the Mode-consciousness to the content-consciousness does not deny that perceptual consciousness and perceptual phenomenology are *essentially* intentional.

- 37 Besides the appeal to the Mode, a further important way of rejecting blurry vision as an evidence against representationalism, is pointing out that PE may represent properties of the channels and states of the perceiver as well. For example, the property [blurry] could be represented by the PE as a bad state of acuity of the visual Mode in the actual circumstance. That consideration is compatible with the appeal to the Mode, it is not alternative to it. For representationalist treatments of the case of blurry vision, see Dretske 2000, Lycan 2003, Tye 2002.
- 38 Under that label (*qualia*-realism) I mean to subsume any view which explains perceptual looks in terms of the production of a certain *quale* the subject becomes aware of, where that *quale* can be picked out independently on the content of the PE and/or on the potential judgments the subject could make on the basis of that PE. See Pettit 2003.

phenomenology of PE and its intentionality<sup>39</sup>.

Impure, Mode-based representationalism accounts for the egocentric character of PE by appeal to the Mode, so it does justice to the point-of-view-ness, or the '*to-me* component' of experiencing. On the other side, that view also accounts for transparency and the essentially intentional nature of phenomenal character itself. Indeed, the properties we find in introspection are the properties things are represented as having, though from my point of view and under a distinctive Mode<sup>40</sup>.

#### 1.4 *From Content-externalism to Phenomenal Externalism?*

##### 1.4.1 *If content is not in the Head, where are Qualia?*

We have been arguing that the phenomenal character of PE supervenes on perceptual content *plus* the distinctive perceptual Mode under which that content is given in PE. Perceptual Content is wide insofar as it is object-dependent, it is a *de re* Content. What about perceptual content, *i.e.* the properties the Object is represented as having? Is it narrow or wide? Representationalism about phenomenal character is generally committed to content-externalism<sup>41</sup>. The represented properties – the content – may depend on factors external to the psycho-physical constitution of the individual perceiver, so that two micro-physical twins can in principle differ in the representational contents of their PEs: such contents are called 'wide'.

We will deal later with the issue of how mental states like PEs may come to acquire and possess the content they possess. In any case, we may already legitimately assume that the content of our PEs must somehow depend on the evolution of our perceptual systems in a given environment, on the survivor-and adaptational value

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39 Also Fregean views on phenomenal content (Chalmers 2004, 2006, Thompson 2003), as we will see soon, have problems in positing an internal connection between phenomenal character and the properties it represents.

40 Tye 1995, 134-7 argues that pure representationalism is the *simplest* explanation of why a change in phenomenal character always involves a respective change in content: because they are one and the same indeed. Impure representationalism seems to me the simplest explanation of why phenomenal character and content are so intimately coordinated, on the one side, *and* of why each sensory modality has an additional phenomenological salience which does not only depend on which property is represented, but also on *how* the property is represented.

41 You can be representationalist about phenomenal properties and content-internalist. You need to hold that your PE has *only* phenomenal content, namely, a content which just supervenes on the phenomenal character of the individual perceiver. It is hard, though, to individuate a set of veridicality conditions of your PEs which would not change by changing deep causal facts about the perceiver-environment relation, about the properties that systematically cause this or that experience, and so on. On phenomenal content, see Kriegel 2002, Horgan and Tienson 2002, Chalmers 2004, 2006.



associated with our ability to detect certain environmental properties<sup>42</sup>. So, the reasons why a certain (type of) perceptual state represents the properties it represents, are outside our phenomenological accessibility. These reasons go back to causal and evolutionary relations between certain types of states and certain environmental properties. Nonetheless, we can immediately access the content of our PEs *in virtue* of PEs having a phenomenal character. So the phenomenal character somehow 'tracks' the represented properties and makes them accessible. That basic fact may be explained by considering that the conscious character of PE is also an outcome of evolution. Our capability of *consciously* entertaining a content must have grown out of our capability to possess contentful mental states at all, so that, as an unsurprising consequence, conscious perceptual experience tracks and 'traces' perceptual contents, making us conscious of them, at least conscious of *a part* of them<sup>43</sup>. A conscious information may be used many ways, far beyond the context of its acquisition. The content of a certain PE depends on the function of the type the state is a token of, and representational functions, as any other proper functions, are acquired by evolution<sup>44</sup>. So, not only is the Content object-involving, but also the content (represented properties) is environment-dependent in that broader, historical sense.

Now, if content also depends on external factors, there may well be elements and/or layers of content which are not present in phenomenology. So phenomenology makes content subjectively available, on the one hand, but may not exhaust its informational richness, on the other.

In any case, inasmuch as phenomenal character makes content available to us, a representationalist view of phenomenal character, even an 'impure' one, faces the 'problem' of phenomenal externalism. If phenomenal character is made out of intentional properties, then since intentional properties are wide phenomenal character is also wide thereby. Phenomenal externalism seems *prima facie* a 'problem' because the way it feels, the what-it-is-like dimension of my conscious experiences *seems* to be a purely subjective matter, an intrinsic, private feature of them, hardly dependent on external factors. It intuitively seems that I could be

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42 This is the most plausible naturalistic story about how we are endowed with perceptual systems at all.

43 There are also unconscious and unnoticed contents in our perception, as we have seen. See chapter II, Section 1.2.

44 See the next Chapter, for further details of that view.

hallucinating everything, I could be a brain in a vat, I could even have had a totally different evolutionary history, yet the conscious character of my actual experiences could be identical, provided that I am in that psychological, internal state.

Let us sum up. If content is wide, then it does not just supervene on individual subjects but also depends on the environment: two perfectly identical twins located in different environments could have PEs with different contents. Here I have assumed that content is wide, a view which I will try to argue for later. Now I will focus on a further question. The further question is: even if content was wide, what about the phenomenal character, which is determined by content *plus* Mode? Would it be wide or narrow? Does content-externalism entail phenomenal character-externalism? Or can an impure representationalist block that entailment? The answer is No, there is no way of blocking the entailment. To give up phenomenal externalism you must give up either representationalism or content externalism, or both.

If perceptual Content consists of veridicality-conditions, the properties which compose it together with the Object are physical features of the environment normally detected by our perceptual systems. If an S's PE is veridical and has [O's being F] as its Content, then F (the content) is the very physical property instantiated in S's environment by the perceived object O. Now, the phenomenal character of a PE is made out of intentional properties as egocentrically given under a Mode, and for an impure representationalist, the intentional properties determine it.

Let us call *qualia* – on a very liberal and generic use of this controversial term – the properties which make up the phenomenal character of a PE. Now:

- 1) content is wide (content externalism)
- 2) *qualia* either (a) are the content or (b) supervene on it (representationalism)<sup>45</sup>
- 3) *qualia* are wide (phenomenal externalism)

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<sup>45</sup> The case (a) is called *strong* representationalism, the case (b) is called *weak* representationalism (see Tye 2012). A case of same content with different phenomenal characters would refute both (a) and (b), a case of different content with same phenomenal character would refute only (a). If phenomenal properties are *identical* with intentional properties, then the implication must be bi-conditional. If phenomenal properties only supervene on intentional properties, it may still be the case that the same phenomenal property could be determined by different intentional properties. As noted above, even if an object-dependent Content determines phenomenal character, that very phenomenal character may be had by a PE with different Content, for example a PE of an another indistinguishable but numerically different object, or even an objectless hallucination with the same represented properties.

So, assuming content externalism and representationalism, phenomenal externalism must follow. Maybe another assumption would be needed, in case one opts for 2b (supervenience rather than identity), the assumption that: “if a mental property supervenes on another wide mental property, it must be a wide mental property”. In any case, that assumption is really difficult to question. If it is true that given content C the phenomenal character P is given thereby, then C's depending on external factors entails P's depending on the very same external factors<sup>46</sup>.

To repeat the above point, impure representationalism is also committed to the thesis that the content (co)determines the phenomenal character of PE. Indeed, if the content C given under the Mode M determines phenomenal character, it suffices that content C is sensitive to external factors for phenomenal character being sensitive to external factors accordingly. In other words, even if the Mode was narrow – shared by any intrinsic duplicates across different environments – the couple [Mode + content] would be wide anyway, provided that a constituent of the couple, the content, is wide. The very notion of 'wide', as employed by externalists, is that of a property's being determined *also* by external factors, not that of being determined *only* by external factors. So both pure and impure representationalism seem to be committed to phenomenal externalism, at least those versions of them which are committed to content-externalism. Phenomenal externalism is so counter-intuitive, *prima facie* at least, that is often considered as a positive reason for rejecting the views which entail it. For a content-externalist, it is even worse: it would be that of *separating* content and phenomenal character and so making their seemingly intimate connection a mystery or a systematic mistake. Namely, it is the strategy of denying representationalism, even the impure version of it. But we have seen above that perceptual introspection reveals intentional properties in the first place, and that we access perceptual content in virtue of perceptions having the phenomenal

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46 For that entailment from 1) and 2) to 3), see Byrne/Tye 2006. If you want to reject *qualia* externalism, you must reject either content externalism or representationalism, or both. To see the incompatibility, take Mario and Franco with phenomenally different experiences. We can construct two intrinsic duplicates of them, two different environment which make identical the intentional content of their experiences. So, if content is external and qualia are internal, representationalism is false. If representationalism is true and qualia are internal, content is not external. As Ellis 2012, 2, straightforwardly puts it “if experience's phenomenal character is exhausted by its representational content, and if representational content is externally individuated, then phenomenal character itself is externally individuated”.

character they have. So, phenomenal character must systematically track the content – the represented properties – and the best explanation of that tracking is that phenomenal properties just are the properties things are represented as having by the subject under a certain Mode.

#### 1.4.2 *Inverted Earth and Inverted Spectrum*

Another powerful argument usually advanced against representationalism, is the Inverted Spectrum-Hypothesis<sup>47</sup>, which purports to depict a scenario of *qualia*-inversion without illusion. Two subjects' PEs (in that world or in another possible world) could have some phenomenal properties inverted, such that the experience caused by instances of color A in S<sup>1</sup> are phenomenally the same as the experiences caused by instances of color B in S<sup>2</sup>, and vice-versa. S<sup>1</sup> and S<sup>2</sup> would perfectly understand each other, they would be apt to detect instances of A and B in their common environment, their perceptual phenomenology would successfully (though differently) track different properties, their beliefs about colors would be justified ('that is blue'), finally the intentional contents of their PEs of real A-color would be the same despite the phenomenal property of that experience of A undergone by S<sup>1</sup> would be the same as the phenomenal property of an experience of B undergone by S<sup>2</sup>, and vice-versa. As Block puts it, IS opens a scenario where “things we agree are red look to you the way things we agree are green look to me” (1996, 511). Here 'look' is meant phenomenally rather than epistemically or intentionally, of course.

So, if Inverted Spectrum is theoretically possible or at least consistently conceivable, then phenomenal properties could be associated with different intentional properties, in such a way that the first cannot simply supervene on the second, much the less they cannot be identical with the second. So representationalism, be it weak or strong, is false.

Many philosophers reject that hypothesis as inconsistent or impossible<sup>48</sup>. Anyway, without entering into the details of that difficult and multifaceted debate, I want to consider a famous *intrapersonal* version of the IS-hypothesis, which does not have the many problems the classic *interpersonal* version has. The intrapersonal IS is at the core of a well-known thought experiment proposed by Block, the so-called

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47 See Shoemaker 1982, Palmer 1999.

48 For example, Dennett 1991.

Inverted Earth experiment (IE from now on).

As it is well-known, the Twin-Earth thought-experiment was firstly introduced by Putnam 1975 to argue in favor of meaning externalism. In Twin Earth all is like Earth apart from the fact that a liquid XYZ, superficially indistinguishable from water but with a different molecular structure, occupies the place of water, and in Twin-Earth's language, people call XYZ “water”. Putnam brilliantly showed that Mario- and Twin-Mario's utterances about “water” would have different meanings in Earth and in Twin-Earth, so 'meanings ain't in the head', rather they are sensitive to causal, external factors. So, at least certain mental contents are 'wide', not supervenient on individual psychologies and neuro-anatomies: they need not keep constant across intrinsic duplicates. Later on, wideness has been extended to other kinds of contents, like object-dependent, *de re* thoughts and beliefs (McDowell 1984, Burge 1979, 1991), memory-contents (Burge 1991, Davidson 1982) or more generally to the contents of propositional attitudes (Stich 1980, Fodor 1980).

Block (1990, 1996) uses a similar thought experiment to argue not only for the wideness of perceptual content – which he accepts anyway – but also for the narrowness of qualitative character, as well as for the consequent irreducibility of (narrow) phenomenal character to (wide) content. In short, IE is directed against representationalism in the first place. Here is a version of the experiment:

In Inverted Earth (IE) things have complementary colors to the colors of their counterparts on Earth. The sky is yellow, grass is red, ripe tomatoes are green, and so on. The population of IE visually detects these properties and undergo experiences with the respective intentional contents, so people form perceptual beliefs that grass is red, the sky is yellow and the like. Although, IE-people have an Inverted Language, so they call the color of their sky “blue” and the color of their grass “green”, just like us.

A night, when you are asleep you are kidnapped by a team of scientists and transported in IE. Before you wake up, they put behind your retinas inverting lenses that shift your visual experience from a color to its complementary color. Now, when you see the yellow sky in IE, your experience is like your normal experiences of the sky you are acquainted to on Earth, so you think and say that the sky is blue just like the

people of IE say. You do not even notice any difference from the day before<sup>49</sup>. If your experience is *wrong* unknown to you (after all, the sky is yellow, you see it blue just because of your inverting lenses, you do not notice you are wrong only because of a linguistic coincidence, IE-people call 'blue' the yellow that you mistake for blue), one can think that in the long run the intentional content both of your PE's and of your utterances about colors would 'attune' with those of IE-people. By keeping in long and repeated causal contact with the environmental properties of IE, your mental states would finally shift their original intentional content. Now, there is a strong intuition that your *qualia* would *not* change accordingly, so IE-thought-experiment shows that the phenomenal character of PE cannot just be either identical with- or supervenient on intentional content. The first can keep constant through change of the second. IE-experiment has a basic advantage on the usual hypothesis of Inverted Spectrum: it is a science-fiction case of course, but nothing seems to make its theoretical possibility suspicious. On the contrary, the hypothesis of Inverted Spectrum as such – the idea that my experience of yellow objects 'feels like' your experience of blue objects and vice-versa, but that phenomenal difference does not make any intentional difference, neither perceptual nor linguistic – has been criticized as inconsistent, as an empirical or a metaphysical impossibility<sup>50</sup>. Once your perceptual contents are attuned with your new environment and community in IE, you may remember what the sky was like years ago, during a period before your (unknown) transportation to IE. So, your memory would remind you to an experience which is just like the experience you have now when you look at the yellow sky. So, that reference to your memories perfectly shows that the 'blue' phenomenal character is introspectively constant – we assume your memory is well-working – but that very same type of experience had the [blue] property in the past and has the [yellow] property now, as its intentional content. Therefore,

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49 The scientists also pigment your skin so that it looks to you as before, despite the presence of the inverted lenses.

50 Block 1990 had already proposed an *intrapersonal* version of Inverted Spectrum. Inverted lenses are put on Mario's eyes. Then, he adapts, come to use the language of the community, even if he remember the past (the sky looks now as the lemons used to look before). Then, he has an amnesia about the past. Since it is implausible that the *qualia* are re-inverted just because of the amnesia, then he still has inverted *qualia*. This version, as often is the Inverted Spectrum hypothesis, is an example of *qualia* inversion despite intentional constancy. On the contrary, Inverted Earth is an example of intentional change despite phenomenal constancy. The result is the same: that of telling apart phenomenal properties and intentional properties.

representationalism about phenomenal character must be false. That is the core of the argument.

The argument is a way of making the idea conceivable that our distinctive experience of a property A (ex. [green]) may have been typically caused by the property B (ex. [yellow]), so a phenomenal property A could have represented the objective property B by tracking it and being related to it with a systematic causal relation. That possibility undermines representationalism because it is incompatible with phenomenal properties being the very properties that PE attributes to perceived objects as intrinsic properties of them. For a representationalist, all phenomenally identical experiences must attribute the same objective properties to the perceived objects. If that was the case, the possibility that another phenomenal property could have represented the same objective property should be ruled out a priori. But these scenarios (IS and IE) seem to consistently allow for that possibility.

#### 1.4.3 - *A Representationalist Reply*

The IE thought experiment may be used to argue against functionalism or against reductive, 'pure' representationalism about phenomenal character. Often representationalism is associated with functionalism, so *qualia* are taken to be functionalizable *qua* intentional, or intentional *qua* functionalizable.

I am not concerned with functionalism here, but only with representationalism and content-externalism. The three are related but different issues. My critical target will rather be the idea that: given content-externalism, if IE is possible then representationalism must be false.

There are some basic assumptions in the very depiction of the IE-scenario provided by Block:

- 1) The intentional properties of my visual experience will *change* through a long-term exposition to the IE-environment.
- 2) My PEs would *become* veridical despite my having inverting lenses on my retinas
- 3) The phenomenal character of my PE will *not* change even through long-term exposition to IE-environment

I want to argue that these assumptions are far from being obvious, rather they are specially compelling only for people who are already anti-representationalist, and/or

internalist about *qualia*. Take away one of 1-3 and the IE-scenario does not show anything relevant anymore. So if we have reasons for rejecting 1 or 2 or 3, or if we just have no compelling reasons for accepting all of them, then we have no reasons to endorse the conclusion that *qualia* cannot be intentional properties.

Let us begin with assumption 1).

You come to IE with a perceptual apparatus, and a brain, and a global cognitive system, which are designed for you – as a member of your species – to successfully cope with *your* environment. The basic cognitive functions of yours, at least those which are phylogenetically fixed rather than acquired through individual learning, are relational functions which can be picked out only by reference to the environment they are supposed to relate you to. That is the environment in which they have been selected, so the one you live in insofar as it is common to the one your ancestors used to live in.

Now, it is controversial whether, and to what extent, visual perception is sensitive to learning, other background knowledge and cognitively higher information (memory, expectations, reasoning, and so on). But there seems to be evidence for that at least color-perception, as depending from the so-called Early Visual System, is cognitively impenetrable and informationally encapsulated in Fodor's sense<sup>51</sup>. Thus, color-perception is a wired-in proper function of a relatively independent module, so its contents are not influenced by other acquired knowledge or individual learning. Now, if that is the case, the type-state your visual system occupies when you see a blue object in normal conditions, is *supposed* to represent [blue], no matter if a token of that state is caused by something yellow, no matter if a token of that state is caused by anything else in another Earth you are knowingly or unknowingly transported in, no matter if a token of that state comes-to-be normally or systematically caused by another property, in an environment which is not the one in which your visual apparatus had been selected because of what it did *there*. So, if color-perception is a wired-in proper representational function and wired-in proper representational functions are species-specific and acquired by selection within a given environment, therefore your mental state normally caused by [blue] on Earth will *continue* to represent [blue] in IE, even after long exposition, and independently

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51 See Fodor 1983, Pylyshyn 2006. For that reply, see also Tye 1998, Lycan 2003, 27.



on linguistic factors and social mutual understanding. Provided that your belief-contents, your memories and other intentional states can change, all that would not change your visual contents like color-representation. So, there is no visual (at least chromatic) 'content -attunement' in IE, despite the fact that you and IE-people understand each other and communicate. You will be wrong, at least perceptually wrong, about the color of the IE sky.

Your perceptual states will ever indicate the presence of [blue] when you see instances of yellow, even though you call that instance "blue", even though that instance of yellow wrongly looks to be blue to you due to the lenses. There *is* illusion then, no matter if you or others do not notice it. If you suddenly take off your lenses, then you veridically see the IE-sky as it is, yellow. So, the intentional content of your PEs does not change either the day after the transportation or twenty years later.

Thus: the argument aims at showing that in IE, in the long run, there will be intentional shift of your color-PEs without qualitative shift of them. But it is far from obvious that there would be intentional shift in the first place. There is an empirical basis to think that it would not be the case.

Assumption 2) is connected to assumption 1). According to 2), inverting lenses do not prevent your PE of the sky in IE from being veridical, at least in the long run. You look at the yellow sky and it looks blue to you. Your internal state is that which is supposed to occur in presence of blue, but there is nothing blue before you. You mistake yellow for blue: lenses deceive you, rather than saving you from a mistake. That your systematic color-deception saves you from social isolation in IE, is another matter. Even in the long run, your mutual understanding with IE-people rests on a coincidence, it is a misunderstanding. Your mental state represents what it is supposed to represent in normal conditions, but the presence of inverting lenses in your organism makes your conditions abnormal. Lenses make you see things *other* than they are. That remains true wherever you are transported, independently on the time of your permanence in your destination<sup>52</sup>.

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52 Another empirical possibility, is that the effect on the lenses would be compensated in a while, so that the sky will begin to appear yellow (as it is), the grass red, and so on. On that case, the subject would suspect that either he is dreaming, or he is not on earth, or he is hallucinating, or something like that. Adaptation to strange, color-distorting spectacles has been experimented, with surprising results, by Kohler 1964. He gave to the subjects goggles with vertically-bisected lenses, each of which had the left part blue and the right part yellow. After less than 50 days the subjects

The key-point is that 'normal conditions' – from which intentional content depends – are relative to the environment where the perceptual system has been selected, not to the actual environment. Making conditions 'normal' in another environment through putting inverting lenses and waiting a lot of time, does not help to change the original content. The content of your lenses-influenced PEs is wrong and will be ever such. Take them off after ten years and you will see things as they are.

Of course, my PEs in IE make me individuate objects, contours, movements, and every visible feature whose detection depends on color-detection. My behavior would be successful. Moreover, I perfectly communicate with IE-people. These conjoined facts make us think that everything is all right with my PEs, but it is a false intuition: my PEs will be veridical in many other respects, besides allowing me to speak IE-language. But they will not be veridical with respect to color-representation.

Again, it is far from obvious that there is intentional change at all. On the contrary, it is plausible to suppose that no repeated causal contact with IE will magically make inverting lenses into a virtuous means for turning my deceiving PEs into veridical PEs.

By critically discussing assumptions 1) and 2) I have shown that there is a plausible view on the content of color-perception, which does not entail the supposed intentional change over time. But some could refuse the 'teleo-functional' account of perceptual content, and take these replies to be *ad hoc*. On another theory of content which grounds content in actual causal co-variation or in anything else, for example, these replies would not be available. Still, they are a possible way out: maybe it could also be argued that such a teleo-functional view on visual content appears plausible also because it 'saves' representationalism – which is a plausible option for many other, independent reasons – from objections based on IE thought-experiments. Alternatively, it suffices to question Assumption 3 for blocking the anti-representationalist conclusion from IE-scenarios. Even if Assumption 1 and 2 were true or inevitable, if Assumption 3 is not inevitable then the argument would be

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recovered their previous color-detection skills, their ability to detect and categorize colors. As soon as they had the goggles removed, they had a complete distortion just opposite to the distortion they had had as soon as they put them. Why could a similar adaptation to to-complementary shifting lenses not happen also on IE? That is an empirical issue, but it could undermine the very presuppositions that are at work in constructing the IE-scenario.

undermined anyway. Assumption 3 is that there would not be any qualitative change in your experiences, before and (a long time) after your trip. Indeed, even if there would be intentional change thanks to time and lenses (Assumptions 1 and 2), it is to be argued that there would not be qualitative change. In fact, in case there was both intentional and qualitative change, then not only representationalism is not refuted, rather it is reinforced by the experiment.

What does support the Assumption 3? Firstly, an internalist intuition about the phenomenal character. Your internal state when you see yellow on IE is the same as that you normally used to have on Earth before blue-instances, so your related experiences must be qualitatively the same. That intuition is undeniably strong and hard to get rid of, but we do not have to forget that it is already hidden in assumption 3, so it cannot be taken as a *conclusion* of the argument. If you think – or do not a priori rule out – that phenomenal character can be partially determined from external matters, you may well *not* accept that the phenomenal properties of your PE's of the sky are constant across transportation, especially if you have accepted that there is intentional change.

For a representationalist, *qualia* are the properties your experience represents things as having (given under a Mode, for an impure representationalist). They are the properties that would be actually had by perceived objects, if the PE was veridical. Now, *if* the content of the your PE changes after ten years on IE, so that your PEs of the sky really come to represent it as yellow (as it is), then the *qualia* must have changed accordingly. Otherwise, the *qualia* of your PE could not be the properties perceived things are represented as having. Indeed, your PE before the trip could not represent a different property from the PEs long after your trip, if the before-PE and the after-PE had the same *qualia*. If it does seem a question-begging reply, it is because it is such. Now, the experiment does not show that *qualia* do not change, it rather *postulates* it, therefore it is no less question-begging. But the burden of showing that representationalism is false should be borne by the argument against it. Certainly a representationalist cannot be asked to concede it in advance.

Even if we concede that the intentional properties change (Assumption 1 and 2), all the experiment shows is that intentional change across Earths entails phenomenal externalism, namely that content-externalism entails phenomenal externalism, it does

not show that *qualia* are not intentional properties (unless one assumes that *qualia* must be internalistically determined)<sup>53</sup>.

Are there any substantive arguments, besides that internalist intuition, which support the view that *qualia* would not change over time? Block 1990, 1996 argues for unchanging *qualia* across different Earths by appeal to what your visual memory would be after transportation.

For example, if you look at the yellow sky at your birthday on IE, you may remember how looking at the sky used to feel to you a long time ago. Given that your memory is working well, your experiences would introspectively seem the same to you, so their phenomenal character must be the same despite their difference in content ([blue], [yellow]).

However, such an appeal to memory and comparative introspective judgements presupposes that phenomenal memory is reliable across Earth-to-IE transportation. But if phenomenal character was externally determined, then we *should* conclude, instead, that such a memory is deceiving. So, the absolute reliability of phenomenal memory across transportation is intuitively irresistible only on the basis of an internalist intuition about phenomenal character! Tye 1998 questions the strength of that intuition by firstly pointing out that also classical, Putnamian externalism about belief- and thought-contents involves the *prima facie* counter-intuitive abandonment of the first-person authority of memory. If you move to Twin Earth for a long time, your utterance will change on content: “water is drinkable” would come to mean: XYZ is drinkable. So, suppose you think that you did drink much more water at your tenth birthday than you are drinking now at your birthday. Unknown to you, you are thinking that you drank much more water then than XYZ now, so you would be deceived about your own past in thinking that you drank the same stuff then and now. So, despite intuitions, memory of our own past may be tricky for a content-externalist. Why could what happens for propositional memory not happen for experiential memory? As Tye argues, memory-contents must actually be wide,

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53 Note that the *qualia*-externalism involved in historically-based teleological views of color-content, is an externalism which is compatible with invariability of *qualia* under transportation. Once an individual has born, given its evolutionary history as a member of its species, you can displace it wherever you want, for how much time you want, a very basic layer of its perceptual contents (including colors) will remain unchanged. What matters for color-contents are not the actual causal connections, rather the causal connection of the species with the environment the species has evolved in.

namely, not necessarily shared by intrinsic duplicates: a native inhabitant of Twin Earth remembers her past drinking spree of XYZ, you on Earth, without interplanetary transportation, remember your own drinking spree of water. That is evident without putting magic trips out. Both of you utter “I had a big drinking spree of water”, you are micro-physical duplicates, yet your thought and utterance is about a water drinking spree, her thought and utterance is about her XYZ drinking spree. So, external factors matter for memory-contents<sup>54</sup>: *what* is remembered is external to you. Change the past, and your memory becomes inaccurate, other things being equal.

Now, we could suppose that phenomenal memory works a similar way across transportation and long-term permanence. I remember that the sky used to look blue to me just like now. However – a phenomenal externalist could say – it is a mistake, because now the sky looks *yellow*. That color is yellow indeed, I just call it “blue” because I am an IE-language speaker. I notice no difference, but there is a difference. Block replies, not without reason, that such an appeal to memory-externalism neglects a very strong intuition on privileged access and authority of introspection, on the one hand, and “*assumes* that as far as memory goes, phenomenal character is representational content” (1996, 45), on the other hand. That is true, but it also holds the other way around: the very intuition that *qualia* would not change under transportation and long-term permanence, as memory allegedly shows, just *assumes* that phenomenal character is not representational content as long as the latter is externally determined. Likewise it assumes that phenomenal memory is internally determined.

Therefore, it seems that the IE-experiment does not show that representationalism is false, unless one already has anti-representationalist intuitions!<sup>55</sup> Perhaps it helps to make these intuitions explicit.

In any case, the IE-experiment seems to show that if you are a content-externalist and a representationalist, you must be externalist about phenomenal character and/or

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<sup>54</sup> On externalism about memory-contents, see Davidson 1982, Burge 1998.

<sup>55</sup> Note that also *belief*-internalism, before Putnam/Burge arguments, was a very compelling intuition. Its strength has been gradually dismissed by objective the force of the arguments against it, but the removal of a natural, strong intuition is not sudden, it needs to be metabolized. Phenomenal internalism seems to be even more recalcitrant to negative arguments, yet that is not a reason for its truth. In general, the first-person authority on our own mental states seems absolute to us, but that is false, and accepting that falsity may be not easy at all at first.

about phenomenal memory.

It may be still replied that phenomenal character cannot shift without that being unnoticed by the subject. But the very experiment supposes a *long-term* and gradual change of content. Even if we accept that an unnoticed sudden shift of phenomenal character is inconceivable, that does not prevent the phenomenal character from *gradually* shifting without being noticed, in such a way that this gradual shift perturbs the reliability of phenomenal memory. In addition, if the phenomenal character changed gradually, that change would be no more mysterious than the gradual change of content from [blue] to [yellow]. As Tye 1998 notes, the privileged access that characterizes perceptual consciousness holds with respect to the *present* states, to what it is like to have that experience now, it does not hold also with respect to the past states, to what it used to be like to have that remotely past experience. If you have independent reasons for representationalism, you have room for rejecting the absolute authority of phenomenal memory, in case you accept that there is an intentional shift after transportation to IE.

A reason why this strategy finds our resistance, may be a naïve idea of phenomenal memory as of a sort of inner picture you store and look at again when you remember the experience. That “photography-model” of phenomenal memory, as Tye opportunely calls it, may on its own depend, I would suggest, on a perception-model of perceptual introspection. If introspecting one's own experience amounts to seeing it with an inner eye or something like that, then remembering your past experience amounts to somehow recalling to the mind that picture-like inner image and “seeing” it again. I do not even want to enter into the intricate discussion of which model of introspection best fits the empirical data on visual memory and other philosophical constraints; nonetheless, I want to point out that if the inner-eye model is a problematic model of introspection, the photograph -model of phenomenal memory is even less compatible with evidence about the way visual memory works. If we consider that phenomenal memory is a reconstruction which starts from poor cues and instructions and is filled also through using actual beliefs and knowledge, then it becomes less implausible that a our access to our past experiences could mislead us. All that considered, a representationalist can take it that *if* intentional content changes after a long time on IE, *then* also my phenomenal image of the past on Earth, now

inaccurately represents the earthly sky as *yellow*, even in the case where my phenomenal memory inaccurately made me take the experiences as phenomenally indistinguishable.

To sum up this cursory discussion of the IE-experiment: For a representationalist (who is a content-externalist) there is more than one way to resist the argument based on the IE-experiment. She may reject Assumption 1) and hold that there is no intentional change over time, because color-contents are teleo-functionally fixed so they are insensitive to trips, lenses, learning, belief- and language-change. She may also question Assumption 2 on the same basis: in being teleo-functionally fixed, color-contents are also insensitive to the presence of inverting lenses: the internal state I am in as I look at the sky on IE, is a state I am supposed to have before blue things, not before yellow things, full stop. As a consequence, there is no attunement of perceptual content, no learning or socializing that may ever compensate the deceiving effect of inverting lenses. She may question Assumption 3 and reject the idea that phenomenal character does not change over time after transportation. Note that it suffices that one of the Assumptions is false – specially 1) and 2) – that the experiment ceases to threaten representationalism at all. Either intentional content does not change, then phenomenal character's not changing is what a representationalist would predict to be the case, or phenomenal character does change with intentional content, so it is again something a representationalist would predict. However, the representationalist needs to choose a unique line of defense: Neither 1) nor 3) seem absolutely compelling, but at least one of them must be true if representationalism is true. Indeed, rejecting both of them would entail that intentional content does not change whereas phenomenal character does change. Paradoxically, that would be an anti-representationalist conclusion!

Although, what matters here is that the IE-experiment does not entail at all the negation of representationalism, because it is based on hidden assumptions a representationalist would have the right to deny. Actually, presupposing that phenomenal character keeps constant means committing to phenomenal internalism, so to anti-representationalism if you are content-externalist. But presupposing that is begging the question. Likewise, rejecting that the phenomenal character remains the same just because it is throughout intentional, just begs the question in favor of

representationalism. That just means that the IE-experiment *as such* is neutral about the issue of representationalism, since it becomes a case against representationalism only by surreptitiously adding to it anti-representationalist assumptions. In that case, the argument is question-begging.

A positive lesson we can draw from the IE-experiment, is that content-externalism is in tension with phenomenal internalism, even if it is not in tension with representationalism. But *no* argument based on IE consistently speaks against phenomenal externalism, as we have seen<sup>56</sup>.

Until this point, I have argued that even if the IE-scenario was possible, there would be available interpretations of it which are perfectly compatible with representationalism: either there is both qualitative and intentional change, or there is neither a qualitative nor intentional shift, under transportation to IE.

Now, I want to point out that there are reasons for rejecting the possibility of the IE-scenario, reasons which may involve a parallel rejection of the more classical Inverted Spectrum Scenarios.

Both IS and IE depict a situation where there is a *qualia*-inversion without illusion (IS) or an intentional inversion without qualitative inversion (IE), despite the fact that everything else is perfectly identical: communication, language, belief-formation, recognitional abilities, behavior, and so forth.

Supposing that on IE there are sunrises, sunsets and nights, we need to suppose that the color of the sky gradually changes according to the Twin-Sun illumination, in such a way that everything else will change its apparent color. Even if color-constancy holds also on IE (better: just because of it), the apparent color of I-Earthly things will change with variations of illumination, so the reciprocal *relations* between the colors of things will continuously change accordingly. But there are reasons to doubt that every behavior and belief directly or indirectly involving colors could be identical despite such a color-inversion. The many possible relations between colors across changes of illumination are likely to be not *perfectly* preserved

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<sup>56</sup> Often though-experiments against phenomenal externalism just beg the question and assume phenomenal internalism within the argument. For example, Rey 1988 holds that a Brain in a Vat identical to you would have the same phenomenal character your experience has now. *So*, phenomenal character does not depend on external matters. But it is only because Rey supposes that phenomenal character is insensitive to external matters (=narrow), that he finds compelling the Brain-in-a-Vat case. On that see Lycan 2003, Tye 2010.



in a world where everything has the complementary color of the color it has on Earth. For example, the perception of the color of an object is influenced by the colors of the background and of the objects contiguous to it<sup>57</sup>. Now, we could expect that the influence of a yellow background on a red object is slightly different from the influence of a blue background on a green object, especially if we consider that influence diachronically, over time across gradual illumination-change. Change of illumination will change every relation between every color. That extraordinarily complex and 'holistic' color-representation of an IE-native's PE is likely to be not preserved *in toto* if we change each color with the respective complementary. We can expect that some judgments by natives about colors, like: “in the early morning, with that lighting-conditions, that color-shade of that surface has a hue, a brightness and a saturation which has this and that relations with the hue, brightness and saturation of that other color-shade of that other surface”, will be different from your judgement. If even *one* of these indefinitely many relations is not totally preserved, then, even with inverting-lenses, there will be a phenomenal difference between you on IE and the natives, as soon as you are transported. So even with perfect inverting lenses the IE-surrounding will not appear to you exactly as it appears to a native. Sooner or later, due to some strange judgement or behaviour toward colors, some native would suggest you to have your eyes visited by an IE-ophtalmologist. So the very possibility of the thought-experiment is undermined, despite its *prima facie* conceivability.

That objection is similar to more immediate objections which could be moved against the very possibility of an Inverted Spectrum. Invert a *quale* with another, and you will have somewhere a change in some representation within the global system of color-relations. For example, colors can be given a place within a scale from the darkest to the brightest, from the maximal to the minimal hue, from the maximal to the minimal saturation. For each shade of color you can discriminate, it will occupy a specific point in *each* of these three scales, so the discrimination-relations between

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57 Many color-illusions are built and based upon the well-known phenomenon of influence-by-contiguity: for example, the Checkerboard Illusion, among others (see Adelson 1995). It is remarkable, for our concerns, that these illusions generally work only with certain contiguous colors. So a locally spectrum-inverted subject is likely to be *representationally* different from a normal subject with respect to their sensitivity to certain color-illusions.

each shade of discriminable colors is throughout relational and incredibly complex<sup>58</sup>. Invert a *quale* of a darker color with the *quale* of a brighter color, and you will upset the representation of 'darker-than' and 'brighter than', if you do not want people and inverted people to judge differently about which color or shade is darker than which. But changing the 'darker-than' relation you will end up changing the saturation-relation, the hue-relation, and other represented properties thereby, so you will not have the desired scenario of *qualia*-inversion without illusion, other representational facts being equal. Each discriminable color has a point on a global space, where that point is individuated by its relations to any other points, so that you cannot arbitrarily invert two points without changing many relations between *all* other points. Conceivability of Inverted Spectrum is considered sufficient to prove the falsity of representationalism. But even if that was conceded – I have argued above that there is no compelling reason to concede it anyway – it can be argued that such a conceivability becomes more and more problematic to grant as soon as we detail our hypothesis and take its consequences seriously. In addition, according to the empirical data available about color-discrimination, which confirm its relational and 'holistic' dimension, the possibility of Inverted Spectrum seems to be definitely undermined<sup>59</sup>.

In this Section, I have broadly considered the relation between phenomenal character and representational content of PE. I have argued for an impure representationalist version of the Content View. I have considered the case of Perceptual Constancy as a possible basis for an anti-representationalist argument, and I have given a negative answer: phenomenal change involved in constant representations of sizes, shapes and

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58 See Churchland and Churchland 1997, Matthen 2005. In inverting a color with another, you will end up disrupting many other relations of similarity or dissimilarity between perceived colors.

59 According to the so-called “Opponent Process Theory” of vision, three types of color-sensitive cones are to be found on the retina, each type sensitive to different visible spectrum-wavelengths. A type of cells registers the value of incoming light on a continuum from red to green, another type on a continuum from yellow to blue, another type on a continuum from black to white. Each cell computes the ratio between the inputs from some combination of cone types (that combination varies through cell-types). Each cell has an activation level which constitutes a triplet of outputs that conjointly produce a certain value in a three-dimensional space of possible activations. That global model for the neural implementation of visual discrimination, involves that you cannot just shift a color with another without disrupting the relevant properties of the whole discrimination-system. On the Opponent Process Theory, originally proposed by Hurvich and Jameson 1957, see Churchland 2005, 2007, Pautz 2006, Byrne/Tye 2006.

colors can be accounted for in terms of represented variations (of distance, orientation, illumination). Nonetheless, a genuine look at the phenomenology involved in visual constancy shows that PEs are egocentric representations. I have argued that the egocentric *character* or PE can be only partially explained by its egocentric, subject-involving *contents*. To do justice of the point-of-view-ness or 'to-me'-component of PE's phenomenology, we need to take into account the *Mode* under which perceptual contents are given. That Mode co-determines phenomenal character: impure representationalism, which is a *tertium* between *qualia*-realism and reductive representationalism, can embed the advantages of these alternatives without inheriting their problems, especially insofar as it respects the perspectival-aspectual and the intentional-representational components of perceptual phenomenology, and accounts for their intimate relation.

In succession, I have taken into consideration the anti-representationalist arguments based on Inverted Spectrum- and Inverted Earth scenarios. I have tried to show that such arguments do not seriously threaten representationalism, since they rest on hidden assumptions which would and should not be shared by a representationalist. However, reflection on the Inverted Heart shows that, given representationalism about phenomenal character, content-externalism entails phenomenal externalism. Again, that is an objection to representationalism only if phenomenal internalism is assumed. Phenomenal internalism must be resisted though, despite its intuitive force on us.

## Section 2 – Fregean vs. Russellian Content

### 2.1 To Recap Where We Are

Perceptual experiences are states there is something it is like to be in, which represent the world. On the version of the Content View I have been arguing for, PEs' phenomenal character (the way it is like to be in them) cannot be picked out independently on their intentional content (the way they represent the world to be) which co-determines it together with their Mode. Indeed, phenomenal properties are intentional, represented properties given to the subject under a Mode. The conscious character and the intentional content of a PE content cannot be told apart<sup>60</sup>, even if

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60 That does not prevent from there being conscious states without content, or contentful states

the first is not sufficient for fully determining the second.

I have argued that Content is constituted by the perceived Object and a set of properties (the *content*) the PE attributes to that Object. Perceptual Content is a condition of satisfaction in the world for the PE: it is the way the world would be if the PE was accurate-veridical. If the perceived Object has the properties the PE attributes to it, then the PE is accurate and veridical.

I have also argued that the phenomenal properties of a PE are determined by those ways the PE represents the Object to be (*i.e.* by the *content*), on the one hand, and by the Mode under which those properties are given to the subject, on the other, but they are *not* determined by the perceived Object as such<sup>61</sup>. However, if not only the Content is wide but also the *content* (represented properties) is wide, then also the phenomenal character, as determined also by the *content*, must be wide as well. That the Content is wide on that view, is evident from the fact that it is singular and object-involving: remove the Object, or change it with another identical object, without changing the internal constitution of the subject, and the Content will change. That is what 'wide' means.

The properties the PE represents the Object as having are wide in another, historical sense. Whilst the Object is actual, what determines *which* properties a PE represents 'its' Object as having, is the function of the type of state the actual PE is a token of, where such a function is acquired evolutionarily by wired-in mechanisms of our perceptual apparatuses<sup>62</sup>. Now, if the representational power of our internal states depends on past causal connections between members of our species and certain environmental properties, therefore the represented properties must be wide, namely, they cannot supervene on the intrinsic constitution of the actual perceiver, rather they diachronically supervene on the environment in which the selection of these

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without consciousness. I think that both of these cases hold.

61 So, perceptual experiences are individuated by their respectively perceived Object, their Contents are also individuated by their perceived Object, but their phenomenal characters are not individuated by their perceived Object (so, nor are they individuated by their object-dependent Content), rather their phenomenal character is individuated together by the *content* and by the Mode, where the *content* is the set of properties the Object is represented as having.

62 As I will argue later, only the *basic* perceptual contents of our PEs are phylogenetically fixed (for example: color, size, shape, position, distance and movement for vision). There is another layer of perceptual content, corresponding to *seeing-as* episodes, which may well be determined by individual learning. Our species-specific representations are a basis which can be enriched by ontogenetically determined contents, like recognition, identification, categorization and the like. There is perceptual learning indeed, which is made possible by previous wired-in representational mechanisms.

representational functions in the perceiver's species had occurred. Assuming that as a plausible story without arguing for it, I have argued that, if that is the case, and phenomenal character is inseparable from *represented* properties<sup>63</sup>, therefore phenomenal character must also be wide, or externally determined.

Our spontaneous and inevitable resistance to phenomenal externalism, shows how rooted phenomenal internalism is in our intuitions, how psychologically compelling it is, so to speak.

For that reason, other options have been proposed to save phenomenal internalism and narrowness. One is the combination of content-internalism with representationalism (McGinn 1982, Siewert 1998, Horgan and Tienson 2002). If two PEs with the same phenomenal character share their content, therefore content needs to be narrow, *if* phenomenal character is narrow. Instead, I have argued that content-externalism is the most plausible option, so rejecting it is too high a price for saving an even stronger intuition in favor of phenomenal internalism. Intuitions are better to be saved, but good arguments cannot be ignored either<sup>64</sup>.

Another option is anti-representationalism about phenomenal character, so to combine content-externalism with phenomenal internalism. That is the option of *qualia*-realists (Block 1990, 1996, Shoemaker 1994, 2001, 2006, Peacocke 1983, 2007). I have argued against this option because, among other reasons against it, it entails an implausible separation between phenomenal character and representational content, which does not do justice to perceptual phenomenology, and moreover cannot account for the circumstance that our PEs are assessable for accuracy *just* in virtue of having a certain phenomenal character<sup>65</sup>. If the relation between

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63 I stress the word 'represented' because the standard term 'representational' may result ambiguous: a property of a mental state can be representational without being identical with the property the state represent something as being (= the represented property). For example, even a *quale* may be taken to be representational insofar as it is attributed to it the property of representing things.

64 Horgan and Tienson 2002 appeal to our phenomenological intuitions to show that conscious phenomenology is throughout intentional. Their examples and their detailed first-person description of our experience as intrinsically representational, are undoubtedly efficacious. But then they seem to argue the same way (appeal to first-person intuitions) also to show that phenomenological intentionality is narrow. But *that* phenomenology is narrow, cannot be shown by appeal to phenomenology itself: phenomenology, just because it is so 'near' to us and directly given to us, is silent about whether an intrinsic duplicate of ourselves would have an identical phenomenology or not. Phenomenal character is silent about its eventual essential relation with external and causal matters, so it is silent also about the *absence* of such an essential relation. It rather seems that such an appeal to intuitions conceals a philosophical prejudice.

65 To be more precise, phenomenal character *constrains* which contents perceptual experiences have,

phenomenal character and content is contingent and extrinsic, what does make the access to the second through the first other than arbitrary and mysterious? That is also an epistemological worry, besides phenomenological issues.

Now I want to take into consideration a third option, which accepts the representationalist constraint, on the one hand, but posits two different kinds of contents for PEs, one the other. A *Fregean* content, which is supposed to be narrow and intimately connected to phenomenal character, and a *Russellian* content, which is supposed to be wide so only contingently connected with the (internally determined) phenomenal character. That is Chalmers's third option (2004, 2006), defended also by Thompson, Kriegel, Rey, and Levine among others<sup>66</sup>. I will focus specially on Chalmers's version of the view, which seems to me the most well-worked and detailed one.

## 2.2 - Chalmers's Third Way: The Double-content View

Frege 1892 explained the informativeness of identity-statements by appeal to the idea that the same referent can be given different ways or according to different Senses. 'The Morning Star' and 'The Evening Star' are two Modes of Presentation of the same referent, Venus. Their different cognitive roles account for the fact that 'The Morning Star is the Evening Star' can be object of a discovery so it is far from being a trivial and uninteresting identity. More generally, we can see beliefs as made out of concepts, each of them having certain extensions. For example, 'The Morning Star is bright' is composed by the concepts 'the Morning Star' and 'bright', having

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so in virtue of that fact we may consciously assess our own PEs for accuracy. As we have seen before (see Chapter 2), there can be perceptual contents which are not testified at all in phenomenology: there is evidence for that, coming from Sperling Experiment, Blindsight, the distinction between Dorsal and Ventral Stream dramatically shown by cases of Visual Associative Agnosia and Optic Ataxia, and so forth. Often we are not phenomenally conscious of the *perceptual* cues our systems use to detect certain properties, for example, to recognize a face, to classify things, and the like. The chicken-sexers' case – people who are able to visually tell apart males and females, but do not have access to *how* their visual experiences enable them to do that – is only a curious example of a very common phenomenon. Not all perceptual contents are conscious, but we can access the conscious ones in virtue of the phenomenal character of our PEs. More generally, the Content View as such does not entail that we can introspectively access 'the' content of our experiences. There may be features of that content which are introspectively accessible and features which are not. In any case there is *phenomenal content* of PE, the content which is subjectively accessible in virtue of the PE's having a certain conscious character. On the notion of phenomenal content, see Kriegel 2002, Horgan and Tienson 2002, Chalmers 2004, McGinn 1988.

66 See Thompson 2003, 2008, Kriegel 2002, Rey 1998, Levine 2003. See also Horgan and Tienson 2002.

respectively Venus and the property [bright] as their extensions. That merely extensional content of a belief is what is usually called its *Russellian* content, a content made out of objects, properties, and relations<sup>67</sup>. Besides a Russellian content or extension, each concept composing the belief-content is associated with a certain *condition* on worldly entities for being the extension of the concept itself. For example, Venus is apt to be the extension of the concept 'The Morning Star' insofar as it is the first star that appears on the sky in the early morning, so Venus satisfies the condition of that concept. A concept picks out a referent in the world (object, property or relation) insofar as that referent satisfies that condition, which can be said to be the sense or mode of presentation in which the referent is given according to that concept. So concepts have both sense and reference, they are specific ways in which certain referents are given or presented<sup>68</sup>.

Now, if we shift from belief- and linguistic contents to perceptual contents, we may apply the same distinction between referents/extensions of a PE and their Modes of Presentation: call the firsts *Russellian* content, the seconds *Fregean* content. So, a PE may be thought of as having a Russellian content, made out of objects, properties and relations, and a Fregean content, made out of the Modes of Presentation of those objects, properties, and relations (MP from now on). Of course, perceptual contents are not made out of concepts as beliefs are, provided that perceptual content is non-conceptual (see Chapter 3). Nonetheless, the notion of the Mode of Presentation (MP) of an object, a property or a relation may play the same role in PE as the role played by MP as a conceptual way of an object/property/relation being given in belief, thought and other language-like propositional attitudes. Namely, a non-conceptual MP or way for an extension to be given to the subject.

If objects, properties and relations are given in perception under respective Modes of Presentation, then the phenomenal character could be taken as determined by these Modes of Presentations instead than by the very represented properties and relations. In other words, phenomenal character could be determined by Fregean content instead of Russellian content. If we add to that the idea that MPs are narrow, we will

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67 That is the content of propositions according to Russell, which is why that content is called Russellian. See Russell 1919. Anyway, I am not concerned with historical matter here, so I just use the common label.

68 See Peacocke 1983, Chalmers 2004, 2006.

obtain a double-content view, according to which PEs have a narrow Fregean content, supervenient on phenomenology and only internally determined, and a wide Russellian content, not supervenient on phenomenology and also externally determined.

It is important to point out that MPs are not to be confused with what I have been calling the Mode. The Mode is a manner *for* a content to be given to the subject – for example, visually – it is not part of the content itself. On the contrary, MPs *are* (Fregean) contents. They are accuracy-conditions.

What kinds of conditions of satisfaction on Russellian extensions are Fregean contents? What does make them accurate, if not the Russellian properties the Object is represented as having? The answer given by the advocates of the double-content view, like Chalmers, is: the most natural condition a property must satisfy in order to be the property attributed by the PE, is that of being the normal and appropriate cause of experiences of that phenomenal type the PE in question is a token of:

(PE): Russellian content: O is: [F] (= Russellian, physical property, like [red])

(PE): Fregean content: O is: [the property which normally causes phenomenally-red experiences]

So, a more articulated Fregean content for a PE's representing O as being F, would be:

“The object causing this experience has the property that usually causes experiences of phenomenal redness” (Chalmers 2008, 110)

So, the Mode of Presentation of the Russellian property [red] is another content than the Russellian one, not less objective, consisting in a causal condition on a type of experience. That Fregean content, made out of MPs, has straightforward conditions of satisfaction, so it is semantically evaluable vis-a-vis to the world. If the seen object has the property which normally causes my phenomenally red experiences, the Fregean content of my PE is satisfied, otherwise it is not. Given an environment in which that phenomenally red type-experience was normally caused by green objects



rather than by red objects, then the very same Mode of Presentation could be a way for another Russellian property ([green]) to be given. So, the same Fregean content could be associated with different Russellian contents, according to environmental, extrinsic matters of causal co-variations.

The double-content view easily accommodates the possibility of the Inverted-Spectrum: two identical phenomenal states, say identical to your usual red-experience, could represent their objects as having respectively a [red] and a [green] color, given that each of these phenomenal states is usually caused respectively by red and by green objects. My red-experience could have been usually caused by the [green] property. Namely, that very Mode of Presentation could have been the Mode of Presentation of *another* Russellian property than the property it is a MP of. The very same MP may pick out different properties in different environments, as well as in different creatures.

So, representationalism is true, but the phenomenal character of PE supervenes on Fregean content, rather than on Russellian content. Phenomenal character supervenes on contents involving a causal component, a self-referential component concerning the experience itself, and especially involving reference to experiential types, like 'phenomenally red' or 'phenomenally F' in general. In this way, it can be true that a given phenomenal character unequivocally determines a narrow content, made out of Modes of Presentation, so phenomenal internalism and representationalism are vindicated, without even denying the possibility of Inverted Spectrum scenarios or Inverted Earth-like scenarios.

Before critically discussing the double-content view, I want to briefly clarify a point in order to avoid possible confusions. The Fregean content exemplified by Chalmers in the above quotation, includes reference both to the *object* which causes the very experience the content is content of, on the one hand, and to the *property* that usually causes that very experience, on the other hand. However, I have already argued that perceptual Content is object-dependent, so the real seen object, not a mode of presentation of it, enters into the Content. The double-content view in itself is neutral about whether perceptual Content is object-dependent, or existential, or anything else<sup>69</sup>. So, given that I have already argued for object-dependency of perceptual

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69 Chalmers himself holds a multiple-contents view, according to which a PE can have a singular

Content, I will consider the double-content view as a view concerning the represented *properties*, what I have called the *content* (lower case). A version of the double-content view which embeds object-dependency, would have the following *de re* characterization:

*Fregean de re content:* of the seen object O – PE represents [the property which normally causes this phenomenally-red type-experience]

*Russellian de re content:* of the seen object O – PE represents [red] (= physical, Russellian property)

So far so good. Now, I will argue that the double-content view is untenable and must be abandoned.

### 2.3 - The Weaknesses of the Double-content View

To begin with, Fregean content is specified by Chalmers by reference to a *causal* element and a *self-referential* element concerning the very experience, the same way as Searle (1983, 1991) specifies perceptual content. I have already argued (Chapter IV, Section 2.4.4) that such a view is implausible, so I only cursorily recall those critical remarks here. Firstly, there is an issue of phenomenological inadequacy: no causal element seems to be reflected in visual phenomenology, much less does it appear to be the case that a visual experience presents the subject with features of the visual experience itself. In addition, such contents are too sophisticated to plausibly characterize the experience of a child or or a non-linguistic animal, even if we consider that such a content is non-conceptual so the perceiver does not have to deploy the respective concepts. Our experiences have a content before we begin to entertain contents like 'my own experience' or 'my experience being caused by P', be it conceptually or non-conceptually. Furthermore, the causal element included in the content must be enriched with a normative clause or *appropriateness*, so to avoid deviant or abnormal causal chains making the content satisfied and the perception veridical. Chalmers explicitly inserts that clause into the Fregean content: “the property which normally and appropriately causes phenomenally red experiences”

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content, which hallucinations lack, an existential content, which is shared by perceptions and hallucinations, and so on.

(2004, 106). That such a problematic notion as that of 'appropriate causation' should enter into experiential, non-conceptual contents seems highly implausible, and not only from a phenomenological point of view. As I noted above by discussing Searle's analog view, there are no discriminatory abilities in perceivers one could not account for without positing such a sophisticated content, so positing it is explanatorily redundant if not simply illegitimate.

Other difficulties are germane to Chalmers's specification of the Fregean content. Here are some.

Firstly, besides the causal, the normative and the self-referential element, there is a reference to a *phenomenal* property. That is why Chalmers takes his narrow representationalism to be non-reductive, insofar as it does not aim to get rid of phenomenal notions by reducing them to non-phenomenal notions. Now, the Fregean content of my PE of a red object is accounted for by appeal to 'phenomenally red' experiences. That means that I am supposed to be able to pick out such a phenomenal property independently of the property my PE seems to attribute to red things, independently of what the double-content advocate calls the Russellian red, the red as represented 'out there'. I have argued in Chapter I that the 'phenomenal' looks are conceptually and phenomenologically parasitic on intentional looks: on the one hand, I can master and understand the notion of 'looking F' as long as I master and understand the notion of 'looking *to be* F'; on the other hand, I can master and understand the notion of 'looking to be F' as long as I can master and understand the notion of *being* F (see Chapter 1, 5.4-5.6). It is only by detecting, sorting and recognizing red things, that I could learn to detect, sort and recognize phenomenally red looks, so 'red experiences'. Moreover, there is no uniform phenomenal experience caused by red things, which can be picked out without considering what worldly things our visual experiences prompt us to take as being red. Perceptual constancy teaches us that 'red experiences' may be significantly different from each other, so that they fall into the same type only insofar as they are all experiences which make us take things as objectively red<sup>70</sup>. Even if Chalmers presents his view as a (Fregean) representationalism, actually the representational aspect of the PE's phenomenal

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70 It will not do to restrict the phenomenally red experience to the experience caused by red things in *standard* or paradigmatic conditions. Indeed, there is no way to single out standard conditions for color-vision. On that, see Hardin 1987, 1993.

character is not so intrinsic to the latter to prevent the independent individuation of phenomenal properties. The Fregean content is an abstract condition on a property, that of appropriately and normally causing a certain type of phenomenal property in my PE. If perceptual phenomenology is intrinsically representational in *that* way, then that view is not clearly distinguishable from a form of *qualia*-realism: *qualia* are intrinsic properties of the experience we are aware of in experiencing<sup>71</sup>. In fact that criterion of ascription of Fregean content needs the position of phenomenal properties as *qualia*: if the Fregean content is specified as 'whatever objective property appropriately causes *that* property of my experience', then the phenomenal red is a property *of* the experience in the first place, which has only an extrinsic connection – *via* normal causation – with the represented property.

Paradoxically enough, that view is supposed to save certain basic phenomenological intuitions (specially, the phenomenal internalism intuition), but it radically neglects perceptual phenomenology. Visual experience is *transparent*: the properties we attend to in introspection present themselves as being the properties of perceived things, *not* as being the properties of the experiences which are normally caused by certain properties of perceived things. Visual experience attributes to worldly objects those very properties that are present in visual phenomenology, not other properties which purportedly cause them in normal conditions and in the appropriate way.

Chalmers considers this issue of phenomenological adequacy<sup>72</sup>, and replies that in fact we 'see through' the Modes of Presentations, in such a way that we are perceptually aware both of the MPs and of the properties given under these MPs, so transparency is vindicated. But that reply is unsatisfactory: indeed what he calls the Mode of Presentation of a property, is only contingently such, indeed it is a *quale* normally caused by that property, which could well be the Mode of Presentation of another property, if it was normally caused by another property. Modes of Presentation are not phenomenologically connected, so to speak, to the properties

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71 Pettit 2003, 225ff., presents the *qualia* theory as follows: A color looks red if it produces a red *quale* in the perceiver, such that: a) the way the object looks is independent of the perceptual abilities typically enabled by the object having such a look b) the way the object look is manifest to the perceiver c) the object's looking so enables the perceptual abilities like sifting the object from other object of different color, and sorting the object in a same category of same-color objects, and so on. So, the *quale* is a property of the experience you are aware of, then it enables certain judgments, recognitions, comparisons, but it can be picked out independently on the way you take the world to be. See also Lewis 1995.

72 See Chalmers 2004, 2006.

they present. Actually, on that model perceptual introspection consists of attending to the *qualia* included in the Fregean contents or MPs, it does not consist of attending to Fregean contents or MPs. In introspecting you do not attend to whatever property is causing your phenomenally-red experience, you rather attend to your phenomenal red, to your *qualia*. That is incompatible with transparency, *pace* Chalmers. According to transparency, in introspection you attend to properties of seen things.

Another big problem that can be envisaged, concerns the interpretation of “normal causation” and “appropriate causation”, clauses included in the Fregean content of PE. What does fix normality and appropriateness in the first place? If normality is just a statistical notion, then the Fregean veridicality conditions of my PE would be satisfied even if I was systematically misperceiving colors and other visual properties. Suppose both green and red things 'normally' cause in me phenomenally red experiences. So, a PE of a green thing would be veridical insofar as [green] normally causes phenomenally red experiences in me. My perceptual system could even be so disrupted that my phenomenal color-types do not track or map any types of properties in the world. Suppose my phenomenal red is 'normally' caused by a certain shade of red, a certain shade of blue, and a certain shade of yellow, whilst my phenomenal green is 'normally' caused by another slightly different shade of red, another shade of blue, and another shade of yellow. So, in that case the first three shades would make veridical my PE instantiating phenomenal red, the other three shades of the same objective color would make veridical my PE instantiating phenomenal green. In both cases the perceived property is that which normally causes – among others<sup>73</sup> – a certain type of experience. Fregean contents would make such fuzzy PEs into veridical PEs.

If “normally” is not a statistical notion but has a stronger normative dimension, such an additional normativity must be explained within the view. If by normal is meant the same as appropriate, again the appropriateness-clause must be accounted for. It seems to me hard to define the appropriateness of the causation of a phenomenally red experience without reference to red things as appropriate causes. But of course that move is not allowed by the double-content view advocate: physical red is Russellian indeed, but by definition the phenomenally red experience could have had

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73 At least, the normal cause is the disjunctive properties of being, say : [red<sup>45</sup>] or [blue<sup>57</sup>] or [green<sup>69</sup>].

the same Fregean content even if its Russellian content had been the extension or property: [blue]<sup>74</sup>.

In addition, in that view there seems to be a problem similar to the so-called *disjunction-problem*, which affects causal theories of mental content<sup>75</sup>. In accounting for content in terms of normal causation, informational-causal theories have troubles in making room for mistakes or misrepresentations. A misrepresentation is a circumstance when a representational state is tokened but its content is not exemplified. Now, if the content is whatever causes the type of the tokened mental state, *any* token of the state will always be true, its content coming to include the actual property which causes it<sup>76</sup>. Now, if I have a phenomenally red experience before a blue object, then what normally causes my phenomenally red experience will become the disjunctive property ([red] or [blue]), so the content will be satisfied and the experience veridical. It will not do to say that the instance of blue – in our environment and for our perceptual systems – is not the 'normal' cause of the phenomenally red experiences, but it is an 'abnormal' cause. Many visual illusions are perfectly 'normal' indeed, this is why they are intersubjectively shared. Not every circumstance which our PE misrepresents, is an abnormal one<sup>77</sup>. Perceptual mistakes are quite common, also under the sun and when we are in perfect shape.

Besides, if by 'normal and appropriate causation of phenomenally red experiences is meant normal causation *in me*, then it is to be decided how far in the past – or perhaps in the future – the 'normality' goes. For example, if I am transported to Inverted Earth, would my *Fregean* visual contents change? In the long run, as Block notes, the normal causes of my phenomenally red experiences would become the

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74 Chalmers 2004, 114, consider the possibility of specifying the Fregean content in terms of my community rather than individually, on these lines: "the property that normally causes phenomenally red experiences in my community". That possibility is rejected by Chalmers himself, who points out that in that case a spectrally inverted individual in her community would have systematic illusions.

75 See Fodor 1990, Dretske 1986, Jacob 1999.

76 Suppose you mistake a cow for a horse, so the concept [horse] is tokened in your mind. Now, if the content of your mental state is whatever property causes it, or whatever property that type of mental state counterfactually depends on, then its content should be [cow OR horse] rather than [cow], but in that way the representation would be correct.

77 At this point, one could appeal to *optimal* conditions or other similar normative notions. The problem is that it seems hopeless to specify optimality of conditions for phenomenally red experiences without referring to red things as the optimal causes. One should be able to tell why a circumstance where a phenomenally red experience is caused by a blue thing is not optimal, without any reference to the [red] property as the good referent of that type of PEs.

green things, so the property [green]. Now, if that is the case, then the *Fregean* content changes across transportation. But that is contrary to the original hypothesis that Fregean content is narrow, different from Russellian content which is wide. So in that case Fregean content would not be able to vindicate phenomenal internalism either. If we want Fregean content to be narrow, perhaps we need to bind the 'normality' to my more remote past. Maybe we should specify the Fregean content like this: "the property that normally causes phenomenally red experiences in me, provided that I stay in my original environment or that no inverting lenses or other artificial modifiers are put on my eyes". As it is self-evident, these clauses would in fact dash the initial hope of keeping the Fregean content narrow, namely exclusively supervenient on the subject's internal constitution, which was the only reason for introducing a Fregean content at all, besides the Russellian content. In short, since the normality-clause must be more than statistical but more strongly normative, and both 'normality' and 'appropriateness' have a normativity depending on them being indexed to an environment, then a change of environment, for example from Earth to Inverted Earth, would change what 'normally and appropriately caused' refers to, so it would change also the Fregean content. Not only the normal cause changes, but also *what it is for a certain type-experience to be normally caused*, will change. Not only the Russellian content, but also the Fregean content.

Another natural move would be that of changing the reference to me with a reference to my *species*, like: "the property which normally causes phenomenally red experiences in members of my species with well-working visual apparatuses", or something like that. Again, firstly that would *prevent* the possibility of an inverted spectrum without illusion for members of the same species, contrary to the *desideratum* of accommodating Inverted-Spectrum scenarios. Secondly, and most importantly, that would prevent again the Fregean content from being narrow, since the PE of an intrinsic duplicate belonging to another species (or a Swampman belonging to no species at all) would have different or no Fregean content at all.

#### 2.4 - Perceptual Content and Character are Wide, External, Russellian

To sum up our critical point on the double-content view: the view is untenable, so it cannot be taken as a virtuous 'third way' mediating between the extreme views of

*qualia*-realism and externalist representationalism. The attempt to save phenomenal internalism by introducing a narrow content on which it should supervene – a content like [the worldly property which normally causes *that* type of phenomenal property] – is doomed to failure. I have shown it by means of three main arguments.

Firstly, the causal and self-referential component cannot plausibly enter into perceptual content, because they are phenomenologically inapt and there are no discriminatory abilities they only could account for. Even more unpalatable is the inclusion of an appropriateness-clause into the content. Rather, the PE's being caused by an Object makes the PE to be *about* it, the PE's being appropriately caused by the properties had by the perceived object, results in a successful representation of these properties. The contextual and causal conditions which make a PE about an object and represent its properties due to the appropriateness of that causation, are objective conditions obtaining in the perceiver-environment relation, they make the representation possible but they are not *represented* as such by the PE. A perceptual state's successfully representing its causes by being appropriately caused by them, does not have to represent itself *being caused* by these causes, nor does it have to represent *that* its own causation is appropriate. It suffices that the latter is such *in fact*. Perceptual contents are satisfaction-conditions, not representations of all it would be contextually required for these conditions to be satisfied.

Secondly, the posited Fregean content includes the phenomenal property [F] as one which can be picked out independently on the reference to any worldly represented property F. Indeed, [F] is only contingently a Mode of Presentation of F, it could be as much a MP of G, or of whatever else could normally cause it. That priority of the phenomenal on the intentional seems to turn priorities upside down, insofar as it presupposes the original givenness of a *quale* of [F], introspectively accessible as an intrinsic property of our PE. That is hardly compatible with the view's being a representationalist view, though of a non-reductive sort, rather it makes it analog to *qualia*-realism. Indeed it inherits its problems, for example that of the separation between phenomenal character and represented properties (phenomenal/intentional couples taken as contingently related and reciprocally invertible), and that of the inability to do justice of transparency of perceptual phenomenology (which attributes to things the properties we are aware of, *not* their normal causes).



Thirdly, the reference to 'normality' and 'appropriateness' of causation into the content, is highly problematic for many reasons. First of all, many illusions and misperceptions are 'normally' caused, the apparatus is working well and the conditions are not abnormal. So there must be accurate and veridical misperceptions, at least according to their Fregean content. Secondly, the notion of 'normality' is vague with respect to temporal and modal extension. If you are transported to Inverted Earth and stay there for a while – or perhaps it suffices that it is just simply possible – not only do the properties which normally cause your phenomenally red experiences change (so the Russellian content change), but also *what-it-is-to-be-normally-caused* for that type of experience, change (so the Fregean content change). Any move of introducing into the content clauses which index the content to one's own environment, would only emphasize that Fregean content is *not* narrow, contrary to the *desideratum* of saving narrowness of phenomenology through introduction of Fregean content. There is no 'normality' which is not environment-indexed, so there is no narrow normality. Therefore, there cannot be any narrow content including normality. If there was Fregean content it would be wide, but then we better use the Occam Razor and stay content with the Russellian one.

If 'normality' is just a statistical, not environment-involving notion, like 'most of the time caused in me', then a perceiver who systematically misrepresents, or has experiences sorted into phenomenal types which do not map at all color-properties in her environment, would have accurate experiences with satisfied Fregean contents. The purely statistical interpretation of 'normal' would also open a disjunction-problem for Fregean contents. You have a phenomenally red experience caused by an example of worldly blue, so the property which most of the time causes your phenomenally red experience, becomes now the disjunctive property: ([red] or [blue]), therefore any mistake is turned into a veridical perception by contributing to change what 'normal causation' is for that phenomenal type. Finally, any other manoeuvre to get a more-than-statistical normativity for 'normally caused'-clause, like interpreting the condition as 'normally caused in members of my community' or 'normally caused in members of my species', would patently re-introduce wideness into the content and so prevent inverted spectrum-scenarios within communities or species.

It seems that to make room for misrepresentation – even the Fregean one – we need to refer to a *certain* environment we are causally connected to, not just to 'whatever environment I could be in', so it seems that perceptual content cannot be other than wide.

The moral I draw from all this, is that perceptual content is Russellian, external and wide, and so it is phenomenal in character thereby, as long as representationalism is the best account of the phenomenal character of PE. The double-content view fails in trying to save phenomenal internalism by introducing a narrow content of PE. Such a content would not be narrow either, so any reason for introducing it, drops as a result. The overall moral is that phenomenal internalism cannot be saved.

We are left with our wide, Russellian, impure, non-reductive representationalism. It is non-reductive not because there is a content which cannot be specified without *qualia*-like phenomenal notions, but because the represented, Russellian properties our PEs attribute to perceived things, are represented by the PE under a Mode, for example the visual Mode or the Auditory Mode, and Modes are phenomenologically salient. The Mode is not a Mode of Presentation, if by MP we mean another sort of content besides the Russellian properties attributed to things: there are *no* other represented properties in PE besides them. The Mode is a way for that content to be given to the subject, and it makes a phenomenal difference without being part of the content. The most relevant difference between the Mode and the Fregean Modes of Presentation, is that MPs are supposed to be picked out independently on the properties they present. That is why there can be inversion between properties and MPs of them such that a phenomenally green MP could come-to-present the property [red] and vice-versa. On the contrary, the Mode is a way for *certain* Russellian properties to be given to the subject, but the phenomenal character as co-determined by that Mode, still cannot be in any way separated by those Russellian properties that co-determine it with the Mode.

To a certain extent, the Mode does the explanatory job which Modes of Presentation were supposed to do: it accounts for the *aspectuality* of perceptual phenomenology, as well as for its egocentric dimension. In PE the world is given in such a way that the perceiver is a *point-of-view* on such a given world. That point-of-view-ness of

experiencing is intimately connected with perceptual Mode<sup>78</sup>.

### *Conclusions*

In this Chapter I have faced two issues. Firstly (Section 1) I have proposed a form of impure representationalism on phenomenal character of visual experience. Secondly, I have critically considered the Double Content View – proposed by Chalmers and others – according to which perceptual experiences have two kinds of content, a Fregean one and a Russellian one.

According to my impure representationalism, the phenomenal character of visual perception is made out of intentional properties represented under a Mode: the Mode co-determines the phenomenal character, so my view is opposed to reductive versions of representationalism, like identity theories, as much as to anti-representationalist views (for which phenomenal properties are just others than the ways perceived things look to be). I have considered the phenomenon of perceptual constancy as a potential challenge to representationalism, and I have argued that the phenomenology involved in perceptual constancy is not a real challenge, at least for an *impure* representationalism: indeed in visual experience certain environmental properties are represented egocentrically, and such a perspectival dimension of visual phenomenology is made possible by the Mode under which such objective properties are represented.

Successively, I have considered the Inverted Earth- and the Inverted Spectrum hypotheses as arguments against representationalism, and I have shown that no valid arguments against representationalism can be construed out of such hypotheses, unless the falsity of representationalism is already circularly presupposed. In addition, I have provided some arguments against the *prima facie* conceivability of Inverted Spectrum Scenarios.

In Section 2 I have argued that perceptual content is throughout Russellian, so perceptual experiences have no Fregean contents. The notion of perceptual Fregean content proposed by Chalmers – something like [the property that is (normally)

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78 I am a bit abstractly focusing on visual experience here, but our concrete perceptual experience, considered as a continuous, unitary flux involving integration of *many* modalities, exhibits a complex phenomenal character with many levels of aspectuality and 'perspectivity' due to the synergic influence of the interplaying Modes.

causing this phenomenal property of my experience] – is highly problematic. First of all, it involves the notion of causation, even that of normal causation, which is implausible as a constituent of a perceptual, non-conceptual content. Secondly, such a content is phenomenologically inapt, insofar as it is incompatible with transparency: when we attend to our own experiences, we seem to be confronted with properties things look to have, not with the normal causes of these properties. Thirdly, Chalmers assumes that one can pick out a phenomenal property independently on the way things seem to objectively be arranged according to one's experience, but that possibility is far from obvious. From these and other arguments I have concluded that the Double Content View is untenable, and that visual content is Wide, Russellian, External, and such must be the phenomenal character as well. The narrowness of phenomenal character, despite a compelling intuition in favor of it, cannot be saved, not even by a Double Content Theory. Phenomenal externalism must be true, because Content Externalism and (impure) Representationalism are true.

## CHAPTER VI: Bringing The Disjunctivist Challenge Into the Intentionalist View

### Introduction

In that Chapter I will do three things. Firstly, I will present the disjunctivist view of perceptual experience and the main reasons the advocates of this view adduce for holding it. Secondly, I will show that such reasons can be respected also within my version of the Content View, so that there is no need of abandoning the Content View, but rather a moderately disjunctivist version of the Content View itself is to be preferred to the anti-intentionalist disjunctivisms, like Naïve Realist disjunctivism. Thirdly, I will argue that within a moderately disjunctivist version of the Content View, the Semantic Gap Problem – the problem of ascribing a semantically evaluable Content to objectless states like hallucinations – can be successfully treated.

### Section 1 – Disjunctivism Introduced

#### 1.1 – *What is Disjunctivism?*

Disjunctivism (DJ) about perceptual experience comes in many flavors. The basic idea of DJ is that veridical experiences and deceptive experiences (like hallucinations) should be told apart as being mental states of two different kinds, namely, they should be given a disjunctive treatment along the following lines:

*DJ: Either E is a manifestation of such-and-such worldly objects and properties to the subject, or E is another kind of state that only seems to be a state of the first kind<sup>1</sup>.*

DJ rests on the rejection of a principle which – according to disjunctivists like McDowell and Martin – often works as a hidden assumption, the “Common Highest

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<sup>1</sup> As we will see, the 'other kind' for hallucinatory states could be taken to be a “mere appearance” (McDowell 1982), or a 'spurious' kind consisting in anything which is indiscriminable from a certain veridical perception (Martin 2004, 2006), or something else. See McDowell 1982, 1994, 2008. Disjunctivism about PE was firstly proposed by Hinton 1967, 1973. Other advocates of disjunctivism about PE are Snowdon 1981, 2005, Putnam 1999, Martin 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, Brewer 2008, Travis 2004, 2006, Campbell 2002, Johnston 2004, 2006, Fish 2009 among others. Important contributions on the subject are collected in Haddock and Macpherson 2008, and in Byrne and Logue 2008, Howthorne and Kovakovich 2006.

Factor Assumption” (McDowell 1982) or the “Common Kind Assumption” (Martin 2004):

*CKA*: Whatever kind of mental event *M* occurs when you veridically perceive, that same kind of mental event *M* can occur when you hallucinate<sup>2</sup>.

Both DJ and the related rejection of CKA also entail the rejection of two *prima facie* plausible principles: the first one, which I have already introduced in Chapter III, Section 2.5, is the one I have called *Cartesian Principle*:

*CP*: If two mental states are subjectively indiscriminable, they are mental states of the same nature, kind and type

Given that a certain hallucination could well be subjectively indiscriminable from a certain veridical perception, then DJ and its related rejection of CKA are *ipso facto* the rejection of CP, namely of the idea that subjective indiscriminability of experiences  $E^1$  from  $E^2$  is sufficient for their sameness in kind.

The second principle a disjunctivist must reject, has to do with the sufficiency of the proximate causes of a mental event for its individuation as an event of a certain mental kind<sup>3</sup>. According to the *Proximate Cause Principle*:

*PCP*: A mental event  $E^1$  is of the same kind as a mental event  $E^2$  iff  $E^1$  is brought about by the same kind of proximate cause as  $E^2$ <sup>4</sup>.

Given that a certain hallucination could in principle be brought about by a certain neural proximal stimulation, committing to DJ and to the related rejection of CKA is

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of CKA, see Martin 2004, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> See Martin 2006, 356ff.

<sup>4</sup> The rejection of CPC does not involve at all the rejection of what Martin calls “Experiential Naturalism” and introduces as the principle that “our sense experiences are themselves part of the natural causal order, subject to broadly physical and psychological causes” (Martin 2006, 357), so our PE are “subject just to broadly physical causes [...]” (Martin 2004, 273). Rejection of CPC only denies that the identity in kind of *proximate* causes are sufficient for the identity in kind of two mental events, so there must be identity in kind of distal causes, or some other non-causal condition must be satisfied, in order two mental events to be of the same kind. That is not to deny that experiences are, in general, subject to physical laws and parts of the causal order, of course. *That* would be obscurantist, at the very least.

*ipso facto* committing to the rejection of the principle: same kind of proximate cause → same kind of effect. Indeed, according to DJ a certain hallucination and a certain veridical perception could well have the same proximate kind of cause without being mental events of the same kind. So DJ entails the rejection of PCP. Therefore there must be some non-causal conditions for two experiences be of the same kind.

To sum up, DJ rests of rejection of CKA and CKA entails the rejection of both CP and PCP.

### 1.2 – *The reasons for Disjunctivism: The Detachment Problem*

With all that in mind, let us now turn to the positive reasons why the disjunctive treatment of PE should be adopted according to their advocates. Without any aim either at suggesting a hierarchy or at being exhaustive, I will sequentially present four kinds of typical reasons for DJ, *i.e.* phenomenological, epistemological, semantical, metaphysical reasons. Although such levels are deeply interwoven in the debate about DJ, it may be useful to introduce them one by one, in order to gain in clarity even at the price of a bit of abstraction. Actually, all the four kinds of reasons ultimately rest on the idea that disjunctivism is the only way of solving what could be called the *Detachment Problem*: any non-disjunctivist view on PE seems to drive a fatal wedge between the perceptual experience and the world. That is, at least, what I think it is the key-problem that underlies and shapes the debate in various forms and dimensions.

#### 1.2.1 – *Phenomenology*

The phenomenology of perceptual experience exhibits the property of *transparency* (see Chapter II, Section 2.4). In attending to your own experience of an object, the only properties you will end up attending to, will be the properties your experience presents to you as the very properties of the object you are perceiving, so the properties the object would have, was the experience true.

But there seems to be another property, besides transparency, which PE introspectively seems to have, namely, the property of *actuality* and *immediacy*. In

attending to your experience of an object, not only do you attend to the 'putative' properties your experience attributes to the object (transparency), but your experience also presents itself as the very presentation of such properties of the object; the so presented properties offer themselves, in experience, in their bodily presence 'out there', as *actual* and *as immediately* given to you. So besides a phenomenology of transparency, in PE there is also a phenomenology of actuality and immediacy; in experience the world itself seems to be in view, manifested to the subject. PE just seems to be, introspectively, such a manifestation of the world with its objects, properties and relations. The presentational phenomenology of PE is specially compatible with Direct- or Naïve - Realism, according to which PE are direct relations of presentation of the world to the subject.

As Martin 2002 points out, the classical *sense-data* theory vindicates actuality: sense-data are there, present as mental objects genuinely related to the subject<sup>5</sup>. But unfortunately it falls short of vindicating transparency. The properties you are aware of in your experience are not properties things look to have, rather they are properties of sense-data indeed. Conversely, intentionalism vindicates transparency but seems to fall short of vindicating actuality. In fact, if the PE was falsidical the content of PE would not be exemplified, so it would not be actual by definition. Only Direct Realism can vindicate both transparency and actuality at once<sup>6</sup>. According to Direct Realists the properties we are aware of in PE are properties things seem to have, on the one hand, and they are also worldly properties in the flesh and bones the subject is presented with in her experience, on the other. So, Direct Realism appears to be phenomenologically apt with respect to transparency and to actuality, on the top of capturing the Commonsense view on perceptual experience.

But illusions and hallucinations are possible, that is just what intentionalism aims at doing justice to through the notion of content. Indeed, illusion is the “mother of

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5 Price 1932 holds that when you have an experience as of a tomato, nothing could be more certain that you are aware of *something*: something is there before you to be experienced, be you hallucinating or not. The Actuality Intuition is related to the presentational phenomenology of PE We can call that thesis, with Pautz 2006, *Item Awareness*.

6 I remark *en passant* that the other remaining classical option, Adverbialism, does not vindicate either transparency or actuality. On the adverbial view experiences are ways of a subject's being modified: so in experience we are not aware either of properties the experience represents things as having (transparency), or of worldly and actual objects, properties and relations (actuality). So, at least from a phenomenological point of view, Adverbialism is an error-theory. I have already suggested that the adverbial theory of perception is phenomenologically inapt and leaves unexplained certain apparent properties of perceptual experience: see Chapter II, Section 1.3.



intentionalism” (Johnston 2004, 115)<sup>7</sup>: in illusion and hallucination actuality does not hold by definition, since the property you experience the object as having is not actually had by the object (illusion) or the very 'object' is not actual because it does not exist (hallucination). Nonetheless, according to Martin, Fish and others a disjunctive treatment of deceptive experience could save the virtues of Naïve Realism without embedding its vices, on the following lines: *when* the PE is veridical, it is the direct, Naive-realist presentation of worldly items, *when* it is not veridical (illusion, hallucination), it is not a presentation of worldly properties but something else, an episode of a different mental kind which is but subjectively indiscriminable from a certain genuine presentation of the world.

Although not all disjunctivists are Naive-realists like Martin and Fish – for example, McDowell does not reject the Content View – the anti-intentionalist use of disjunctivism is very important in the debate. Insofar as such a version of DJ posits itself as a deep criticism to the Content View, I will give it a special consideration: I will call it *Disjunctivism-cum-Naïve-Realism* (DJ-cum-NR).

In any case, according to DJ veridical PEs are genuine manifestations of the surrounding world to the subject, and their presentational phenomenology would be best explained just by taking such PEs as *being* episodes of presentation, as being what they introspectively seem to be. According to DJ-cum-NR our veridical PEs' being genuine manifestations of the surrounding world is *incompatible* with intentionalism. A presentation of the world presupposes actuality in a way a representation of the world does not: a represented world is not a necessarily present world.

A conjunctive view on PE<sup>8</sup> would posit a non-world-involving common factor shared by veridical experiences and deceptive experiences – for example, the content – *plus* some additional element which plausibly would be present in the veridical case but absent in the deceptive case, whereas a disjunctive view starts from the 'good' disjunct considered as an essentially world-involving manifestation, and distinguishes it from the 'bad' disjunct considered as a mental event of a different kind which only (introspectively) seems to be a genuine manifestation of the

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<sup>7</sup> On the incompatibility between illusions and Direct Realism, see Smith 2002.

<sup>8</sup> The opposition between disjunctive and conjunctive views is proposed by Campbell 2002 and Johnston 2004.

surrounding world.

On that account, according to the DJ-cum-NR version of disjunctivism, deceptive cases do not speak against Naïve Realism, because only the non-illusory/hallucinatory disjunct is given a naïve-realist account, whilst the illusory or hallucinatory disjunct is told apart as something which is just indiscriminable from a certain veridical experience, without it falling into the same mental kind just in virtue of such an indiscriminability-property. Two things can be subjectively indiscriminable without falling under the same kind<sup>9</sup>: this is another way of saying that the Cartesian Principle is false.

To sum up, the presentational phenomenology of PE involves the purported actuality of the manifested world, and it is best explained by this actuality, at least in the veridical cases. Such a phenomenology is hardly compatible with any conjunctive view on PE which allegedly drives an unbridgeable wedge between the subject and the world. If a veridical experience is individuated and characterized independently on its being a genuine manifestation of the world, such an experience could present the subject with the world only 'indirectly'. That is problematic from a phenomenological point of view in the first place. Indeed the issue of phenomenological aptness is a first facet of the Detachment Problem.

### 1.2.2 – *Epistemology*

Through our perceptual experiences we come to acquire knowledge about the surrounding world outside us. Therefore perceptual experience has a key epistemological role in “anchoring” our thoughts and empirical judgments to the world<sup>10</sup>, in providing our empirical thoughts with an objective purport. Now, if perceptual experiences are to ground and justify our empirical judgments about the surroundings, they cannot also make available for us what illusion and hallucinations make available for us. If what is given in perceptual experience was just an 'appearance' shared by illusions and hallucinations, then the justificatory power of a perceptual experience would be as defective as the justificatory power of a hallucination. In that case the very external world would not give any relevant

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<sup>9</sup> On that, see Austin 1962, Martin 2006.

<sup>10</sup> That epistemological reason for disjunctivism is provided by McDowell 1982, 1994, 1995, 1998, 2008 as well as by Travis 2004, 2006, and Campbell 2002.

contribution to our empirical knowledge<sup>11</sup>, which is simply absurd. The skeptical challenge would easily rise at this point, and become inescapable, to the effect that our everyday perceptual judgments, even produced in optimal conditions, could never count as genuine knowledge as we want them to be<sup>12</sup>.

In other words, if we tell apart the 'appearing' involved in perceptual experience from the worldly items such an appearing is a manifestation of in the veridical cases – as do the conjunctive views which posit a neutral 'appearance' sharable by veridical perceptions and hallucinations – we fatally introduce an irreparable gulf between our experience and the world. That is indeed the epistemological facet of the Detachment Problem. On the face of it DJ aims at radically overcome any “interface model of perception” (Putnam 1999, 42), any idea of perceptual experience as a “veil between us and the world” (McDowell 1982, 215), the very idea which is originally responsible for the rise of the Detachment Problem. The latter can be left behind only by conceiving two classes of epistemically distinct experiences: those occurring when the way things are 'makes itself perceptually manifest' to a subject, and those occurring when it merely seems to the subject that things are a certain way (where the experiences of the second class misleadingly present themselves as belonging to the first class). Thus, the only radical solution is the disjunctive treatment of PEs.

### 1.2.3 – *Semantics*

Russell used to distinguish descriptive knowledge from knowledge by acquaintance: the second way makes the first possible, and involves a direct epistemic contact with an object, without any inferential, predication, descriptive mediation<sup>13</sup>. The typical way of getting acquainted with a worldly object is perception. Perception offers the demonstrative, referential basis for any predication, for any descriptive knowledge of the environment around us. In other words, perceptual experience makes available to us, worldly particulars as 'topics' for empirical judgments about them, and for

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11 The world would contribute to the knowledge of the world only in an externally causal way, not in a constitutive way.

12 The very idea of perceptual experience as a “common factor” to deceptive and veridical cases “seems incompatible with the supposition that we ever *know*, strictly speaking, something about the surrounding environment” (McDowell 2008, 381).

13 “We shall say that we have acquaintance of anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths” (Russell 1912, 25). On the difference between acquaintance and descriptive knowledge, see also Lewis 1983.

propositional knowledge of them.

As Evans 1982 vigorously pointed out<sup>14</sup>, perceptual discrimination is the basic way in which our empirical thoughts can be anchored to the world, namely, perceptual discrimination of certain objects provides original referents for empirical judgments which 'directly' involve such perceived objects. In other words, perceptual experience basically makes *demonstrative thoughts* about the world possible<sup>15</sup>. In that way, perception grants the very aboutness of empirical thinking.

According to Campbell, Johnston<sup>16</sup> and Travis, only the 'revelatory' nature of perceptual experience could account for our capacity of making *de re* judgments about the surroundings. The very particulars' being directly presented to the subject in experience, without any semantic intermediary like representations, can enable us to judge directly *about* them, not just through mental representations of them. As Johnston 2006, 265, writes "without sensible consciousness we would not have any singular thought about perceivable objects". Our PEs "introduce particulars as topics for thought" (Johnston 2004, 130) and "make external entities available as objects of immediate demonstration" (Johnston 2006, 282). Without that function of 'bringing into view' realized by our PEs, not only could the world not control our empirical judgments, but our very scheme of descriptive identification would collapse.

Empirical judgments are exposures to error just because they presuppose that something worldly has being perceptually brought into view in the first place, the worldly object the judgment is *about* and which can make the judgment true or false. So perceptual experience is not a representational phenomenon but a way of directly "bringing the surrounding into view" (Travis 2004), whereas empirical beliefs and judgments are representations about portions of the world which perceptual experience has so brought into view and made available as a referent for true or false judgments. The role of PE is not that of representing the world. Rather, "the central task of seeing [...] in a thinker's life is to allow the world to bear, for that thinker, on what he is to think (and do) according as it bears on what is *so*" (Travis 2006, § 5).

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14 See Evans 1982, Cap. 4, Cap. 6. See also McDowell 1984.

15 On these semantic reasons for disjunctivism, Campbell 2002 insists emphatically. See also Travis 2006. On singular thoughts and object-dependency, the classical works are Evans 1982, Kaplan 1989, McDowell 1984, 1986. A singular thought about a perceived object is made possible by the very existence of the perceived object, *i.e.* that thought – with that content – could not be entertained without the existence of the perceived object it is about.

16 See Johnston 2004, 2006.

Again, conceiving veridical PE as the direct presentation of particulars as 'topics' for empirical thoughts is a way of avoiding the Detachment Problem which allegedly weighs on the Content View as well as on any other non-disjunctivist views. As it is evident, the semantic issue is deeply interwoven with the epistemological issue. So for advocates of DJ any semantic and/or epistemic 'interface' between the subject and the world would confine the mind within itself, and make it impossible for any knowledge of the world on the one hand, and any reference to the world on the other hand. At least the veridical experiences are to be thought as genuine presentations of worldly particulars so as to guarantee that Mind-World cognitive contact: that is the only way to cope with the Detachment Problem.

#### 1.2.4 – *Metaphysics*

Perceptual experiences are mental states<sup>17</sup> of a certain kind, which have a certain *nature*. As for any other entities over which we quantify, some criteria for the identity and the individuation of a given perceptual experience must be available, some type- or kind-individuation must be possible. Furthermore, among the many types and kinds under which a PE may fall, there must be a 'fundamental kind'<sup>18</sup> the PE belongs to which can somehow capture the deep metaphysical nature of such an entity.

From an intentionalist point of view, PEs are *essentially* individuated by their semantic properties, namely, by their respective representational content. A PE is what it is insofar as it possesses certain accuracy-conditions, independently on whether such conditions are satisfied in the world, *i.e.* on whether the content is exemplified or not. As a consequence, the very nature of the mental state a certain PE consists of must be indifferent to how the represented world is actually arranged. Indeed the semantic evaluability of a PE is possible just because the individuation of

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17 I have clarified (Chapter II, Section 1.1) that PEs are *episodes* rather than states. Here I just adopt the current use in order not to overload the discussion with terminological subtleties. It suffices to keep in mind that fact.

18 Martin insists on that a given PE must belong to a fundamental kind. The fundamental kind to which an experience belongs is “its most specific kind; it tells what essentially the event or episode is” (Martin 2006, 361). Whilst an item may have many natural properties, an item must fall in just one fundamental kind. That is what Wiggins 1980, 65, calls the 'ultimate sortal' of a thing. I personally find that notion highly suspicious, if it is meant to metaphysically 'carve the thing at its joints', rather than being more modestly meant as the result of a pragmatic taxonomy useful for certain descriptive or explanatory purposes.

such a state is independent on its semantic value (true/false, accurate/inaccurate). That seems to entail that a certain veridical PE could well have been an illusion or a hallucination – if things would have been different in the surrounding world – without being of a different kind or nature thereby. In other words, if the fact that a certain PE possesses a certain content fundamentally individuates that PE, and such a content is possessed by the PE independently on whether it is a veridical PE, an illusory PE or a hallucinatory PE, therefore the veridical perception being a genuine relation to the world – say, a relation of manifestation of the world to the subject – must be totally inessential to the nature of that PE. The PE is what it is independently on the world and on being a genuine relation with the world; the metaphysical nature of the PE, even of veridical PEs, is essentially world-independent.

Also from a metaphysical point of view, any conjunctive view for which a veridical perceptual state can be factored out into a world-independent psychological state, on the one hand, plus a certain arrangement of the world, on the other, is doomed to fail in accounting for the PE's being a cognitive contact to the world in which the world itself becomes manifest and 'disclosed' to the subject. In particular, if perceptual experience was representation, it could never be a presentation of the world itself in flesh and bones, because a representation is what it is independently of its content being or not being exemplified, whilst a presentation-manifestation of the world has a relational nature which is essentially determined by the very world the state is manifestation of<sup>19</sup>.

As a consequence, only a disjunctive view is able to account for the relationality of veridical perception, by assigning to the latter a different fundamental kind from that of illusions and/or hallucinations<sup>20</sup>. Hallucinations must be thought of as having a different metaphysical nature from veridical perception. Like the latter, they introspectively seem to be genuine relations of manifestation, but they aren't, so hallucinating involves a double mistake: about how the world is arranged, on the one hand, about the very metaphysical nature of one's own state, on the other hand<sup>21</sup>.

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19 On the opposition between an intentional view and a relational view on perception, see Crane 2006.

20 As we will see, some disjunctivists oppose veridical perceptions to illusions and hallucinations (ex. Martin), other disjunctivists oppose veridical perception and illusions to hallucinations (ex. Snowdon, Langsam, Fish).

21 On hallucinatory states being inaccurate both with respect to the world and with respect to the

The metaphysics of perceptual states cannot be given a conjunctive treatment, on pain of distancing the world from the subject also with respect to veridical cases, on pain of making the relationality of veridical states metaphysically irrelevant so to close the Mind in itself and leave the World outside. As it is conspicuous, that is nothing more than the metaphysical facet of the Detachment Problem.

## **Section 2 – The Good, The Bad and the Neutral**

### *2.1 – The Priority of the Successful*

Disjunctive views on perceptual experience take the veridical experience as basic and analyze the deceptive cases (ex. hallucinations) in terms of the veridical experience, they make no room for any neutral experiential states. Putatively neutral states are treated as states which must be either instances of the successful disjunct or instances the unsuccessful disjunct, where the disjunction is usually interpreted exclusively. So ascribing a 'neutral state' can only mean labeling it as a state you do not know whether is an instance of the one or of the other disjunct, rather than picking out a common ingredient to successful and unsuccessful states. Since the unsuccessful state on its own is analyzed in terms of the successful state, ascribing a 'neutral' state amounts to ascribing a state which at least seems to be a successful state but that seeming is not completely endorsed by the one who ascribes or self-ascribes the state.

Conjunctive views on perceptual experience take the neutral case as basic, and analyze the successful case by factoring it out into the neutral case plus some further ingredient. The unsuccessful case will be characterized by the lack of that further ingredient which determines success. The neutral case is instantiated both in the successful case and the unsuccessful case, as a common factor which makes up the successful case when conjoined with the further ingredient.

Apart from Radical Disjunctivism, a Disjunctive Treatment of PE may well involve a commonality of positive features between successful and unsuccessful states (say, VP and H). What matters for a view to be a form of DJ, is that the common features are not seen as the most relevant features in kind-individuating the two states as mental states, so that what the successful and the unsuccessful states 'fundamentally

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subject's introspection of those states themselves, see Martin 2006.

are' is common to them. Given that a mental feature can be more or less relevant in characterizing and individuating a mental state, it follows that there can be more or less moderate versions of (non-radical) DJ. I will argue that there is not an *aut-aut* opposition between conjunctivist views and disjunctivist views; some features may be common to the successful and the unsuccessful case and also mentally relevant to both, even if the unsuccessful case is analyzed in terms of the successful case and so the successful case is conceptually, explanatorily and metaphysically prior. I will argue that a moderately disjunctivist intentionalism is just such a view, on the top of being the most promising view in addressing the demand of Cognitive Contact raised by disjunctivists, *i.e.* in putting us in a position to solve the Detachment Problem.

In Chapter I I have argued that perceptual verbs and locutions like 'seeing' and 'seeing-that' are success-verbs, so the ascription of them encodes perceptual success. I have also argued that 'looking-F' conceptually depends on 'being F', so the idea of experiencing something as of red conceptually depends on the idea of successfully seeing something red. Also at the level of ordinary ascriptions the success-case is the basic one, by reference to which the deceptive cases are ascribed and understood.

The Content View can vindicate these ordinary intuitions about perceiving and experiencing, and also the disjunctivist core-idea that the success-case must be taken as the basic case by reference to which the neutral and the unsuccessful case are to be characterized. Nonetheless, the explanatory, conceptual and metaphysical priority of the success-case does not rule out the idea of a mentally relevant common factor between successful and deceptive experiences, between VP and H.

In order to show that, I will firstly introduce the basic teleo-functional framework, a particularly promising version of the Content View. Without arguing for the truth of that version, I will suppose it is true and argue that it is a good example of how the Content View can embed the intuition of the Good/Bad asymmetry and also meet the demand of Cognitive Contact which typically inspires the disjunctivist proposals. Differently from the radical DJ-cum-NR, a moderately disjunctivist Content View will not entail any obscurantist consequences about the apriori unaccountability of hallucinations: indeed, if the indiscriminability between a veridical perception and its hallucinatory counterpart had an explanation of any sort, this explanation would appeal to properties common to the hallucination and the veridical perception, but in



this case it would be not true anymore that the H and the VP have *nothing* relevant in common other than their subjective indiscriminability, as the radical disjunctivists like Martin and Fish hold.

## 2.2 - *Function and Content*

### 2.2.1 – *Where Do Semantic Properties of Perceptions Come From?*

No one would reasonably deny that perceptual capacities have been acquired by biological systems through evolution, in virtue of the survivor-value associated with them. A capacity realized by a mechanism which has been selected because the capacity it realized had a survivor-value, is a *teleo-function*. If a function – a mechano-function – is a causal role, a teleo-function is a causal role which has been selected because it contributes to the survivor and fitness of the organism equipped with the mechanism that implements that causal role. Biological functions are teleo-functions, so also perceptual functions, being biological functions, are such. According to teleo-semantic accounts of perceptual content<sup>22</sup> (TS), the content of a perceptual state is determined by the teleo-function of that state. The teleo-function of a certain type of internal state is not just its actual causal role, rather it is the causal role that type of state has been selected to realize. The basic perceptual teleo-functions are selectionally acquired by organisms through the history of the evolution of their species, indeed they are phylogenetically fixed and wired-in. Then individual learning may expand and determine perceptual deliverances by individually and ontogenetically 'selecting' other more fine-grained discriminatory capacities through exploiting the basic species-specific capacities.

Let us consider an environmental property, like [red]. According to a certain version of TS<sup>23</sup> an actual internal state you are in when you successfully discriminate something red, has the semantic content [is red] because the state is a token of a type of state produced by a mechanism which has been selected because the states produced by it reliably co-varied with the presence of something red, and having been so selected amounts to having the function of producing states which indicate

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22 See Millikan 1984, 2000, Dretske 1988, 1995, Papineau 1990, Cummins 1994, Neander 1995, Jacob 1999.

23 That is, for example, a view preferred by Dretske, Neander and Jacob. It is the information-based teleosemantics.

the presence of something red. Perceptual functions come from the evolution-based 'exploitation' of certain relations of co-variation between internal states and environmental conditions.

Suppose this sketchy story is true, so we have a plausible, naturalistic account of *why* certain states have certain contents, indeed such contents are objectively determined by specific indicator functions historically established through evolution at the level of species. Thus, to schematize things as briefly as possible, we have the following picture:

- 1) A *token* of a perceptual state derives its semantic properties from the type it is a token of: that type of state has the function of indicating certain environmental circumstances.
- 2) The *type* to which the token belongs derives its semantic properties from the mechanism which has the function of producing states of that type.
- 3) The *mechanism* that produces that type of state derives its 'content-giving' function from evolutionary selection, which has maintained that mechanism as a phylogenetic trait of the species *because* the states produced by it indicated certain environmental conditions (whose discrimination was somehow relevant for acting in a survivor-preserving way).

So, representational functions depend on biological functions, biological functions depend on the history of evolutionary selection. The content represented by a certain token is the environmental condition in presence of which the mechanism producing the type has the evolutionarily acquired function of producing a token of that type.

The teleo-functional proposal on perceptual content has the important virtue of accounting for the possibility of misrepresentation, differently from non-teleological causal-informational semantics<sup>24</sup>: the content is fixed not by whatever may cause the state, rather by the condition the state has the function of indicating. Normally the mechanism produces a token of its type in presence of the 'right' cause, but it can be

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24 The classical informational semantics is that articulated by Dretske 1981 and Fodor 1983. Whilst Dretske has realized the insufficiency of causal semantics and has integrated the causal component into a teleo-semantic theory (Dretske 1986, 1988, 1995), Fodor keeps skeptic about the teleo-semantic approaches. See Fodor 1990.

improperly activated by a different cause from that which it has the function of indicating. As a consequence, the content of an occurring state can very well be not exemplified, so the state can be incorrect/inaccurate/false<sup>25</sup>. If the content was fixed by whatever may cause the state, then each token would be a priori accurate/correct/true, so misrepresentation would be impossible. In fact, normally perceptual states are caused by their correctness-conditions, *i.e.* their contents, but in order them to have correctness-conditions it could not be that they *must* be caused by their correctness conditions. That they are mostly caused by their correctness-condition is not a mysterious pre-established harmony, rather is accounted for by the selectional logic of function-acquisition. The very reason why a mechanism has been acquired that produces that type of states, is that the occurrences of this type of state are reliably correlated with the presence of a certain property (which can be said to be 'the content' of these states only *once* the function has been established: *then* some tokens of the state can be false). That means that the acquisition of a function by a mechanism originally depends on a *real relation* between certain internal states and those environmental properties that now are the contents of these states. A function of  $\phi$ -ing is acquired by a mechanism because the mechanism has been successful in  $\phi$ -ing and  $\phi$ -ing is relevant for survivor and fitness. That is why a function is defined by reference to its successful exercises, not by reference to its failed exercises, even if failed exercises can well occur. But again, they are *failed* exercises of *that* function just because the function is defined by reference to its successful exercises.

To sum up that fundamental point: past successes in  $\phi$ -ing are the reason why a mechanism which  $\phi$ -es acquires the function of  $\phi$ -ing: when  $\phi$ -ing is producing certain states S in presence of certain conditions F, what is to be expected is that tokens of S are normally caused by F, *i.e.* by their contents. The reason why a perceptual state has the content it has, is the very same reason why a mechanism having the function of producing states representing that content has been selected in

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25 Suppose a token of the type which has the function of indicating [red] is actually caused by an instance of [green]. It can be a misrepresentation because its content is not fixed by whatever may cause it – in that case it would have the disjunction [red or green] as (a part of its) content – but only by that sub-set of potential causes the state has the function of indicating. That is known as the 'Disjunction Problem', which may be overcome by a causal-informational semantics only insofar as a teleo-functional component is added to the view. Causal roles alone cannot generate the right normativity for the property of misrepresenting to be consistency applicable. On that problem, see Jacob 1999, 78-140.

the first place.

With all that in mind, let us firstly state a general principle about the Good/Bad asymmetry:

*Principle of Dependence* (PD): There is a conceptual, explanatory and natural *asymmetrical dependence* of the Bad cases from the Good cases

A misrepresentation is such because it is a token of a type having the function of indicating something else than the property that has caused the misrepresentation itself. A failed exercise of a perceptual function is what it is because of the functional type it is a token of, so its characterization and definition are conceptually, explanatorily and *in primis* naturally ('metaphysically') dependent on the function of its type, which is determined by the cases in which the function is successfully exercised. The occurrence of a state with content C when C is not exemplified is the occurrence of a state whose type-individuation involves reference to a circumstance in which C is exemplified, namely, to a Good token of the same functional type. The content consists of the conditions under which the state would be correct, so it is specified by a situation in which a state of that type is caused by what it is 'supposed' to be caused by. The Bad case is analyzed by reference to the Good case, and not vice-versa. A neutral case is just a case for which it is not specified whether it is Good or Bad, but also the Neutral is ultimately characterizable only by reference to its Good counterpart.

Consider a hallucination as of something's being F. The content of that experiential state cannot be specified other than by reference to how the world would be, was the state *not* a hallucination but rather a veridical perception. A state caused by its content and representing it, a state through which a subject would become conscious of something perceived and of the real way it is, of it's being F.

Functions – be they successfully or unsuccessfully exercised – are *positive* capacities, general *dispositions*. Also perceptual functions are perceptual capacities. As such, their unsuccessful exercises are essentially 'privative' episodes, failures of the function they are exercises of.

The metaphysical relation between a function and its exercises is that between a

general positive capacity and the particular occurrences of that capacity, some of which realize the very what-it-is of that capacity (ex.  $\phi$ -ing), some which do not do that, even though they are still exercises *of* it.

A functional disposition can be exercised recursively, and some tokens of the functional type are failed tokens of their type, they do not do what they are 'supposed' to do as exercises of their function. So, what do a veridical and a correspondent deceptive experience have in common?

a) They are both occurrences of the same type, exercises of the very same functional type

b) One is a failed exercise of its functional type, one is a successful exercise

What is common to them is absolutely relevant for their description, their explanation, their very nature as mental episodes: they share a certain representational function, specified by the content they have. It is an essential feature of a token-exercise of an objective bio-function its being a token-exercise of that function. It is not a contingent feature of it, but a maximally relevant feature.

As we have seen, Martin introduces the idea of a “fundamental kind” each of our perceptual experiences should fall into, and holds that Hs and VPs cannot share their fundamental kind<sup>26</sup>. I do not want to discuss subtle issues concerning the (suspicious) essentialist metaphysics of 'fundamental kinds', but a plausible and non-ideological way of kind-individuating mental states like perceptual experiences, specially if we stay within a broadly naturalistic framework, is that of appealing to the natural functions of these states, something which is observer-independent<sup>27</sup> and explains, after all, why these states occur to us at all and why they have the features they have. So the taxonomy of perceptual states and their subsumption under types and subtypes is an empirical affair dependent on facts about evolution and natural history. A heart may have a morphology similar to that of a closed fist, perhaps a color similar

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26 The Aristotelian idea according to which any item must fall in one and only one fundamental kind, has been deeply articulated by Wiggins 1980.

27 Even if some deny that biological functions are objective and observer-independent (for example, Dennett 1978, 1991), among the philosophers of biology and the biologists themselves functional realism is overwhelmingly the mainstream view. On functions, see Allen/Bekoff/Lauder 1998, Buller 1999, Ariew/Cummins/Perlman 2009.

to that of a lung, it may make a certain noise, and so on, but such features are totally irrelevant for kind-individuating it. Rather, it is essentially defined by its bio-function, which is that of pumping blood through the circulatory system, any other apparent feature of it has to be explained with respect to its fundamental function: for biological organs, states or traits, their function just tells what they are, they are what they are insofar as they have a certain natural function. Perceptual states are no exception.

A malfunctioning heart that does not pump blood is still a heart – only in being a heart it is properly characterizable as malfunctioning – likewise a successful and a correspondent deceptive experience have the same function, and that also accounts for the fact that one is the deceptive counterpart *of* the other. If perceptual states are functional states, as it is very reasonable to hold, radical DJ must be false. Instead a moderately disjunctive treatment of the Good and the Bad – one which does *not* rule out that the Good and the Bad share positive and relevant properties – could be spelled out as follows:

*Teleo-functional DJ:*

*Either* the state/process/event S is an actualization of the function to realize which it has been produced, *or* S is a failed exercise of that function, that only *seems* an actualization of the function  $\phi$  but does not perform  $\phi$ .

*Perceptual Teleo-functional DJ:*

*Either* PE is an occurrent exercise which successfully realize the positive function/capacity of making one conscious of certain environmental circumstances through representing them accurately, *or* PE is an unsuccessful exercise of the same function/capacity that only *seems* to successfully perform the capacity it is a (failed) exercise of.

Such an exclusive disjunction embeds the idea that the Good is definitionally, conceptually and explanatorily prior to the Bad, indeed the Bad is characterized just by reference to the Good. The Bad is a failed example of that of which the Good is the paradigmatic and normative example, but still the Bad seems and 'looks like' the

Good, so it may be not discriminable from the Good.

In addition, the disjunctive treatment of PE in such terms also embeds the idea that the Neutral is not an autonomously characterizable situation, rather its ascription just rests on the subject's condition of not being in a position to tell whether she is in presence of the Good or of the Bad disjunct. Therefore, there is no definitional, conceptual, or explanatory independence of the Neutral case, so *a fortiori* there is no priority of the Neutral over the Good and the Bad cases, as in the conjunctivist views as opposed to the disjunctivist ones.

The asymmetric dependence of both the Bad and the Neutral from the Good is compatible with the fact that the Good shares with the Bad positive relevant features (functional facts above all)<sup>28</sup>, those in virtue of which it is not a mystery that the Bad may falsely seem an instance of the Good till the point to be subjectively indiscriminable from the Good. More on that, below.

### 2.2.2 - *Perceptual Capacities Realize Relational Functions*

A perception is a certain kind of causal and cognitive relation of the subject with the surrounding environment. Perceptual capacities are an example of those functions that put the organism in relation with the environment by being activated by a certain condition outside the perceiver. A perceptual state is something that happens inside as a consequence of something that happens outside that the perceptual state itself, in being caused by it, somehow indicates or represents.

In Chapter III have argued that visual perception is a real relation to the environment, the seeing-relation (see also Chapter I), which involves a representation of a perceived object as being such-and-so, where these properties are represented under a phenomenologically salient Mode.

I have also argued that perceptual Content is object-dependent, so perceptual experiences are *de re* states with a demonstrative Content. The Content is made out of the Object plus the content, where by 'content' (lower-case) is meant the properties the PE represents the Object as having (under a Mode). As a consequence, what

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28 As we will see, these functional facts, in case of conscious perceptual experiences, can be reflected in phenomenology. In fact, our very perceptual phenomenology has the function of making us conscious (in certain distinctive ways) of the representational states we are in, so of the environmental features they represent when successful.

makes a PE accurate or inaccurate is whether – and to what extent – the properties the PE represents its Object as having are properties that the perceived Object actually has. Being the PE essentially object-dependent, its Content and also the kind it belongs to, are dependent on causal and external factors, they do not depend only on subjective factors. So, also for the version of the Content View I have been articulating, the Cartesian Principle must be false:

– CP: *It is not true that:* if two mental states are subjectively indiscriminable, they are mental states of the same nature, kind and type

PE are object-involving relational states, so a state subjectively indiscriminable from a certain PE obtained by the removal of the PE's distal object, would *not* be a PE anymore, but something else.

For the same reason, also the Accessibility Principle (see Chapter III, Section 2.5) must be false:

– AP: *It is not true that:* if two experiences are subjectively indiscriminable, they must have the same Content

Subjective indiscriminability does not even entail sameness in Content. Change the object with another visually indiscriminable object, and the Content will change: the PE will represent another Object as having certain properties, the Content of the PE, being a *de re* content, would involve another *res*. Remove the Object completely, and you will not have a PE anymore, since the Content of a PE is essentially relational and object-involving.

But subjective indiscriminability – *contra* Radical DJ – is grounded on a positive phenomenal character which the indiscriminable experiences share. Therefore, the phenomenal character cannot be determined by the Object, rather it is determined by the properties the (putatively) perceived Object is represented as having, and by the Mode under which these properties are represented (ex. Visual Mode with its distinctive phenomenology), according to the following scheme:



content + Object = Content

Mode + content = phenomenal character

Therefore the Mode does not determine the Content, the Object does not determine the phenomenal character.

Another principle that that version of the Content View must reject – so that, again, it embeds another demand advanced by disjunctivists – is the Proximate Cause Principle (PCP):

– PCP: *It is not true that:* a mental event  $E^1$  is of the same kind as a mental event  $E^2$  iff  $E^1$  is brought about by the same kind of proximate cause as  $E^2$

Again, the existence of a distal cause (an Object) is essential for a certain experience to be a perceptual experience, namely, a relational event. A relational event and a non-relational event could have the same kind of proximate causes, but still they will not have to be mental states of the same kind, insofar nothing will ever make the subjective appearance of a perceptual relation to a distal object into a genuine perceptual relation, if the distal object or cause is removed. But sameness in kind of proximal causes is compatible with absence of distal causes, therefore that sameness cannot be sufficient for making two mental states identical in kind.

To sum up, subjective indiscriminability between two experiences is not sufficient either for their sameness in kind, type or nature (CP is false) or for their sameness in Content (AP is false), nor is sameness in kind of proximate causes sufficient for sameness in kind, type and nature. But indiscriminability is grounded in sameness of positive phenomenal character, which depends on the Mode and on the properties the experiential state represent the Object as being, where there is an object at all, or the 'putative' Object as being, where there is no Object. Before saying something about that puzzling introduction of the notion of a 'putative object', I want to remark that this version of the Content View does represent a form a moderate DJ, but the relevant disjunction needs to be spelled out not by contrasting veridical perceptions against hallucinations, but by contrasting genuine perceptual experiences (veridical

and illusory) against hallucinations, which are not perceptual experiences despite the subjectively 'look' to be such. Let us see.

### 2.3 - *Where Do We Put Illusions?*

Until now, we have considered the disjunctivist proposal as contrasting hallucinations (H) with veridical perceptions (VP). *Tertium datur*, though: indeed perceptual illusions, or inaccurate perceptions, are neither hallucinations nor veridical perceptions. Be them I, between H and VP.

Perceptual experiences are not intra-mental events, rather they are subject-environment relations. Perceiving is being in causal and cognitive contact with an external object, that is also entailed by the fact that the perceptual object enters into the accuracy-conditions and so provides the PE with a demonstrative semantic content. The object is the target of the perceptual representation, and it's having or not having the properties represented by the PE *of* it, is what makes the PE accurate or not. It is in being of the object O, that the PE is evaluable for accuracy with respect to the represented property F. A PE is essentially about its environmental object, which also is its distal cause. Therefore such an aboutness is causally, contextually determined, and makes the PE true or false *of* its object.

Now, an illusory perceptual state is a perceptual experience which is still successful in being a genuine perceptual relation, on the one hand, despite that it is unsuccessful in representing a certain (inaccurate) way the object the state is a genuine relation to, on the other hand. For example, an illusory visual experience is a case of 'seeing-O', which involves a certain discrimination-relation with an environmental object which causes the very state (see Chapter I), but it is a case of unsuccessful representation of the seen object as being in ways which happen to be different from the ways this object actually is.

Now, for Martin and others the disjunctive treatment of PE should contrast H and I with VP, namely, deceptive or Bad cases with Good cases. But there is Bad and Bad: illusions and hallucinations are radically different types of mental states, the first is a real relation with an environmental object, the second is not a real relation at all but just a subjective appearance of that.

As a consequence, the right and relevant disjunction should not be:

a) PE: *Either* VP *or* (H, I)

but rather:

b) *Either* PE (VP, I) *or* H

a) contrasts veridical perceptions with deceptive perceptions, independently of whether deceptive perceptions are hallucinations or illusions, whereas b) contrasts relational experiences with non-relational experiences, independently on whether the relational experiences (PE) are deceptive or not. These contrasts are very different ones, and give rise to very different sorts of disjunctivism.

According to b) – for which I am arguing for – *hallucinations are not perceptual experiences*, but illusions are perceptual experiences. An illusion makes a wrong comment on a real perceptual target, whilst a hallucination only seems to make a comment on a real perceptual target but it is 'targetless', it is only an appearance of a relation but in fact it has no objectual target.

Consider a VP, a H and an I which are 'correspondent' and subjectively indiscriminable, so they share their phenomenal character. What do they differ in fundamentally?

The VP is a real relation with an environmental object which it represents as being the ways it is, so it is successful both in making the subject visually conscious of a seen object, and in making the subject visually conscious of their properties (by accurately representing these properties). So, VP is successful in a double sense. It is an example of the Good as a real environmental-representational relation, and it is an example of the Good as the particular environmental relation it is, namely, as a representation which accurately represents its environmental target: the content is exemplified.

The Illusion is still a real relation with the environmental object, but it represents the object as having properties that the object does not have. So, it is successful in making the subject visually conscious of an object and in representing certain properties as *of* the object it is (successfully) about, but it is an example of the Bad in being the particular representational relation it is, namely, in having a content which

is not exemplified by the perceived object.

The Hallucination is *not* a real relation with any environmental object, so it is an example of the Bad in being the failure at *being* a subject-environment relation, and it is an example of the Bad in representing things as they are not. Not only is it an only apparent relation to an environmental object, but it represents the 'putative' object (it is an apparent relation with) as different from the way any real object in the surrounding actually is<sup>29</sup>.

Accordingly, I and H, with respect to VP, involve different levels of introspective mistakes. A VP introspectively seems to be a real relation with a perceived object having the properties it appears to have in the PE. Since the VP is a relation to a perceived object, and the object is as it appears to be in the PE, a VP normally gives rise to two levels of introspective success: the VP 'looks' the way it is insofar as it looks like a perceptual relation, and the VP looks the way it is insofar as it looks like a successful perceptual relation, namely the properties it attributes to the object are the right ones.

An illusion involves an introspective mistake, because it subjectively seems a VP, namely, a successful perceptual relation which attributes to the perceived objects properties the object has. It is not what it seems, because the apparent properties of the object are not properties actually had by it. Yet an illusion involves introspective success, because it subjectively looks like a real relation to a perceived object, and from this point of view an illusion looks just what it is.

A hallucination involves two levels of introspective mistakes,. On the one hand, it subjectively looks like a perception (a genuine relation to an environmental object) without being such; on the other, it subjectively looks like a *veridical* perception, a perceptual relation which accurately attributes certain properties to an object it is putatively related to. But it is not accurate as it seems.

A H, an I and a VP may well be subjectively indiscriminable, but their phenomenal character is radically deceiving in the case of H (a H misleads us about the deep nature of the state we are in), it is moderately deceiving in the case of I (an I misleads

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29 Here I do not consider the case of veridical hallucinations. Normally, hallucinations make us represent the surrounding world as different from the way it is, even if an extreme coincidence could occur in which we hallucinate a world that happens to be identical to the real world we are actually facing.

us about the accuracy of the state but not about the deep nature of the state we are in), and it is not deceiving in the case of VP. VPs are generally what they seem to be, perceptual relations to an object which present us with the actual properties of that object.

We may then contrast either I with VP, or PE (I, VP) with H, but these contrasts are very different ones:

1) Illusory/Veridical Disjunction:

*Either* PE is a subject-environment relation that successfully represents its object, *or* it is a subject-environment relation unsuccessful in enabling the subject to access to (some of) the perceivable properties of the object, even if it introspectively *seems* to be successful.

2) Perceptual Experience/Hallucination Disjunction:

*Either* E is a perceptual relation to the environment (be it accurate [=VP] or inaccurate [=I]) or it is a state which only *seems* to be a perceptual relation with the environment but it is not such [=H]

It is 2), not 1), the most significant disjunction. An accurate and an inaccurate PE are the same type of relation, they have the same function of representing an environmental target and they are successful in doing it, although only VP is successfully also in accurately doing it<sup>30</sup>.

Above all we need to contrast relational states with non-relational states. Only the first are genuine perceptual experiences, even if the second kind may be indiscriminable from the first and have a misleading relational introspective appearance. So disjunctivists are right in saying that hallucinations have a different nature from veridical experiences. But on the one hand, such a difference in nature does not prevent them from sharing a positive phenomenal character with perceptual

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30 That the right disjunction is the perception/hallucination one rather than the veridical/deceptive one, is embedded in the disjunctive treatment proposed by Snowdon 1981, 202: “it looks to S as if there is an F: *either* [there is something which looks to S to be F] *or* [it is to S as if there is something which looks to him (S) to be F]”. The first disjunct expresses a *de re* seeming, whereas in the second disjunct the object falls under the scope of the seeming-operator. Note that the first disjunct would be satisfied also by an illusory experience.

experiences, *pace* radical DJ; on the other hand, the difference in deep nature as mental kinds is not between veridical experiences and deceptive experiences in general, but between relational experiences (veridical and illusory perceptions), and non-relational experiences (hallucinations). The point is relationality, rather than deceptiveness.

#### 2.4 – A Problem: The 'Function' of Hallucinations

I have argued that mental states should be teleo-functionally type-individuated, so a functional identity is sufficient for sameness in type. Since phenomenal character tracks intentional content (see Chapter V)<sup>31</sup> and content ultimately depends on teleo-functions, a sameness of functions could account for the sameness of phenomenal character, on which indiscriminability is grounded.

On the other hand, I have proposed a disjunctive treatment of perceptual experiences and hallucinations, so the indiscriminability and the commonality of phenomenal character between PE and H cannot be sufficient for sameness in type. But if type-individuation should be based on teleo-functions and phenomenal character is also dependent on teleo-functions, is it not incoherent to say that PEs and Hs belong to different types of mental state, on the one hand, and that they may share their phenomenal character, on the other? Do PEs and Hs have then the very same teleo-function? But if so, should we not reject any disjunctive treatment of them?

The objection could be formulated like this: granted that any taxonomy and type-individuation of mental states should be based on teleo-functional factors<sup>32</sup>, presumably also hallucinatory states have the double function of:

- 1) *being* a perceptual-representational relation with environmental objects
- 2) being an *accurate* and veridical relation with such environmental objects.

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31 Remember that by *content* (lower case) I mean the properties the Object is represented as having in the PE. The Object is the other component of the Content (upper case), but the Object does not determine phenomenal character. While the Content is object-dependent, *i.e.* it is a *de re* content, the phenomenal character is not.

32 At least, any taxonomy of perceptual states. One can doubt about the efficacy of a naturalization based on a teleo-semantic account of thoughts, beliefs and propositional attitudes in general. But perceptual states are more evidently, and less problematically, to be considered as produced by functions which are a byproduct of evolution.

1) and 2) can be considered to entertain a determinable-determinate relation. Although both of them are frustrated functions of H, I have argued so far that being a successful or a failed example of a certain teleo-function does not prevent a token to be typed according to its function. Indeed what type-individuates a teleo-functional state is what it is *supposed* to do, not what it actually does. Therefore we have a problem in justifying why hallucinations and perceptual relations should be told apart even if they share their teleo-functional type, since that seems inconsistent with the teleo-functional account we have used to criticize radical and anti-intentionalist forms of disjunctivism. Wasn't sharing the function sharing the most relevant feature?

The problem should be faced by firstly coming back to the very notion of relational teleo-function<sup>33</sup>. A relational function is a function of doing something when some external condition occurs. Perceptual functions are relational functions *par excellence*, because they just represent certain external conditions when they occur. More precisely, *given* an object that causes the perception and is its target, the perceptual episode represents *it* as being such and so, say F and G.

A relational function is just a potential function before being applied to a concrete context it is supposed to be set off by. Only the application of the function to a certain external circumstance, context or domain of reality can be considered as a genuine exercise of it. Before being exerted, a function is just an abstract disposition, a potential cognitive reaction to certain circumstances. Now, it is completely different from a mechanism to be activated without *any* pertinent circumstance at all, or to be activated by the *wrong* circumstances. A wrong relation is not an absent relation.

Moreover, the environmental context provides the 'adaptors' which make the general function an adapted function, a function applied to a concrete domain of reality. Let us make some examples.

Consider the mimetic function of a chameleon. His skin has the general function of [becoming of the color of the background]. Given a certain background – say, a certain shade of green – the general function is adapted to the concrete context and becomes the function of [becoming of *that* shade of green]. Provided that the

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33 Such a notion has been articulated by Millikan 1984.

evaluation of accuracy for such a function depends on the fine-grainedness of the chromatic adaptability (that depends on the very function of the chromatic adaptation, which is that of not having been spotted by certain predators having a certain visual acuity and normally being at certain distances, and on and on), but the exercise of that general function once adapted to the concrete contexts can be successful or unsuccessful. Suppose the chameleon becomes yellowish and makes itself more noticeable, then the token-exercise of that general function is inaccurate because its accuracy is measured by the contextual domain of reality. It is measured by the objective color of the background the function is a function of 'becoming-like'. The background in which the animal is actually located is the occasional *target* of the mimetic function, that which measures the success of that relational function. The color-change is a *real* relation between the chameleon's skin and the color of its background-space. Given some other conditions – noise, danger, unknown environment – the target of that function of [becoming the same color of] causes the activation of the function itself, it is an environmental input. The skin has to become *like that*. Now, imagine that the mimetic mechanism is activated without *any* relation to the surroundings, not as a reaction to any environmental stimulus but just because of some internal malfunctioning. The activation of a certain relational mechanism without the presence of any *relatum* to which the mechanism is normally supposed to react (suppose it is triggered during the night) would not be a genuine exercise of the relational function. An exercise of a relational function, be it Bad or Good, would be a genuine relation with an environmental target, with a standard domain of application. Generally speaking the animal is in a 'mistaken' or incorrect state, because a mechanism is triggered for no reason, perhaps with useless dissipation of energy and increase of risks. But that would not properly be a wrong exercise of the function  $\phi$ , insofar as is a relational function which is exerted only when applied to a certain target-domain. Rather, the state is a state that *would be* an exercise (failed or successful) of  $\phi$  *if* there was a causal context which would work as an 'adaptor'. Such a context of application would also be the context of normative evaluation for that exercise. Without such a causal context, without a proper environmental cause/input/target, the state is not an inaccurate exercise of the relational function, rather it is the *absence* of the exercise of a function, despite the respective



mechanism has been triggered which produces tokens of the type normally having the function of  $\phi$ -ing. A failure at being a relational function is something radically different from a genuine relation which is a failure as such (as a relation). We should not confuse an unsuccessful relation with the failure at *being* a relation. The second is a mistake of a higher order, it is not a mistake as a normatively evaluable relation, or as a reaction to a certain condition, which is not as it should be. Here there is no reaction to external condition at all, neither proper nor improper. It is a sort of meta-functional mistake, so to speak.

Consider the digesting function. Digestive apparatus is a very complex mechanism composed by many sub-mechanisms which cooperate by implementing sub-functions that together enable digestion. It is the function of metabolizing or processing incoming food. But the digestive apparatus does not have the function of *being* a relation with the food assumed by the animal. Rather, given a certain amount and type of food, the digestive apparatus has the function of processing *it*. *Given* the target, the function is that of reacting to that target in certain appropriate ways. The digesting-relation involves the presence of food as its causal, triggering context, there is no digesting function of being a relation with the food; rather, to repeat the fundamental point, once there is incoming food, then a dedicated mechanism has the function of processing *it*. Imagine that the digestive process is activated without reason when no food is coming in: broadly speaking, that situation would be a 'mistake' of the mechanism of course, but by no means could that situation be compared with one in which the incoming food is being processed in a wrong or inaccurate way. In that latter case, the food is the real, normal *relatum*, the domain of reality to which digestion applies. But an activation of the same process without incoming food is not a digestive process at all, it is not a genuine exercise of the digestive function, neither a Good nor a Bad one. There is no relation with any food, so no relational function is exercised, rather a mechanism is improperly activated which *should* have been activated only to exercise a relational function in presence of a certain *relatum*.

Now consider perceptual experience in the same vein. Perception is a relational function such that, given an environmental object which causes the perception, it has the function of representing *it* as being a certain way. Perceptual functions do not

include the function of *being* a causal relation. Rather, given the causal relation with the *relatum* (an object), perceptual states have the function of being a Good *relatum*, so to speak, that of representing their target accurately. That is why hallucinations are not perceptual experiences even if they may have some functional analogies with them (analogies plausibly responsible for the sameness in phenomenal character). No colors, no mimicry; no food, no digestion; no environmental object, no perceptual experiences, full stop.

Illusions and veridical perceptions possess a genuine 'environmental intentionality', an aboutness determined by them being real perceptual relations to worldly objects. Since their Content is demonstrative, their Object measures their veridicality, so their having an Object is the reason why they are semantically evaluable at all. It is about their target, that they make certain 'comments', and it is the way their target is, that makes these comments veridical or falsidical.

Despite their subjective indiscriminability and their commonality of phenomenal character, perceptual experiences (illusory or veridical) and hallucinations do not possess the same nature. They do share certain functions though. Hallucinations are also states which 'should' be triggered by a perceived object, so they 'should' be perceptual relations but they aren't, they are non-applied functions, non-demonstrative states, but they exhibit the appearance of perceptual relations because the original function of that type of states *should have been* that of representing the surrounding environment. This only potential commonality of basic functions account for their commonality of conscious phenomenal character, at least that seems to be a very good working-hypothesis.

Without entering in that delicate topic, I just suggest that it is reasonable to take our capacity of having perceptual states with a conscious character (so, subjectively accessible and introspectable) as a byproduct of our evolution. Even if it is far from clear *why* certain states have certain phenomenal characters and other states have others, it is highly plausible that the tracking-relation between our phenomenal character and the objective content of our perceptual states, depends on the value of our conscious access to our perceptual states for our lives, for our success in acting, planning, reasoning, and so on. Conscious experience track representational functions 'for us'.

In fact, in case of hallucination the phenomenal character is still made out of representational properties, but *nothing* environmental is represented as having these properties. That opens what I have called (in Chapter III, Section 2.5) the Problem of Semantic Gap, which I will face now.

## 2.5 – *The Semantic Gap of Hallucinatory Contents*

### 2.5.1 *Introducing the Problem*

Hallucinations exhibit a presentational phenomenology just like veridical experiences (and illusions). Their conscious character of 'felt reality' needs to be given an explanation within an intentionalist view. If hallucinating is sensorily entertaining a content which is not exemplified, what is then exemplified or at least 'present before the mind' when one is hallucinating? What is the hallucinatory phenomenal character made out of, so to say? What do we attend to in introspecting a H?<sup>34</sup>

Besides that phenomenological issue, there is a related semantical issue, concerning the very content of hallucination. A very peculiar semantic structure, different from that of perceptual experiences, needs to be assigned to Hs. Indeed, according to the Singularity Thesis I have defended (see Chapter III, Section 2.4) the Content of perceptual experiences contains worldly particulars, so it is a *de re*, demonstrative content. But hallucinations are not perceptual experiences, even if they seem to be such because of their tricky PE-like phenomenology. They have no Object, so they must be taken to have no Content but rather just content. There are properties represented, but there is no worldly Object these properties as represented as belonging to. So, if PE's Content is object-dependent and H's Content is not, what does determine the accuracy-conditions of Hs? *Of what* are hallucinatory comments veridical or falsidical, what do they match or mismatch with, in not with an Object?<sup>35</sup> In fact, hallucinations intuitively seem to be mistaken or inaccurate states. In order to

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34 See Smith 2002, 224-5: "We need to be able to account for the *perceptual attention* that may be present in hallucination. A hallucinating subject may, for example, be mentally focusing on another element in a hallucinated scene, and then another, describing in minute detail what he is aware of. In what sense is this merely 'mock'? [...] The sensory features of the situation need to be accounted for. How can this be done if such subjects are denied an object of awareness?". On the topic of attention in hallucination, see also the remarks of Johnston 2004.

35 The scheme proposed in Chapter III, Section 2.5, makes the problem visible. Hallucinations have no Content.

be such they must have a semantic content, but their content cannot have the object-dependent semantic structure of the PE's Content. What does make Hs inaccurate or falsidical, if they are such at all, provided that the accuracy of PEs can be semantically evaluated *only* because their content is *de re*? If the Singularity Thesis is true for PE, we have an asymmetry with hallucinatory contents that needs to be accounted for. How can an Object-less sensory content be semantically evaluable? If hallucinations have instead a general and not object-involving content, why should the Generality Thesis not hold also for PEs? That is the Semantic Gap Problem, which I will treat in what follows.

### 2.5.2 – *Perceptual Content and Perceptual Awareness*

Intuitively a H that shared its conscious character with your actual experience would share with the latter also its phenomenology of 'felt reality' (Smith 2002, Siegel 2008) or 'bodily presence' (Husserl 1900). Hs have a presentational phenomenology, just like VPs and Is. This intuition can be made explicit and embedded into a principle we can call Principle of Item-Awareness, following Pautz 2007:

*Item Awareness* (IA): When S has a visual experience, there is something of which one is aware<sup>36</sup>

IA may lead to *Sense-Data* theory, if that S is aware of is identified with a mental object<sup>37</sup>. Given the possibility of illusions and hallucinations, what S is *always* aware of when having a visual experience cannot be mind-independent objects and properties, since in illusions some properties you seem to see are not actually there, in hallucinations the very object you seem to see as having certain properties is not there either (so neither the putative object nor 'its' putative properties are there). By

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36 Actually I consider 'visual' a determinate of the determinable 'perceptual', so a hallucination cannot be a visual experience, insofar as it is not a perceptual experience. Here by visual it is to be mean "*as of visual*", or having the subjective character normally *bona fide* visual experiences have. Visual experiences are seeing-episodes indeed.

37 IA is not identical to the principle Robinson 1994, 31, calls Phenomenal Principle (PP): "If there sensibly appears to a subject to be something which possess a particular sensible quality then there is something of which the subject is aware which possess that sensible quality". IA just says that in having a sensible appearance you are aware of something, PP says that if you have an experience as if something has a certain property, there must be an object that actually possesses that property. PP naturally leads to *sense-data*, IA is neutral about whether the 'something' you are aware of is an object having the property it seems to you something has in experiencing, or anything else.

generalizing the case of H and I, *Sense-Data* theorists conclude by generalization that in visually experiencing we are *always* (at least directly) aware of *Sense-Data*, even in case we are veridically perceiving (see Chapter II, Section 1.1.3).

As already noticed<sup>38</sup>, the Content View has been proposed – firstly, in the *Belief-Theory* version – as a way out from the unsatisfactory alternative between Sense-Datum theories and Direct Realism. If also visual hallucinations make us aware of something (IA), then what visual experiences as such make us aware of cannot be mind-independent items; since it cannot be *sense-data* either – given their extravagant ontology, their indeterminacy, and other problematic properties – what visual experiences make us aware of must have to do with the represented content, which for the intentionalist version of CV determines the phenomenal character of the visual experience, namely its being a state of conscious awareness.

A visual experience purports to present the subject with objects and features. Such a purporting-to-present nature of visual experience is analyzed by CV in terms of representing things as being a certain way. But the content of a veridical experience is not its Object. The Object of your VP is the perceived worldly object you become aware of, together with its properties (those your VP veridically attributes to it). That Object it is part of the object-dependent Content, so in consciously entertaining the Content of a PE we do become aware of its Object, besides becoming aware of certain properties it possesses (those properties your PE veridically represents it as having = the content of the PE).

According to certain versions of intentionalism, the items you are aware of in H are particulars which do not exist, so-called Meinongian objects<sup>39</sup>. When visually hallucinating a pink rat, you do see a pink rat, a *bona fide* particular you can demonstratively refer to, attend to, explore and so on; it's just that it does not exist, which is why you are said to be hallucinating it instead of perceiving it. So, there is a particular pink rat you are aware of, though a non-existent one. The Singularity Thesis can be straightforwardly maintained if we go Meinongian. Visual experience

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38 See *this chapter*, Section 1.2.1; Chapter II, Section 1.3.

39 According to Meinongianism (see Meinong 1904, Parsons 1980) there are some objects that exist and some that do not: intentional objects, imagined objects, desired objects, fictional objects are of the second kind. A hallucination has a Meinongian object, indeed it is about a particular which does not exist. The Meinongian ontology has been applied to solve the puzzle of hallucination firstly by Grossman 1974 (131ff.) and then by Smith 2002, chapter. 8.

always involves particulars, but sometimes – when we hallucinate – these particulars that are involved in our experience do not exist. Existence is to be meant as a property that only certain particulars possess.

I do not want to discuss in too much detail the difficulties of that extravagant 'solution'. It is not clear to me whether such a version of CV is really different from *sense-data* theory. Is the non-existent rat mind-dependent or mind-independent? If it is mind-independent (so it is not a *sense-datum*), is it *causing* my very experience of it, as existent objects of perceptual experiences are expected to do? Could a non-existent rat ever cause anything? In addition, Meinongian particulars inherit all the puzzling problems had by sense-data, for example their indeterminacy<sup>40</sup>, their bizarre ontological status<sup>41</sup>, and so on<sup>42</sup>. Introducing an *ad hoc* ontology does not look that promising.

Smith 2002 courageously advocates the Meinongian solution but he adds that the awareness-relation of H with non-existent particulars should be understood neither ontologically nor semantically but *phenomenologically*. Such a restriction seems to be very reasonable, but at the same time it apparently makes the proposal a re-description of the problem rather than a solution of it: the “phenomenology of singularity” exhibited by hallucinations is not under discussion indeed. No one denies that in H it is phenomenologically *as if* we became aware of particulars, that is but the problem itself, not the solution. Given that we *seem* to be aware of something when hallucinating, what are we aware of in fact? If the answer is that we are aware of Meinongian particulars phenomenologically meant, are we saying something more than that hallucinations have a presentational phenomenology in which it seems to the subject she is becoming aware of seen particulars? Moreover, I am trying to address the Semantic Gap Problem, which is interwoven with the phenomenological

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40 Smith 2002, 247 gets rid of the problem by pointing that Meinongian objects do not exist, so we should not worry about their indeterminacy. I find that answer unsatisfactory. After all positing non-existing objects as objects of awareness in hallucination, does not avoid the original puzzle: “how can one be aware of something which does not exist?”. For arguments in favour of Meinongianism, see also McGinn 2004.

41 *Where* are they, for example? One could reply: “well, they are nowhere, since they do not exist, so where is the problem?” The problem is exactly that if they do not exist, they cannot do the ontological and semantic job of being genuine *relata* of a subject-world relation. They are neither 'into' the mind (otherwise they would be sense-data) nor in the world (otherwise they would exist and have causal powers).

42 A criticism of the Meinongian solution to the puzzle of the hallucinatory object is to be found in Pautz 2007.

issue, but which concerns the gappy Contents of hallucinations and their apparent lack of evaluability. If a PE is accurate/inaccurate only insofar as it has a worldly object – that may or may not be the way the PE represents it to be – how can a Meinongian object make the hallucination accuracy-evaluable at all? *Ex hypothesi* the Meinongian object *is* the way the H represents it to be (the non-existent rat *is* pink). If that non-existent particular did the semantic job the perceived object does in perceptual experiences (veridical or illusory), then Hs would well be *de re* states with the same semantic structure as PEs, but unfortunately they would be *always true*. Indeed, a PE is veridical when its Object is the way the PE represents it as being. But the Meinongian hallucinated rat is pink, so the respective hallucination, as any other H, is accurate and veridical!

Such an outrageous result makes me conclude that Meinongianism on hallucinatory contents is either a truistic *escamotage* for hiding a problem by re-stating it another way, or it is a bad solution of the problem, since it does not does justice of the intuitive inaccuracy of hallucinatory contents.

Now, the problem of Semantic Gap for H is: how can a H have accuracy-conditions at all if it is Objectless, since at least no normal worldly object is there to measure the accuracy of the H, *i.e.* since H lacks an object whose actual properties could be matched or mismatched by the 'comments' the H makes? *On what* object-topic does the H make its comments? On nothing at all?

Instead, the Item Awareness issue is for H is: what are we aware of in H, if by definition we are not aware of any worldly objects? The H's lack of an object must be somehow consistently reconciled with the phenomenological appearance that in H you are aware of 'something' after all (Item Awareness Issue), as well as with the intuition that Hs have fully-fledged accuracy-conditions which make them evaluable as inaccurate (Semantic Gap Problem). Both phenomenologically and semantically, 'something' seems to do the job the worldly Object does in PE (veridical or not).

Of course there is an intimate connection between the topic of Item Awareness in hallucination and the topic of hallucinatory contents. Before facing the Semantic Gap problem, let us then continue to consider the Item Awareness Issue for a more moment, because inquiring the latter will be of help in treating the first, as we will see soon.

Having left behind the Meinongian proposal as patently inadequate, another more promising idea is that when hallucinating we become aware of *properties*, if not of particular objects. That is a more attractive option<sup>43</sup>. So the Principle of Item Awareness holds, but in H we are aware just of properties and never of particular objects. Let us call it the *Property View*.

When veridically perceiving we become aware of the perceived objects as well as of their properties, through representing them accurately. The perceived object is the way our experience represents it to be, so veridically perceiving it makes us aware both of it and of the properties it actually instantiates. VP are episodes of object-awareness and property-awareness at a time.

When having an illusion, we become aware of a perceived object, but (some of) the properties that it looks to have according to our PE are not instantiated by it. Now, are we *aware* of the properties the perceived object look to have, even if these properties are not instantiated by the object?

When hallucinating, it is as if we were seeing a particular, and it is as if we were becoming aware of certain properties of that putative particular. Provided that we are not aware of any particular, are we *aware* at least of the *properties* our H attribute to the putative object it purports to present us with? In the illusory and in the hallucinatory case, there are properties our experience represents, which are not instantiated by any perceived object. In the illusory case, the experience represents the perceived object as having such properties, so it is inaccurate and falsidical because of the way the worldly object actually is. In the hallucinatory case, we also have the semantic problem of justifying inaccuracy. Illusions pose a phenomenological problem (Item Awareness), hallucinations pose also a semantic problem (Item Awareness and Semantic Gap) in addition.

Thus, even if we take it that in H we are aware of properties – following the Property View – the Semantic Gap Problem would not disappear as a result. Although, this view about Item Awareness in H could be a way toward a satisfactory treatment of it. Let us see if it is the case.

According to Dretske, Tye and Johnston<sup>44</sup>, in hallucination we are aware of a “cluster

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43 See Dretske 1999, Johnston 2004, Tye 2005. The view is deeply analyzed and discussed by Pautz 2007.

44 See also Foster 2000 and Forrest 2005.



of uninstantiated properties” (Dretske 1999, 102), a set of “properties with no bearer” (Tye 2005, 169), “of uninstantiated sensible profiles” (Johnston 2004, 135). The idea – which can be spelled out in different ways<sup>45</sup> – is that in H we are not aware of objects but the phenomenal character of 'felt reality' depends on a complex of properties our H represents as being instantiated and of which we are aware. Such properties we are aware of in H are uninstantiated *universals* (Dretske 1999), which misleadingly seem to us to be instantiated by something. So, in H we are aware of no particulars at all but only of universals or uninstantiated properties, but it just seems to us that we are aware of particulars. Our H subjectively seems to be a PE. A cluster of uninstantiated properties (ex. [red] and [round], [small], [smooth] and so on) we are phenomenally aware of can make us wrongly take our state as the factive awareness of a particular apple, but there is no apple there we are aware of instead: the hallucinated 'apple' is not a particular – not even a Meinongian particular – but a cluster of uninstantiated properties. I add that such clusters must be thought of as *structured*: visually hallucinating a red circle on a green square is not the same as hallucinating a green circle on a red square, even if the two Hs involve the same properties [red], [green], [circle], [square]. Each of the two Hs makes us aware respectively of a different *Structured Property Complex*, even if these complexes are made out of the same (uninstantiated) properties. The phenomenal character of a H is determined by the properties the subject is aware of, and by the specific way they are related in the Structured Complex in which they are involved (and by the distinctive Mode, ex. Visual). Such structured complexes of universals are all we are visually aware of in H. On the contrary, in PE we are aware also of the particular objects which instantiate the properties, at least of those objects which our PEs represent as having certain properties. In illusion we are aware of genuine particulars and uninstantiated universals, in hallucination we are aware *just* of uninstantiated universals.

Such a view is consistent with the disjunctive treatment that contrasts PE with H. Whilst in PEs we are genuinely related to worldly objects and we become aware of these objects through perceiving them with their properties, in Hs we only seem to be related to worldly particulars having certain properties, therefore we only *seem to be*

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<sup>45</sup> See Pautz 2007 for a careful consideration of the many options on the market.

*aware* of particulars, but we are aware only of structured complexes of uninstantiated properties. The presentational phenomenology and the phenomenology of singularity possessed by H are misleading features of H, due to the fact that Hs seem to be PEs.

I have argued that hallucinations have a positive phenomenal character that they share with veridical and illusory perceptions, contrary to what radical DJ holds. Since I have also argued for the Singularity Thesis, hallucinations have an Object-less, 'gappy' content, made out of intentional properties, the properties that the hallucinatory experience, *if it was a perception*, would represent its Object as having. But Hs do not represent any object as having certain properties. Rather, in hallucinating it introspectively seems to us that we are aware of an object, and it also seems that such a putative object is represented as having certain properties. H's phenomenal character is determined by these represented properties, i.e. by the content. That content would be part of an object-dependent Content, *if* the hallucination was a perception, if it was what it subjectively seems.

All that means that the phenomenal character does depend on represented (structured complexes of) properties in such a way that it is independent on whether such properties are instantiated by particulars or not. Phenomenal character of visual experience is then object-independent, even if our experience is not neutral about whether there is an object which has these properties. In visually experiencing it does seem to you that you are aware of particulars having these properties, but if you are hallucinating it does *wrongly* seem to you so.

It is opportune not to hide that such an account of property-based phenomenal character is not fully satisfactory. What does it mean 'being aware of uninstantiated universals'? Is positing an awareness of uninstantiated universals a phenomenologically apt account of phenomenal character of hallucinations (as well as of perceptual experiences)? Can the 'felt reality' and the feeling of 'bodily presence' be explained by the awareness of universals? How can an awareness of universals exhibit a *sensuous* character? Could I be aware of an universal [greyness] if my actual PE was a hallucination of my laptop? How can I be aware of something which is not instantiated *anywhere*?<sup>46</sup>

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46 We cannot say that the universal of [grey] is instantiated in my mind: at that point it would be natural to re-introduce a mental object that instantiates the property, so rather than an uninstantiated universal it would be better thought of as a property instantiated by a sense-datum.

However, at least that is a tentative explanation of the hallucinatory phenomenal character and of its indiscriminability from the phenomenal character of veridical perceptions. Other views on perception are not in a better position to explain this. As we have seen, DJ-cum-NR leaves such indiscriminability as an insuperable mystery and has nothing substantive to say about the positive conscious character of hallucinations, a Content View that is committed to Meinongian objects is ontologically unsatisfactory and does not account for inaccuracy of hallucinations, a Content View which reduces hallucinatory objects of awareness to beliefs – on the lines of the Belief-Theory – is even more phenomenologically implausible, and so on.

Another radical solution is that of rejecting the very Item Awareness Principle (IA), namely, denying that whenever you have a visual experience you are aware of *something*. In ruling out particulars but accepting uninstantiated properties as hallucinatory objects of awareness, the Property View tries to account for hallucinations on the light on IA, which does appear to be intuitively true. But if that intuition was unreliable, then we would have no need of committing to the idea that there must be *some item* we are aware of in hallucination. That is the radical view explicitly hold by Pautz 2007, and already endorsed by Evans 1982: *in hallucination you are not aware of any 'item' at all*, neither particulars nor properties<sup>47</sup>. Where does IA's *prima facie* plausibility come from then?

According to Pautz, the intuition in favor of IA embeds the same mistake into which *sense-data* theorists have been trapped: the need of hypostatize the sensory content into 'items' you are supposed to be in genuine contact with. Instead of mental objects, the Property-View (as a version of the Content View which accepts IA) postulates that in H you are aware of uninstantiated properties on the basis of the following reasoning: since there are no worldly objects in H you are aware of (by definition), but in H you must be aware of some 'item' (IA), then you must be aware at least of the properties your H represent a putative object as having. The reasoning is the same

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We would be back to the sense-data theory with all its puzzles.

47 See Evans 1982, 199ff: “[...] when a person hallucinates, so that it appears to him he is confronting, say, a bus, then, whether or not he is taken in by the appearances, there is literally nothing before his mind”. The appearance of having something before the mind does not entail that there must be something before the mind (not even something 'mental'). Rather, “to hallucinate is precisely to be in a condition in which it seems right to the hallucinator to say that he is actually confronting something”.

as that which led to the position of *sense-data*, even if now it posits ontologically more plausible 'items' (uninstantiated properties) than *sense-data*.

But sensorily entertaining a content is not the same as being aware of 'items' that content is made out of. Having an H as of a red and round object, amounts to *sensorily entertaining* a certain content involving the properties [red] and [round], not to *being aware* of these properties. Bearing a relation to a content, for a given conscious state, does not amount to bearing an awareness-relation to the properties that content is the representation of. We are not aware of contents in the same way in which we are aware of objects and properties. Objects and properties can be represented by contentful states, they do not need to be object of awareness for a subject having those conscious contentful states<sup>48</sup>. The relation of 'being represented' is not the relation of 'being object of awareness'. My belief can represent unicorns as moving, but I do not need to be aware either of unicorns or of the property of movement, in order to have the belief. Rather, I need to entertain that content, so to represent unicorns and movement, but just in the same way in which I am not aware of any unicorn (they do not exist indeed) I am not aware of their movement either, nor am I aware of the [movement]-property, even if I exert the respective concept.

If we drop IA, then we can allow that in hallucination we are not aware either of particulars or of properties. Awareness is to be thought of as a factive or implicative relation: if you are aware of X, then X is there as a genuine object of your awareness. On the contrary, representation is not factive or implicative. If your experience represents F, not only does it not mean that F exists, but it does not mean either that F is a genuine object of your awareness.

So hallucinated properties are not properties you are aware of, rather they are represented properties, properties your hallucination represent as being instantiated and which then *seem* to you 'items' you are aware of. Just as the rat you hallucinate is not something you are aware of, also its pinkness is not something you are aware of, even if in hallucinating you *entertain* a content involving the attribution of pinkness to something. The phenomenal character of a VP makes you conscious of objects and properties, even if it is not something you are sensorily conscious *of*; the phenomenal character of an H fails at making you conscious of objects and properties, but it is not

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48 Even though in case of perceptual contents the Object is a constituent of the Content itself.

something you are sensorily conscious *of*. You do not 'see' your visual phenomenal character the way you see objects and properties, or the way it phenomenally seem to you to see objects and properties. On this basis, you self-ascribe a certain content to your experience, but that self-ascription is done by looking at the world, or at what seems to you to be the world according to your experience. In order to self-ascribe an experience with a certain content (made out of properties represented as instantiated by a putative object) on the basis of being in a certain conscious state, you do not need to see that conscious state itself, so of being sensuously aware *of* the very same conscious state of sensory awareness<sup>49</sup>.

Instead of being aware of items in H, we consciously entertain a content that can be ascribed to our experience insofar as that experience has a certain phenomenal character. Our being in a state with a certain conscious character puts us in a position to self-ascribe a state with a given content, but we do not 'see' the phenomenal character of our experience with an inner eye. Since we do not come to grasp the content of our experience by innerly perceiving the very experiences we have, there is no need to think that in order to consciously entertain a content we must be aware of the properties that our experience represents as instantiated by something<sup>50</sup>. Rather, we are aware of these properties only when the experience is veridical, so the properties are instantiated by a perceived object and then experience makes us factively conscious of them.

An experience exhibits a distinctive phenomenal character: in having the experience, you are *in* a state of awareness which has a phenomenal character, instead of being sensuously aware *of* your experience, or *of* its phenomenal character. You are aware *of* 'items' (objects and properties) only when they are exemplified, otherwise you enjoy a conscious state with such a phenomenal character that puts you in a position to self-ascribe an experience with a certain content. Sensorily entertaining a given content, for an experience with a certain phenomenal character, does not involve

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49 As Evans writes "there is no informational state which stands to the internal state as that internal state stands to the state of the world" (Evans 1982, 227-8). When it visually seems to you as if things are such and so, you self-ascribe a conscious perception with a content, but you do not 'see' either your own perception or its content, rather you self-ascribe your experience on the basis of what it seems to you to be there.

50 That difference between 'sensorily entertaining a content' and 'being aware of items' is articulated by Pautz 2007. I have benefited of the reading of the PhD Thesis by Conor McHugh, *Self-knowledge in Consciousness* (Edinburgh, 2008).

being aware of the properties and objects which would satisfy that content, were the experience veridical. Only when the content is satisfied, are you aware of such objects and properties. No need to be “aware of uninstantiated properties” in having an H with a certain content, you only need to *be* in a phenomenal state whose properties are the properties your H *represents* as being instantiated. To repeat the point, the properties your H represents as being instantiated do not need to be properties you are *aware* of. If you become aware of the represented properties of your hallucination, it is just because you self-ascribe an experience with a certain content. But that self-awareness – the awareness *that* you are having an experience with a certain phenomenal character and with a certain content – is not a sensory awareness anymore, rather it is a conceptualization of your sensory state and involves belief *that* you are having a state such-and-so<sup>51</sup>. The phenomenal character can well be made out of intentional properties given under a Mode – see Chapter III, Section 3 – even if one is not aware of these intentional properties and of the Mode itself. Rather, these properties given under a Mode *are* what make your state a conscious state with a certain phenomenal character, not something you are sensorily conscious *of*.

To conclude that survey of the available options: if we accept IA, the “items” we are aware of in H can be either particulars or properties or both. Particulars could be *sense-data* or Meinongian objects, so within the Content View if H involves awareness of particulars it must involve awareness of Meinongian, non-existent particulars. But Meinongianism on hallucinatory content is implausible, not only because Meinongian objects are ontologically problematic just as classical *sense-data* are, but also because such a view would entail that hallucinations are a priori accurate, which is absurd. It remains as the only plausible option that the items we are aware of in H are properties. Since in H we do not see anything actually having the properties we are aware of, these properties H makes us aware of must be Structured Complexes of *Uninstantiated Universals*. That view is phenomenologically unsatisfactory, and poses some problems. It is not clear what it could be for a sensuous state to involve the awareness of, say, the universal [red] and [round]. Nonetheless, no other view on perceptual experience does any better, so that

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51 On that view on perceptual introspection, see Evans 1982, cap. 7; Dretske 1995, cap. 2; Tye 1995.

perfectible account is better than nothing.

Another possibility is that of denying the Item Awareness Principle and holding that in Hs we are not aware of anything, either particulars or properties. Rather we consciously entertain a content such that we are in a position to self-ascribe an experience which, *if it was veridical*, would involve the awareness of certain objects and properties. That view entails a rejection of a perception-model of perceptual introspection. In introspecting your perceptual experience you do not become *sensorily* aware of the phenomenal character of your own experience – rather, your experience is a conscious state because it exhibits a phenomenal character, and you are *in* that state – but you judgmentally self-ascribe an experience with a certain character and content, on the basis of how things seem to be to you on the basis of that experience. That means that having a sensory state with a certain conscious character and content, and introspecting it, does not mean being aware of that character and content as 'items' you have a quasi-perception of. You cannot perceive your own perceptual state, its character and its content (where perceiving entails an awareness-relation), rather you can become judgmentally conscious of the fact that you are having a visual experience having a certain conscious character and a content (a content you entertain instead of being aware of it).

I find that account very convincing, but it is true that it entails a specific model of perceptual introspection that could not be easily shared by many. In any case, the only palatable alternative is that in H we are aware of uninstantiated properties: the choice between the two alternatives also depends on how we interpret the 'awareness relation'. If we allow that we are aware of the contents of our experiences, so of the properties represented by the experiences as being instantiated by something, then we can buy the Property-View, but we should keep in mind that we are adopting a loose notion of awareness, which in any case is not the same factive notion according to which we say that in veridical perceptions we become aware of worldly objects and properties. If we reject the Item Awareness principle, then we reserve the awareness to worldly objects and properties, so that hallucinations do not make us aware of anything. Hallucinations seem to be states of Item-Awareness but they aren't, they are deceptive both about the world and about themselves. That fits well with our moderately disjunctive version of the Content View. Either Hs *seem* to

make us aware of particulars and instantiated properties but they only make us aware of Structured Complexes of uninstantiated Universals (Property-View with IA), or Hs seems to make aware of particulars and properties instantiated by them, but they do not make us aware of anything at all (Rejection of IA). Both ways are plausible and present certain virtues. I do not want to argue for one or other option.

Independently of which of the accounts one prefers, what remains to be treated is the Semantic Gap Problem. Indeed in both accounts it is accepted that in H we are not aware of worldly particulars, so the content of H cannot be object-dependent. How can H be accuracy-evaluable and inaccurate?

Here is a proposal compatible with our moderate disjunctivism: hallucinations, strictly speaking, *lack* proprietary accuracy-conditions so they are not inaccurate either, rather they are neither accurate nor inaccurate just because there is no worldly object they represent as having the properties they represent, no object having properties which could be matched with the hallucinatory content. Hallucinatory content is essentially *gappy*, it is like a *potential* singular proposition where the box for the singular term is empty. There is no truth- or accuracy-maker, in other words. So there is not even inaccuracy. Hs make comments on no particular worldly topic.

But on the other side, hallucinations have a cognitive role, just like veridical experiences. They result in perceptual beliefs, and also in pre-doxastic 'stands' towards the environment<sup>52</sup> which orient behaviour, intentions, desires, planning, reasoning and so on. The cognitive effects of an hallucination (due the the original function of this type of state) – their causal and cognitive role in the economy of one's mental life – are the same as those of a certain veridical perception with the same content.

When I hallucinate a pink rat, there is *nothing* in the environment that I mistake for a pink item and for a rat. But I subjectively seem to be presented with a particular, and my state subjectively seems to attribute to 'that' putative particular the [being a rat]

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52 Also non-conceptual beings can hallucinate, and the apparent inaccuracy of their state needs an account which does not appeal to beliefs. But there are cognitive stands toward the environment which are pre-doxastic, for example the acts of 'seeing-as' which I have investigated in Chapter I, Section 4. Hallucinating animals have inaccurate stands toward the environment, but their hallucinatory state is not inaccurate in itself, since its Content is gappy. Their mistake has to do with the cognitive effects and consequences of the hallucinatory state: on the basis of their H they come to represent the environment wrongly, but the hallucination in itself is not a representation *of* any environmental object.



and the [pink] properties. My H is indiscriminable from a PE, so I introspectively mistake my state for a state of another nature. In particular, I mistake a non-relational, non-object-dependent and non-accuracy-evaluable state for a relational, accuracy-evaluable and object-dependent state. That mistake makes me take a *cognitive stand* toward my surrounding environment – consisting of beliefs and perhaps other more basic belief-like states – which is accuracy-evaluable, it is inaccurate. *These* representations, which are typical cognitive effects of the hallucinatory state, have a *general* content. For example “there is a pink rat there, which is moving in that direction”. Of course I can believe a representation to be demonstratively referring to “that” pink rat there, but my act is a failed act of demonstration, grounded on a false belief about there being a particular I am seeing. A failed act of demonstration is not an act of demonstration, rather something which I take to be such but which fails at *being* such.

When having a H we also form immediate (not inference-based) beliefs that: a) we are having a VP b) we are aware of particulars which are presented as being such-and-so. Both *beliefs* are wrong, the one about the nature of our state and the one about what is there in the world and how it is arranged. But the hallucination is not inaccurate in itself, rather it is mistaken for an accuracy-evaluable state because it is subjectively indiscriminable from a state of that kind.

So the intuition of inaccuracy of hallucination is vindicated and accounted for in two ways: 1) by arguing that it is a wrong intuition after all, since Hs are not accuracy-evaluable as they seem to be 2) by explaining why that intuition is so strong and apparently compelling. It is such because a cascade of immediate and psychologically compelling cognitive effects of H (beliefs and pre-doxastic cognitive stands) make us take the environment as being a certain way, so we are in an inaccurate state. The inaccuracy of the states is immediately dependent on the H, not of the H itself.

To sum up the discussion above: in H either we are aware of uninstantiated properties or we are not aware of anything. Without having to take a definitive stand toward these two options, what matters for the Semantic Gap Problem is that in any case hallucinatory states do not involve awareness of particulars. Accordingly, Hs

have gappy contents without Objects, and that makes them not accuracy-available. The Semantic Gap Problem must be treated by recognizing that gappy nature of hallucinatory contents, in the first place, and by doing two more things: firstly, we must recognize that the intuition in favor of the inaccuracy of H is wrong, secondly, we need to account for the compelling appearance of the intuition. The apparent inaccuracy of Hs depends on the cognitive effects of them: they result in beliefs and other cognitive stands toward the surrounding environment, which are inaccurate. So Hs are not inaccurate, but typically produce inaccurate states.

## 2.6 *Beyond The Detachment Problem*

### 2.6.1 *The Content View and the Detachment Problem*

In Section 1.2 on *this Chapter* I have introduced the Detachment Problem, then I have argued that the different reasons adduced by most disjunctivists against the Content View – problems CV would entail and which allegedly could be solved only by abandoning CV in favor of a non-CV version of DJ – are all amenable to the Detachment Problem. I have grouped these reasons into phenomenological, epistemological, semantical, and metaphysical reasons.

Now that I have developed a moderately disjunctive version of the Content View, I will come back to these problems and argue that the above articulated version of the Content View can well meet the demand of Cognitive Contact, so it can avoid the various difficulties I have grouped under the idea of Detachment Problem. As a result, a moderately disjunctive version of the Content View appears to be the most promising view also in addressing those problems that some disjunctivists wrongly take to be intrinsic to CV *as such*. Not only does the idea that perceptual experience is representation *not* prevent veridical experiences from being episodes of genuine contact with the world, but in addition, the representational view on perceptual experience is the only view which puts us in a position to satisfactorily explain how that contact can be possible at all.

### 2.6.2 *Phenomenology*

The phenomenology of perceptual experience exhibits the properties of

*transparency, actuality, immediacy and singularity.* According to DJ<sup>53</sup>, the Content View cannot allow that perceptual phenomenology gets things right with these properties, not even in the Good case. Indeed, if perceptual experience was representational, it could not involve the genuine presentation of the subject with the world, the direct contact to an actual world bodily present and disclosed by the PE to the subject. If PEs were representations, they could not be manifestative, world-revealing episodes. Thanks to the disjunctive treatment of the Good and the Bad, we should go Direct Realist about the Good cases and abandon CV. In addition – they argue – not only is Direct Realism phenomenologically apt, but it also captures the commonsensical intuitions about what we seem to be doing when we perceptually experience the world and have it simply 'in view' before us.

Now, transparency is compatible with an intentionalist version of CV, on which the phenomenal properties are properties represented as had by something. I have argued for an impure intentionalism about phenomenal character (see Chapter IV, Section 3), on which the phenomenal character is determined by the represented properties plus the Mode. In attending to your PE you will attend to the objects and features which your PE purports to present you with. CV analyzes that purporting-to-present relation in terms of representing: the properties your PE represents the (putatively) perceived object as having, are the properties you attend to in introspecting your PE. Also attending to illusions and hallucinations is attending to the purportedly presented objects and to the ways in which your experience represents them as being. On the moderately disjunctive version of CV I have been proposing, in H you only attend to represented properties<sup>54</sup>, but you wrongly *seem* to attend to particulars which instantiate these properties. So, VP, I and H are transparent, but in introspecting VP you attend to the properties your experience veridically represents the perceived object as having; in I you attend to the properties your experience falsidically represent the object as having; and in hallucination you falsely *seem* to attend to properties instantiated by an object you falsely *seem* to be in perceptual

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53 In that context, with the label 'DJ' I will refer only to these forms of disjunctivism (like Radical Disjunctivism *cum* Naïve Realism) that are incompatible with the Content View, namely, to the anti-intentionalist disjunctivism.

54 If we buy the Property-View, on which in H we are aware of uninstantiated properties, then in H we attend to properties even if 'attending to' is used factively, as 'being-aware of'. Otherwise, if we deny the Item Awareness Principle and at the same time interpret 'attending-to' relation as a factive one, then in H you *seem* to attend to properties but you do not attend to anything.

contact with.

It is true that perceptual phenomenology is presentational, it is true that in deceptive experience our mistake is not only about the world but also about our own experience. Illusions and hallucination introspectively seem to be episodes of presentation but they aren't<sup>55</sup>. Veridical perceptions seem to be episodes of presentation and they *are* such. The opposition presentation/representation is a misleading and unnecessary opposition. In fact, the Content View does not have to deny that in veridical perception we are genuinely presented with the world. The representational episode the PE consists of, is just the way in which we manage to be presented with our surrounding world.

As I have argued for, the Good/Bad explanatory, conceptual and metaphysical asymmetry is entailed at least by a teleo-semantic version of CV (which I find particularly promising). The Bad case needs to be characterized by reference to the Good case. A visual experience as of [*a*'s being F] is an experience that looks just like an episode of *seeing a*'s being F, so of being in 'genuine contact' with the object *a* and the property F instantiated by it. Successfully representing an object as having a property, for a visual experience, just *amounts to* being genuinely presented with the object and with its property. Representations are not veils between us and the world, they are episodes which make it possible at all for us to be in cognitive contact with the surrounding world.

Therefore, it is not true that CV must be an error-theory with respect to the phenomenology of immediacy, actuality and singularity. The apparent immediacy or actuality of PE is not a systematic mistake, rather it is a mistake only when we have deceptive experiences, which do not do what they seem to do. When I have a PE it seems to me that I have the world in view in its bodily presence, manifested to me. That seeming is reliable when my PE is veridical, it is also reliable when my PE involves an illusion. Indeed, I am in real contact with environmental objects, although for some respects it looks different from the way it is. When my PE veridically represent the object O as being F, my PE manages to make me aware of O as well as of F as instantiated by O. Veridical experiences do make me conscious of worldly objects and features. Their being representational episodes does not prevent

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<sup>55</sup> To be more precise, illusions are episodes of presentation of an object, even if the object is wrongly presented (at least for some respect).

them from being factive awareness-episodes. There is no reason for thinking that if perceptual experience is representation then it can make us only *indirectly* aware of objects and properties. Representations are not mental objects of awareness like *sense-data*.

Disjunctivists characterize perceptual experiences as episodes of “cognitive contact with the world” (McDowell 1982, 2008), as “states which reveal the world we live in” (McDowell 1986), “fusions with the things themselves” (Sartwell 1995), ways of “having the surrounding things in view” (Travis 2004). In experience “facts make themselves manifest” and “disclose themselves to the subject (McDowell 1998, 2008), so our senses should be conceived of as “windows” (Campbell 2002). All these characterizations are interesting and emphatic *metaphors*, which unfortunately are too seldom analyzed or explained by their proponents<sup>56</sup>. Why could a representational episode not be a fusion with the world, a way of reveling or manifesting the world to the subject, why should our sensory apparatuses not be like windows opened to the world itself, if CV is true?

Insofar as these proposals conceive themselves as incompatible with CV, it seems to me that a misleading notion of representation is surreptitiously at work. It is as if a CV-theorist had to hold that in PE we are directly conscious *of* representations, so anything else we would be conscious of (worldly objects and features) would be something we can be only *indirectly* conscious of<sup>57</sup>. But as I have said representations are not like *sense-data*, they are not direct objects of conscious awareness. Rather, they are states which (can) *make us conscious* of worldly objects and features. Far from being an interface between us and the world, perceptual

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56 About the vagueness and metaphorical status of these typical characterizations, Lowe 2000, 148ff., and Burge 2005, 49, rightly complain.

57 For example, Campbell 2002, 188ff., proposes an opposition between the “relational view” of PE and the representationalist view, and calls the first the *window-model* of perceptual experience. Suppose you see a dagger through a pane of glass: “to hold that the only way in which it can happen that you see a dagger through a pane of glass is by having a representation of the glass appear on the glass itself, would plainly be a mistake”. It seems to me from that analogy that Campbell thinks of Representations as if they were *sense-data*-like entities, something like pictures before the mind, such that we would see only the representations, the effect of things on us rather than the things themselves. If that was Representationalism, then no doubt it should be abandoned. But the Content View is not to be contrasted to the “relational view of experience” because it is compatible with the idea that PEs are essentially relational, as we have seen. The metaphor of the pane of glass is ill-conceived, because the content of a conscious perceptual state is not something you are aware of *instead* of the worldly objects and properties, in the way in which you would be aware of a representation of a dagger depicted on the glass instead of the real dagger.

representations are states that enable us to have the world in view. Nothing prevents a representational episode from being a presentational episode.

Sensorily entertaining an exemplified content *amounts to* being conscious of worldly objects and features which exemplify that content. Contents are semantic properties of our conscious states, they are not the only *objects* of awareness we are directly conscious of in PE. Instead, in veridical PEs we become conscious of the perceived world though being in such contentful states as the PEs. When the content of a perceptual experience is exemplified and the experience is in the right causal contact to its object, the perceptual experience makes the subject 'directly' conscious of objects, aspects and features of that surrounding environment which is the target or the experience and causes it.

The phenomenology of singularity is also accounted for by the demonstrative structure of perceptual content, so by the Singularity Thesis: perceptual content is *de re*, it is not general and existential, so when we attend to our PE we attend to the worldly objects 'directly', as object we are acquainted with which are available to us for comment, descriptions, attributions or properties. *Of this* object which is here in view, my PE represent this or that property. The perceptual object is there, made directly available by the PE. So perceptual experiences are genuine relations to the world, be them veridical or illusory. Only in H the phenomenology of singularity is misleading, because Hs introspectively seem to be *de re* states without being such. That is the moderately disjunctive CV.

To sum up, it is not true that CV is not phenomenologically apt: the jargon of “revelation”, “manifestation” and “disclosure” is interesting but it does not explain so much about what perceptual episodes are, and how they can be presentations at all. All these evocative ways of pointing to the presentational nature of perceptual experience can be consistently embedded into the Content View. Finally, CV can successfully vindicate the phenomenology of transparency, immediacy and singularity which distinctively characterizes our perceptual experiences.

### 2.6.3 Epistemology

Through perceptually experiencing we come to acquire knowledge about the surrounding world, so we come to form true and justified empirical beliefs. But if

what veridical perceptions make available to us was the same as that which also illusions and hallucinations make available to us, not even veridical experiences could justify our empirical beliefs and ground perceptual knowledge.

That is why some disjunctivists argue that the Content View is epistemologically inadequate, *i.e.* it falls short of accounting for perceptual knowledge. Instead, they argue, in perception the world must be thought of as directly available to us, not just as represented into an appearance-episode which is a Common Factor sharable by certain illusions and hallucinations. If it was so also the justificatory power of our veridical experiences would be as defective as that of correspondent illusions and hallucinations. In addition, in that case the world itself would not give any direct contribution to our empirical knowledge – apart from an exterior, causal contribution – which is absurd. So, CV necessarily opens the way to the skeptical challenge therefore it must be abandoned.

Now, the polemical target of that criticism is a purely conjunctivist version of CV, for which the fundamental nature of a perceptual experience is that of being *nothing more* than a mere appearance – a purely subjective state – which in certain cases is caused by the 'right' causes (VP), in other cases by the 'wrong' causes (I), in other cases by no external cause at all (H).

Even though the version of CV I have been defending does involve the existence of a common factor (ex. certain functional properties, a positive phenomenal character), but the common factor is not taken to be the *only* element which is relevant for individuating and characterizing the states that share that factor.

Since Cartesian Principle is not true, it is not true that two introspectively indiscriminable states have the same nature and are of same kind. Since Accessibility Principle is not true, it is not true that two introspectively indiscriminable states have the same Content. That is way hallucinations are *not* states of the same kind as perceptual experiences, even if they share relevant properties with the latter. Firstly, they do *not* make available to the subject what perceptual experiences make available to the subject. Indeed a PE makes the subject conscious of worldly particulars, and a veridical PE makes the subject conscious of worldly particulars and their properties. So a PE makes the world itself available to the subject, an H does not, even if it introspectively seems as if it did. So, it is not an objection to my version of CV the

idea that the Good case cannot make available just the same which is made available by the Bad case, because otherwise the Good case would justify our belief no more than the Bad case. On the contrary, the Good case is good exactly because it makes available to us the surrounding world itself with its objects and features (by making us conscious of them), whilst the Bad case does not make available anything to us. The Bad case may be introspectively indiscriminable from the Good case, so I may be not in a position to know whether I am in a Good state or in a Bad state. That circumstance could be appealed to by a skeptic, it is true, but *any* other view will not do any better in this sense: for example, a Naïve Realist *à la* Martin must recognize that a hallucination can be subjectively indiscriminable from a veridical perception. Even if the veridical Case is a direct manifestation of the world with a special justificatory power, I could be in a second-order mistaken state in thinking *that* I am in a World-Disclosing state with an undefeasible justificatory power, when I am in the Bad state instead<sup>58</sup>.

Thus, a moderately disjunctive version of CV entails a difference in nature between perceptual experiences and hallucinations, so that a given experience is not just individuated by its being a certain “mere appearance”: the nature of that ‘appearance’ and the elements which it factively makes available for us, are not just determined by its conscious character. The subject could be deeply mistaken on the nature of her own experience, because things can be different from the way they seem, and perceptual experiences are no exception.

The justificatory power of perceptual experiences essentially rests – among other things – on their being genuine relations to the environment: they can be such relations because their content is object-dependent, so they are essentially episodes in which worldly particulars are made available to the subject.

It is through perception that our empirical beliefs are originally anchored to the world. Not only is such an anchoring compatible with CV, but CV is also the best way to account for it. Only an object-dependent content can guarantee the right ‘aboutness’ for a belief to originally concern the world, and the object-dependent content of perceptual beliefs is a conceptualization and a judgmental endorsement of more basic, object-dependent perceptual contents.

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58 For that line of criticism, see Wright 2008.



The epistemological facet of the Detachment Problem may constitute a worry for certain particular versions of the Content View, but a duly spelled-out version of CV is rather the best way to cope with it.

#### 2.6.4 *Semantics*

Our scheme of descriptive identification rests on the possibility of a non-descriptive acquaintance with the objects we identify, characterize and know. Again, perceptual acquaintance with the world makes demonstrative thoughts possible in the first place. Johnston, Campbell, Travis and others hold that only the 'revelatory' nature of perceptual experience could account for our capacity of making *de re* judgments about perceived particulars, without any semantic intermediary (like representations) between us and those particulars. Perceptions must be making particulars available for immediate demonstration, in order that *de re* judgments about them be possible at all<sup>59</sup>. If perceptual experience did not bring such particulars into view, the world could not even control our empirical judgments.

I reply to this points that all of this can and must be accepted. Although, none of these points speaks against the Content View as such, the Singularity Thesis is precisely the ingredient of the Content View that makes the view semantically apt in accounting for our direct reference to worldly particulars in empirical judgments.

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59 According to Travis 2004, visual experience just 'brings the world into view' without involving any representation, so that perceptual experiences are neither accurate nor inaccurate, rather *we* are right or wrong in judging that what we see is such and so. He argues that looks as visible features cannot index a coherent content, because many different and incompatible things can share a look (a pig, the half of a pig in view, a rear pig, a wax pig, a hologram of a pig, a hairless wild boar, and on and on). But his argument does not work, because firstly he does not distinguish low-level contents, so complex sensible profiles made out of SCM-properties, from thicker contents like [being a pig], so from what the seen object strikes you as being on the basis of your perception. SCM-looks are neither inconsistent nor indeterminate: something can look pinkish, moving certain ways, with this or that complex shape, at this or that distance, and so on. The fact that many different kinds of things can exhibit that objective sensible profile, is another matter: the sensible profile is represented determinately, and the visual representation of it is accurate or not according to how the perceived object is in fact. But also with respect to thick contents Travis's argument does not work: by perceptual learning I can acquire a visual recognitional disposition for a certain type of object or for an individual, even if the visible profile I represent could be instantiated by other types of objects or other individuals: the fact that a robot or a hologram could have the same visible profile as that of my mother, does not entail that when I recognize my mother just-by-looking my experience does not represent the seen object as being my mother but as being either my mother or a hologram of my mother or a robot identical to my mother or whatever else one can think of. Likewise, I can see x as a pig, even if my visual experience could be wrong in such a thick representation despite being accurate at the thin level of SCM-properties: as I have argued for, a very same Scenario Content is compatible with different proto-propositional contents or *seeing-as* (see Chapter IV, Section 1).

Such a direct reference does rest on an immediate availability of worldly particulars, but that immediate availability is, again, guaranteed by perceptual contents' being *de re* contents. A PE makes particulars immediately available for though because its Content already includes the Object which the PE represents as being such and so.

To recall the point made above, that PE is “direct presentation of particulars” is not a fact that prevents PE from being a contentful state. It is exactly in having a (exemplified) *de re* content, that a PE manage to be the conscious, direct presentation of a particular to the subject.

The Singularity Thesis provides the Content View with the theoretical resources for avoiding also the semantic facet of the Detachment Problem. Our perceptual beliefs have *de re*, particular-involving contents insofar as the perceptual episodes on which they are grounded (and of which they are a cognitive effect) have a particular-involving semantic Content.

#### 2.6.5 *Metaphysics*

According to the Martin-Fish Disjunctivism *cum* Naïve Realism, a veridical experience is a state of a kind which could never be instantiated when hallucinating. But the Content View entails that a state is fundamentally individuated by its representational content, and that can be shared by a veridical perception and an indiscriminable hallucination. The content of a state (so something essential to its nature and kind) is individuated independently on whether it is exemplified or not, *i.e.* on whether the state is accurate or inaccurate. So for CV, it is argued, the fact that a veridical experience is a genuine relation in which the subject is presented with the surrounding world, must be completely inessential to the nature of such a state. Its being a Cognitive Contact is inessential to its nature, so a VP is not a world-involving state. CV must be a conjunctive view on which a perceptual experience is individuated in isolation from the world. The world is just externally added to the Common Factor – a merely psychological, intra-mental element – to characterize veridical cases, without really conditioning their fundamental nature. So the Mind is separated by the World, insofar as, even in the Good case, the World stands to the Mind in a merely causal rather than in a *constitutive* relation.

Therefore the Content View, as a form of Conjunctivism, is doomed to be trapped

into the Detachment Problem also with respect to the metaphysics of mental states. This line of criticism is grounded in good reasons, but it should not be addressed to the Content View as such, rather to certain possible versions of it, which could be labeled as “purely conjunctive” versions<sup>60</sup>.

According to the moderately disjunctive version of CV, it is *not* true that being a relation to mind-independent objects is inessential to the nature of the perceptual experience as a mental state. The 'mere appearance' which could be shared by veridical perceptions, illusions and hallucinations does not fix any common nature (DJ is right on that) although it is a common property (Radical DJ is wrong on that). The appearance of a genuine relation to the world does not fix anything else other than a subjective-introspective commonality between something which is a genuine relation and something which only *seems* to be a relation. H and PE have a different 'nature' even if they may be subjectively mistaken one for the other. Indeed, hallucinations are not episodes that make us aware of worldly objects and properties. All that means that my version of CV does not drive an unbridgeable wedge between the mind and the world. The relationality of PE is essential to it, that is why the contrast that really matters is the one between hallucinations and perceptions (be them illusory or veridical).

I have argued that, if we are to attribute a 'fundamental kind' to mental states, such kind-individuation must track bio-functional facts. The function of perceptual experience is a relational function, representing a perceived object in an accurate way. So, a PE is a perceptual relation with a determinate teleo-function. An H is a state of a type which should have had the function of representing a perceived object accurately. But a relational function without its proper environmental target or *relatum*, is not a function exerted inaccurately, rather it is the missed exercise of a function, so an H can be only the *appearance* of a relational function.

That is why, within the theoretical frame of the Content View, we need to commit to a distinction in nature between hallucinations and perceptions, we need to go moderately disjunctivists. Perceptions are essentially world-involving, indeed their contents are *de re* content. The demand of Cognitive Contact is done justice to by

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60 For example, the version of CV of Crane 2006 is vulnerable to that objection, insofar as Crane holds that perceptual experiences are not relational states, and he contrasts – differently from me – intentional with relational views on perceptual experience.

CV, and the Detachment Problem is avoided by the moderately disjunctive treatment of the relation between hallucinations and perceptual experiences. They may have something in common, even something relevant – phenomenal character and a 'purported' teleo-function – but that does not prevent hallucinations from being states of another kind, namely, non-relational states. On the contrary, for non-hallucinatory perceptual states, be they illusions or veridical perceptions, they are ecological relations rather than merely psychological states. Perceptual states cannot be detached from the world, without making them lose their very nature<sup>61</sup>.

## Conclusions

In *this Chapter* I have taken into consideration the Disjunctivist (DJ) objections to the Content View about perceptual experience, in order to show that they are resistible. CV can cope with them.

In Section 1, I have firstly introduced the core-idea of DJ, and individuated four kinds of reasons typically provided in favour of it and often also provided against the Content View. I have suggested that such reasons (phenomenological, epistemological, semantical, metaphysical) are all amenable to a basic theoretical *desideratum*, that of avoiding what I have called the Detachment Problem. The Detachment Problem is raised by any views on perceptual experience which conceive of PEs as mental states which can be type-individuated and characterized independently on their being or not being a genuine relation to the world. Perceptual phenomenology is presentational and apparently world-involving, a fact which would be best explained by PE's really being genuine relations of presentation, at least in the veridical cases. So, it is argued, presentations are not representations, since the latter are not essentially world-involving: if also veridical PE are

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61 A criticism that could be moved to Martin and to other advocates of the disjunction [hallucinations and illusions] vs. [veridical perceptions] is the following: when having an illusion, we normally represent the object accurately for some respect, and inaccurately for other respects. That means that the very same state (numerically the same) is a genuine 'disclosure' of the world, on the one side, and a state of a totally different kind, on the other side. Indeed the state makes certain properties manifest, but fall short of making other properties manifest, since it is not a *total* illusion. Now, can we really conceive a state that is partially of a manifestative kind and partially of the 'spurious' kind of those state not knowable as different from a VP? Since the perceptual mistake is normally partial, radical DJ is at odds in accounting for a state that is partially veridical (for certain properties) and partially falsidical (for other properties). Is the state as an instance of the Good or an instance of the Bad? Each answer is wrong, but the Good and the Bad cannot be mixed since the radically differ in kind, so the view cannot account for illusion.

representations, they are what they are independently on being genuine relation to the world, so the Content View entails that even veridical PEs are 'detached' from the world insofar as they do not essentially involve it. Secondly, if a PE is a state that represents a certain content which could be veridical, illusory or hallucinatory, then a veridical perception would make available to the subject that what also an illusion or a hallucination make available to the subject. If so, a veridical PE could not provide reasons for perceptual knowledge any more than an illusion or a hallucination. If we want PE to have an epistemological role in justifying our perceptual knowledge, we must think that veridical PEs do make available to us just certain represented contents but the World itself they are relation to. That is the epistemological facet of the Detachment Problem.

The semantic facet of the Detachment problem goes like this: in order to have demonstrative thoughts about the perceived world, perceptual experience needs not just represent the worldly particulars but rather make them directly available for immediate demonstration to our perceptual thoughts, beliefs and judgements. So particulars needs to be immediately present, not represented.

Also the metaphysics of mental states entailed by the Content View is conjunctivist. Veridical experiences are mental states individuated by their semantic properties, properties which can be shared by falsidical experiences. So, the relationality of veridical experience cannot be fundamental to kind-individuate veridical PEs, and veridicality must be taken as an external ingredient which does not determine the nature of the mental state. On the contrary, DJ-cum-NR does consider veridical experiences as relational states made out of the worldly elements which are experienced and so 'disclosed' to the subject, and deceptive experiences will be not states of the same kind but only states subjectively indiscriminable from states of this kind, *i.e.* from genuine manifestations.

In Section 2 I have argued that many critical points made by DJ can and must be positively embedded into the Content View. Indeed I have argued for a moderately disjunctivist version of CV, on the following lines. Firstly, DJ is right in taking the Good case (veridical perception) as basic and in characterizing the Bad case by reference to the Good case. I have supposed that a teleo-semantic version of the Content View is true (without positively arguing for that version), in order to show

that CV is consistent with an asymmetrical and moderately disjunctivist treatment of the Good and the Bad. I have then argued that, within a naturalistic framework on mind and mental properties, the proper function of a mental state is what type-individuates its, on the top of determining its content when the state has the function of perceptually representing the environment. Now, since the acquisition of a certain representational function is a matter of evolutionary selection of a respective mechanism, and the function had been originally selected because it was successful, a certain function so acquired is to be specified by reference to its successful exercises. The Bad case is essentially a failed exercise of the Good case, but not vice-versa. Still, the Good and the Bad have the same function, so they share relevant properties: also the phenomenal character of PE is plausibly related to the representational function of that type of states, namely, to the semantic function of the state.

Therefore, first of all there is a conceptual, explanatory and natural *asymmetrical* dependence of the Bad cases from the Good cases (Principle of Dependence). Secondly, there are relevant common properties between the Bad and the Good cases. They have the same function and the same conscious character, so Radical disjunctivism is false, besides being incompatible with the Content View.

Nonetheless, I have suggested that the principles typically rejected by disjunctivists are to be rejected also within a consistent version of the Content View. Firstly, it is false that if two states are subjectively indiscriminable they have the same nature, kind and type (Cartesian Principle). Secondly, it is false that if two experiences are subjectively indiscriminable then they have the same Content (Accessibility Principle). Thirdly, it is false that a mental event  $E^1$  is of the same kind of a mental event  $E^2$  iff  $E^1$  is brought about by the same kind of proximate cause as  $E^2$  (Proximate Cause Principle). The moderately disjunctivist proposal is that of treating perceptual experiences, illusory or veridical, as essentially relational states, and to contrast them with hallucinatory states, which are only subjectively indiscriminable from the firsts, but they are not relational states. That perceptual experiences are relational states is entailed by the very semantic structure of their Contents. Indeed perceptual content is a *de re* content, which includes a worldly, perceived object as a constituent. So, it is true that two states can have same subjective character, same

kind of proximate causes, but different 'nature' (PE are essentially relations to the environment, H aren't) and also different Contents (PE's have *de re* contents, Hs do not, because their contents are not object-dependent). On that view, the phenomenal character of an experience is determined by the Mode together with the properties the PE represent something as having, but not by the Object. Indeed a H is object-less but can share the phenomenal character with a veridical experience, because the two states share the represented properties and the Mode (ex. Visual). The Content View must go (moderately) disjunctivist, but the right disjunction is that between perceptual experiences and hallucinations, *not* that between veridical experiences and deceptive experiences.

Additionally, I have pointed to a problem which seems to arise with moderate disjunctivism and functional account of type-individuation of mental states and ascription of their contents. If mental states are type-individuated, and plausibly also hallucinations are tokens of types of states which have the function of accurately representing the environment a certain way, why should hallucinations contrasted with perceptual experiences, if a H and a PE share a basic teleo-function and functions are what type-individuate mental states in the first place?

I have argued that such a problem can be coped with by appeal to a closer reflection on the very notion of relational function. A function is relational when it is supposed to be exercised toward a certain environmental target. Perceptual functions are relational *par excellence*: when a certain circumstance obtain, then a certain state is produced to represent *it* accurately. Something the object causing the perception is not represented as it is, so the function is applied to an environmental domain but it is unsuccessfully exerted. But if there is no target at all, no environmental domain to which the function is applied, then the situation is better to be described as the failure *at* exerting a relational function, rather than as an unsuccessful exercise of the function. Hallucinations are states which should have been relational states but are not such: therefore their proper function – that of representing their environmental target an accurate way – is not exercised at all, and a missing exercise of a relational function due to the absence of a *relatum* is neither an accurate exercise nor an inaccurate exercise, rather it is *no* exercise at all. Therefore, even if both H and VP *would* have the teleo-function of being a relation of accurate representation *of* a

certain environmental object, that function remains in H only an abstract, potential, targetless function. Indeed H is an appearance of representation of the world without really being *about* any worldly object.

In fact, hallucinations rise big problems for the Content View. Firstly, *what* are we aware of when hallucinating, if not of any worldly object? Secondly, if the Content of PE is object-dependent (Singularity Thesis), how can objectless states like hallucinations be semantically evaluable at all? Any if they are not, where does come from the strong intuitions that they are inaccurate states?

The two questions are deeply interwoven, still they are not to be conflated. I have addressed the first problem first, which is not a specific problem of the Content View but of any view on perception. Given the intuition that whenever we have a visual experience, there is something we are aware of (Item Awareness Principle), and what we are aware of in H cannot be mental objects like *sense-data* – because of the well-known problems of the *sense-data* theory – two more alternative are available. One is that in H we are aware of Meinongian objects, *i.e.* of particulars having the bizarre property of not existing. For example, when you hallucinate a pink rat you are aware of a genuine particular object, a rat, it is just that the rat does not exist. I have argued that such an alternative is to be left aside, because such a suspicious ontology of non-existent particulars has the same problems of the position of *sense-data* (indeterminate objects, impossible objects, and so on). But above all that is a hopeless solution for treating H, because in hallucinating a pink rat the supposedly non-existent particular we are aware of *is* pink, on the top of being a rat. This means that hallucinations are a priori true, because their non-existent objects have the properties the H represent them as having! We wanted to do justice to the intuitive inaccuracy of hallucination, but our Meinongian treatment makes all H true, so something must be wrong with that treatment.

The other alternative is holding that we are not aware of objects at all in H, rather we are aware of *properties*. Since no object instantiated these represented properties, we are aware of structured complexes of uninstantiated properties, which are to be meant as universals. I have pointed out that the Property-View is the best way to respect the Item Awareness Principle for Hs, but the view does not come without problems. It is not so easy, for example, to conceive of a sensuous and phenomenologically salient



awareness of universals. Could a phenomenal character like that your PE has just now be determined by your awareness of universals alone? There is an issue of phenomenological adequacy, but no more appealing proposal is actually in view. So, if in H we are aware of something – if Item Awareness Principle holds – we must be aware of uninstantiated properties.

Another alternative is that of dropping the Item Awareness intuition and accept that in H we are not aware of anything at all, neither of object nor of properties (neither instantiated nor uninstantiated). That is the Evans-Pautz proposal. Sensorily entertaining a content in a conscious experience, when the content is made out of represented properties does not amount to being *aware* of these properties. Rather, being in a certain conscious state puts you in a position to self-ascribe a content, but your PE's having a certain content – say, representing [red] and [round] – entails that if your PE was veridical, you would be factively aware of these instantiated properties. It does not entail that you must be aware anyway of these properties but “uninstantiated”. The Item Awareness intuition comes from a wrong way to conceive introspection and the relation between phenomenal character and content. For a representationalist version of CV (as mine, see Chapter V, Section 1) phenomenal properties are the properties your PE represents an object as having (given under a Mode, but that does not matter now). But a perceptual state with a conscious phenomenal character and a content, is a state you are *in*, it is not a state you must be aware *of*. In introspecting you may become aware of your own experience, but that is not an inner perception as if you “saw” your experience with its phenomenal character and its related content. Phenomenal character is what makes your PE a conscious visual state, not something you are visually conscious *of*. So, visually entertaining a content involving certain properties does not mean being aware of these properties, unless the PE is veridical so it really, factively makes you aware of these properties and of the worldly object which instantiates them. Call such a view on H the No Item Awareness View.

I have not taken a definite stand toward the alternative between the Property-View and the No Item Awareness View. The choice between them may depend also on a decision about how to stipulate the “awareness-relation” to mean.

In any case, both views do not solve the other problem I have treated successively,

which is that of the semantic content of hallucinatory states. I have argued that the Content of PE is a *de re* content, made out of the properties the PE represents a perceived object as having, plus the worldly Object the PE has both as a cause and as a representational target. No worldly target, to evaluability then.

But Hs are just states with a gappy Content, because properties are represented, even under a Mode (for example, Visual) with its distinctive phenomenology, but no object is there to make the content accurate or inaccurate. So either we drop the Singularity Thesis, or we take it that hallucinations have a general and existential content, like [there is an object which is pink and is a rat] so that Hs can be inaccurate. Since there are good arguments for the Singularity Thesis (see Chapter III, Section 2), and since it is implausible that Hs and VP, having the same potential function, and the same phenomenal character, have one a general and existential content and the other a *de re* Content, I have argued that hallucinations, despite our intuitions, are not semantically evaluable, so they are neither accurate nor inaccurate in themselves. What is accuracy-evaluable, and inaccurate, is not the hallucination as such but the beliefs and perhaps the more basic belief-like states which are produced by hallucinations as immediate cognitive effects of them. Hs subjectively seem demonstrative states, so they seem to be accuracy-evaluable states. Hs are not accurate as they seem, but they are not inaccurate either, because they are not accuracy-evaluable as they seem to be in the first place. The reason why we have a strong intuition for their inaccuracy, is that they have false beliefs and falsidical cognitive stands toward the surrounding environment as their natural and immediate effects.

After having treated the problem of awareness in H and the problem of hallucinatory contents, I have come back to the Detachment Problem introduced before, in order to show that the alleged problems that would weigh on the Content View can be satisfactorily treated within the frame of the Content View. Firstly, the phenomenology of singularity, actuality, immediacy and world-involving presentation does not speak against the Content View, nor must the Content View be an error theory about perceptual phenomenology. I have tried to show that the criticism rests on an unnecessary opposition between representation and presentation. When a representational state like a PE is veridical, it does make us aware of worldly

objects and features, so enable the subject's capacity to be presented with the world. When the content of a PE is exemplified and the PE is in the right causal contact with its target, then the accurately represented world *is* a presented world. The Singularity Thesis posits demonstrative contents, so the PE's content being originally object-involving and world-involving fits very well with the phenomenology of actuality, immediacy and singularity. So the version of the Content View I have been articulating is phenomenologically apt.

Similar reflection can be done about the semantic and epistemological facets of the Detachment Problem. It is not true that what a VP makes available to us is the same as what a H makes available to us (a "mere appearance" or something like that). On the contrary, a VP make us aware of worldly objects and features, so it makes available for us the surrounding world (through accurately representing it), whilst a H does not make available for us *any* worldly objects and features. So it is true that the justificatory power of a VP rests on it being a genuine relation to the world rather than a 'mere appearance', but that special power of the Good case is not in conflict with the Content View. I have argued on similar lines that also the semantic worries about genuine reference to the world are easily treated within the Content View. It is said that in order our perceptual beliefs and judgement to be about the perceived particulars, the role of perception must be that of making worldly particulars as immediately available for reference, as topics for empirical thought. But the Singularity Thesis just guarantees that our perceptual beliefs and judgements are *de re* beliefs and judgements. Indeed, our perceptual beliefs are *de re* beliefs because they are grounded on *de re* perceptual contents in the first place, namely, on particular-involving content. There are no semantical worries of Detachment Problem for my version of the Content View.

From a metaphysical point of view, I have firstly argued that the only plausible kind-individuation of mental states, at least within a naturalistic framework, must rest on the (teleo)functions of these states or, to put it better, of the mechanism which produce the type of states a given state is a token of. So, there is a 'natural' divide between relational states (representational functions exercised on an environmental target) and non-relational states like hallucinations (representational states which lack a target for being genuine exercise of the function their type is suppose to

perform). So, it is right that the kind of state I am having when veridically perceiving an F is a type of state that could never be instantiated when hallucinating an F. That is true, veridical states are genuine relations, so there is no metaphysical facet of Detachment Problem either. It is not true, in other words, that the Content View cannot give a special metaphysical status to the Good case. Nothing, not even God, could make a deceiving *appearance* of a perceptual relation (a H) into a genuine perceptual relation (a PE). All that being said, there are many relevant properties in common between veridical perceptions and hallucinations. For example their phenomenal character and certain teleo-functional features, so that the Radical Disjunctivism – for which there is nothing relevant in common between the veridical 'manifestative' episodes and subjectively indiscriminable non-manifestative hallucinations – is ultimately untenable.

## Conclusions

In what follows I very briefly state the main points I have variously argued for in *this dissertation*.

The Content View on visual experience fits very well with ordinary ascriptions of visual experiences and episodes. It also vindicates our pre-theoretical intuitions about our experiences' being accurate or inaccurate, about things seeming/looking a certain way, and so forth.

The Content View, if duly articulated, embeds in itself the virtues of the classical Belief Theory without inheriting its problems (philosophical problems and incompatibility with experimental data). According to the global articulation of the Content View I have proposed:

Perceptual content is *two-layered*, so it involves a 'scenario' level and a proto-propositional level.

Perceptual content is *singular* and *de re*, it is essentially an object-dependent content.

Perceptual content is *Russellian*, it consists of environmental properties and relations represented as possessed/entertained by perceived objects, so it is not *double* (Russellian and Fregean).

The phenomenal character of our perceptual experiences it is determined by the represented properties and by the *Mode*, but *not* by the perceived Object which is represented as having the properties (that is why it can be shared by veridical perceptions and objectless states like hallucinations). Such a view is an *impure representationalism* about phenomenal character: it is impure, because it entails that the conscious character is not determined by the content alone but also by the Mode. It is a form of representationalism, because the Mode is a modality-dependent way for a property to be represented, but that way is inseparable from the respective property.

The Content View so articulated is able to successfully cope with the many facets of the *Detachment Problem*, the apparent wedge which the notions of content and of representation seem to drive between the Mind and the World: the Disjunctivism *cum* Naïve Realism is a bad and ultimately untenable way to address the Detachment problem. Not only is there no need of abandoning the Content View to address it; on

the contrary, a certain version of the Content View is the only way to address it properly. Such a view must be a *moderately disjunctivist* version of the Content View, according to which perceptual experiences (veridical or illusory) must be told apart from hallucinations: the firsts are genuine relations to the surrounding world, which may represent *it* accurately or inaccurately, the seconds are not genuine relations so – even if they may share a positive phenomenal character with veridical perceptions – they have a gappy content which is, strictly-speaking, not even semantically evaluable. Though, hallucinations systematically produce inaccurate beliefs about the surrounding world, so they are inaccurate states in a derivative sense.

Such points, I think, offer a plausible global picture which speaks in favor of the Content View.

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