



The Modern Problems for Naïve Realism

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Abstract

Is naïve realism a plausible theory of perception? Naïve realism is often written off in the philosophy of perception, often due to The Problem of Perception, and the view that alternative theories, such as representationalism are better placed to solve the problem. I am more optimistic about the prospects for naïve realism.

Rather than looking at how naïve realists can respond to the traditional problem of perception, this thesis assesses naïve realism by bringing it into discourse with what I'll call *modern* problems of perception. As such, I will examine how naïve realism can be adapted and developed in the light of these new problems.

I open with a deep analysis of the theory of naïve realism, explaining the core commitments of the theory. I outline the version of naïve realism that I find the most convincing and thus the most useful for the purposes of the thesis. This acts as a springboard for the rest of the thesis, as the version of naïve realism that I set out is the version that I will continue to come back to, and develop, as we explore the modern problems of perception.

I then outline the modern problems of perception, each of which containing an interesting perceptual phenomenon at its heart; those being unconscious perception, rich perception, cognitive penetration and the rationality of perception. I examine whether we ought to accept that these phenomena are real and legitimate, and then, having found them all to be real and legitimate, I address their compatibility with naïve realism. I also develop the theory of naïve realism based on my discussion.

This thesis is a compilation of different fields of study. The chapters on unconscious perception and cognitive penetration include more empirical work as they have a strong basis in cognitive science and neuroscience. The chapters that focus on rich perception and rationality of perception take a more psychological and philosophical approach. This approach lends support to the idea that naïve realism is not undermined by the sciences of the mind and perception, but, when developed in the right way, can work alongside them.

The thesis is unique in several ways: it brings together a multitude of phenomena to the table and constructs structurally similar challenges for naïve realism out of them (the 'modern problems'), reflecting and unifying some of the disparate anti-naïve realist ideas we find in the literature. And it develops a distinctive brand of naïve realism, a version of naïve realism that has not yet been developed in the way I develop it, in response to some of these problems.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	5
Chapter 1: What is Naïve Realism?.....	8
Chapter 2: Unconscious Perception and Naïve Realism	31
Chapter 3: Cognitive Penetration and Naïve Realism.....	62
Chapter 4: Rich Perception and Naïve Realism.....	82
Chapter 5: Rationality of Perception and Naïve Realism.....	106
Conclusion.....	129
Bibliography.....	130

Thesis Introduction

Is naïve realism a plausible theory of perception? Naïve realism is often written off in the philosophy of perception. This is often due to The Problem of Perception and the view that alternative theories, such as representationalism are better placed to solve the problem.¹ Yet, I am more optimistic about the prospects for naïve realism.

Rather than looking at how naïve realists can respond to the traditional problem of perception (where there is already a vast literature, Ali (2018), Dancy (1995), Logue (2012), Segal (1989) as just some of them), this thesis assesses naïve realism by bringing it into discourse with what I'll call *modern* problems of perception. I refer to them as *modern* problems as they are phenomenon that move away from the typical problems of perception and hallucination. What I will discuss are perceptual phenomenon that are more contemporary and are not typically analysed in a naïve realist framework.

In this thesis, I will examine how naïve realism can be adapted and developed in light of these new problems.

This work is divided into five chapters, each of which can be read and understood individually, but whilst all containing the same thread and narrative: that naïve realism is not only compatible with the phenomena at the heart of the modern issues but can also be used to develop insight and understanding of these perceptual phenomena.

Chapter One is a deep analysis of the theory of naïve realism, explaining the core commitments of the theory. In this chapter, I outline the version of naïve realism that I find the most convincing and thus the most useful for the purposes of the thesis. This chapter acts as a springboard for the rest of the thesis, as the version of naïve realism that I set out is the version that I will continue to come back to, and develop, as we explore the modern problems of perception.

The subsequent three chapters all have a similar structure. They outline one of the modern problems of perception, each of which has an interesting perceptual phenomenon at its heart; those being unconscious perception, rich perception, and cognitive penetration. In each of these chapters I examine whether we ought to accept that these phenomena are real and legitimate, and then, having found them all to be real and legitimate, I address their compatibility with naïve realism. Whilst each of these chapters shares the same structure, they each concern different phenomena, and contain discussion on how naïve realism can be adapted and developed to accommodate the relevant phenomenon.

Chapter two focuses on unconscious perception, paying close attention to the discussion between Phillips and Block (2016) as to whether unconscious perception exists. The compatibility section looks at how a naïve realist can understand unconscious perception, with focus on phenomenal character, representation and perceptual relations.

¹ Crane, French, 2021.

Chapter three is where I look at cognitive penetration, utilising examples to illustrate how it is distinguished from similar but different phenomena, such as shifting attention. After a detailed discussion of whether cognitive penetration exists and the scope of it, I move on to the compatibility issue. I spend a lot of time responding to Cavedon-Taylor's (2018) objections to the compatibility between naïve realism and cognitive penetration, before offering my own analysis of cognitive penetration under a naïve realist framework.

Chapter four is a detailed examination of the rich view of perception. The chapter is split into three parts: the first focuses on examining the concept of 'rich perception' and what the Rich View states. I then address the question 'Is the Rich View true?' by examining some arguments both for and against the Rich view. In this section, I focus on Phenomenal Contrast arguments and how they can be used to support the Rich View. Part three returns to the compatibility issue with naïve realism where I consider both logical compatibility: whether there are any logical contradictions derived by combining naïve realism and rich perception, and a broader issue of compatibility. As in the chapter before, I offer my own analysis of what rich perception is under a naïve realism framework. I also develop this as an alternative to Brewer's (2013) naïve realist friendly discussion.

Chapter five draws on the previous two chapters, but it differs in its structure. In this chapter, I delve deeper into the phenomenon itself rather than the compatibility with naïve realism. I present an in-depth analysis of Siegel's (2016) version of the rationality of perception, drawing also on Mehta's (2021) discussion. Yet, because I have, in the previous chapters, shown that naïve realism is compatible with cognitive penetration and rich perception, there are very few substantive additional compatibility worries between naïve realism and the Rationality of Perception. The previous chapters show that naïve realists can deal with modern *problems* of perception: it is not falsified by the existence of the phenomena at the heart of those problems. This chapter is a complement to those, as though it is not framed in terms of a compatibility *problem*, it provides further support for the idea that, far from struggling to deal with modern issues with naïve realism, instead, we can develop naïve realists' perspectives on contemporary issues and perceptual phenomena, such as the rationality of perception.

We can see this thesis as a compilation of different fields of study. The chapters on unconscious perception and cognitive penetration include more empirical work as they have a strong basis in cognitive science and neuroscience. The chapters that focus on rich perception and rationality of perception take a more psychological and philosophical approach. This approach lends support to the idea that naïve realism is not undermined by the sciences of the mind and perception, but, when developed in the right way, can work alongside them.

In this thesis, I aim to argue for a negative and a positive claim. (1) Naïve realism is not refuted, as many seem to maintain, by what I am calling the modern problems. Just as with the traditional problem of perception, authors have been too quick to reject naïve realism and have failed to appreciate its full resources. And (2) it is not merely that naïve realism is logically compatible with the phenomena in focus here but can be developed and adapted in the light of them and therefore be a philosophical theory that sheds light on these phenomena. My thesis is unique in several ways: it brings together a multitude of phenomena to the table and constructs structurally similar challenges for naïve realism out of them (the 'modern problems'), reflecting and unifying some of the disparate anti-naïve realist ideas we find in the

literature. And it develops a distinctive brand of naïve realism, a version of naïve realism that has not yet been developed in the way I develop it, in response to some of these problems.

Chapter One

What is Naïve Realism?

In this chapter, I am going to set out a version of naïve realism. I will argue why we ought to understand naïve realism in this way and why it is best placed for use in the arguments of this thesis to follow. To do so, I will be examining various aspects of naïve realism, from presenting the core commitments of the theory, to the objects that are significant to the theory and how naïve realists explain the character of experience.

In order to show what I think are the most significant aspects of the theory, I will be critically analysing some arguments that have been presented in favour of naïve realism with an emphasis on the introspective support for naïve realism. The result of this is to present naïve realism as a theory that ought to be taken seriously within the philosophy of perception, and that can be used for the remainder of this thesis and its discussion of various phenomena.

As such, the beginning of the chapter focuses on ‘basic’ naïve realism before moving to argue for specific developments that the naïve realist ought to accept.

Part One – The Core Commitments of Naïve Realism

Naïve realism is a theory that was devised to offer an explanation as to what occurs primarily during the perceptual experiences which are genuine perceptions. For instance, when I see a book on my bookshelf, I have a sensory experience of the various objects and their features: the book, the bookshelf, the colour of the book, the shape of the book and so on.

Naïve realists argue that in such perceptual experiences, the subject is in a *relation* with the mind-independent objects of those experiences.² So, in the above example, the subject is in a relation with the book and the bookshelf, and other objects and features in their perceptual experience. This relation can be and has been described in a multitude of ways, acquaintance, presentation, awareness, and many more. All such descriptions are trying to capture a primitive relation between a subject and an object (French, 2018, p.2).

Naïve realists also emphasise that the objects we are related to are ordinary objects, such as tables, trees, or cars, things that we are familiar with in our everyday lives. These objects are those that we are able to perceive, at least without external assistance, or as Byrne puts it, “[ordinary objects] are those we can see with the unaided eye” (2018, p.1), which is contrary to non-ordinary objects, like black holes or atoms.³

These objects and the features of those objects are also *mind-independent*; in that, they have no metaphysical reliance on minds for their existence.⁴ See Logue (2012, p.1), “Naïve Realism

² We are also able to perceive (see, hear, etc) events which are also mind-independent.

³ Whilst this quotation makes reference to the ordinary eye, this thesis does not restrict perception to visual experience.

⁴ There may be some outlying cases of perceptions that are seemingly mind-dependent, such as seeing after-images, which the naïve realist can explain.

is the view that veridical experience fundamentally consists in the subject perceiving things in her environment and some of their properties”, in which the *things in her environment* are taken to be mind-independent objects.

The theory also assigns significant meaning to the character of experience insofar as the ways that things appear to you do so because those features of the object are directly presented to you. For instance, if I have a perceptual experience of an apple and it appears red and round to me, this is because I have been presented with (or I am in a relation with) an actual red and round apple. The character of my experience, according to the naïve realist, is explained by the actual ordinary objects that I am experiencing.

As such, according to the naïve realist, not only are we in some sort of direct relation with an ordinary object when we perceive it, but that object is a constituent of the character of the experience. To offer an example, see Campbell’s description of the character of experience according to naïve realists, “The phenomenal character of your experience, as you look around the room, is constituted by the actual layout of the room itself.” (2002, p.116). This explains why, in veridical perception at minimum, the features that the objects actually have are the features that are being presented to you and seem to be presented to you. If the apple is, as the naïve realist claims, even in part, constitutive of the character of your experience, then certain features of that object will play a significant role in that experience and in explaining why things appear the way they do to you.

A further label that is applied to the theory of naïve realism is ‘direct’. Naïve realism can be said to be an example of a ‘direct realist theory’, which are those that state that perception is direct, or “perceptual experiences are direct perceptual presentations of ordinary objects” (Crane and French, 2021, section 1.4). For instance, when Ashley perceives the black water bottle that is on the desk in front of him, he does so directly, at least in this sense: he perceives it, but not by perceiving anything else. He has directly perceived an ordinary object. There is much literature on the nature of perception and how to understand the idea of direct perception, Jackson (1978), Gram (1983), Foster (2000), and Martin (2017).

Of course, the naïve realist doesn’t claim that *all* instances of perception are direct, as they can allow for cases such as perceiving an object in a mirror. Yet, due to the nature of naïve realism, it is still classed as an example of a direct realist theory.

These aspects of naïve realism allow for the naïve realist to argue that it is the theory that is most similar to the ordinary common-sense or ordinary conception of perception. The ordinary conception of perception is often framed as one on which experience involves direct perception of an object; one might refer to this as perception of a ‘direct object’ (Brewer, 2007), as in these cases of perception, the subjects are perceiving without any intermediaries. In the ordinary conception of perception, what is revealed is how the experience would strike the perceiver. Or as McDowell explains, perceptual experience appears as an “openness to the world” (McDowell, 1994, p.111), where ‘the world’ refers to the mind-independent world.

We can further understand the ordinary conception of perception through the idea of phenomenal character. Ordinary reflection on perceptual experience will often refer to ‘what it

is like' for one to have an experience. Of course, this exact phrasing is not necessarily part of ordinary parlance, given its philosophical origins (Nagel, 1974), but ordinary descriptions of perceptual experience are based on phenomenological reflection. In this same sense, the ordinary conception of perception is a reflection of how our experiences introspectively seem to be. For instance, if one has a perceptual experience of a red car, we can describe this by reflecting on its character: as an experience of an object, immediately present, that is car-shaped and red. When we introspect upon perceptual experience and describe its character, the naïve realist insists, part of what we end up doing is describing the immediately presented world. Because of this, it makes sense to account for such experiences in a naïve realist way: as immediate presentations of the external world.

In summary, then, the core commitments of naïve realism that I will discuss further are that the subject is in a relation with a mind-independent object (MIO), that the subject is in a *direct* relation with the object they are perceiving and that the character of experience is at least partially constituted by the object of the experience. Before discussing these in more depth, I will briefly mention disjunctivism, which is often a commitment that naïve realists make, even though it is not a *core* commitment.

Disjunctivism

Whilst being disjunctivist is not a *core* commitment of naïve realism, insofar as it is not a part of how they explain our regular veridical perceptual experiences, it is an important element of the theory - especially in the context of the traditional problem of perception, where being disjunctivist is one way in which naïve realists have responded to that problem. But what is disjunctivism?

Being disjunctivist means denying the Common Kind Claim, a claim that states “the conscious perceptual experiences that are involved in cases of veridical perception, illusion and hallucination have the same nature.” (Soteriou, 2009,2020). This is because they will need different explanations of veridical perceptions and hallucinations, and/or illusions. This helps naïve realists respond to the problem of perception because, in broad terms, the problem says that naïve realism must fail for veridical perceptions, because it fails for hallucinations or illusions, and all of these cases are essentially the same. By denying that they are essentially the same, naïve realists can protect their view of the nature of veridical perception. The background to this is that naïve realism is, first and foremost, a theory that works to explain veridical perceptions, ones where the world is perceived for what it is.

Typically, naïve realists become disjunctivist about hallucinations, but it is not a universal stance. There are some philosophers who do agree with the Common Kind Claim and argue that hallucinations can and do involve perceptual contact with worldly objects. For instance, Raleigh (2014), Ali (2018), and Mazzullo (2024).

So, although the disjunctive move with respect to hallucinations is common, in recent literature naïve realists have developed a quite different response to the problem of perception as developed through the argument from illusion (French and Phillips, 2020, Fish, 2009, Genone, 2014, Kalderon, 2008, etc). This makes sense as illusions are often cases in which a subject genuinely perceives an ordinary mind-independent object. It is just that there are

cases where something about their perceptual experience, e.g., colour, shape, or location, has erred and does not match the external world.

In contrast, since subjects can hallucinate objects that do not exist or are not in the same room as them, there is not the same rationale for maintaining naïve realism to cover them. There is, on the face of it, no relation between the subject and the object in hallucinations. Therefore, naïve realists typically become disjunctivist, denying the Common Kind Claim and stating that hallucinations are a different type of experience from veridical perceptions and illusions.

This element of naïve realism is significant. It shows that naïve realists are open to the idea that there can be different kinds of explanations of experiences whilst still falling under the naïve realist umbrella. This could be useful later in my thesis, as some phenomenon, say cognitive penetration or unconscious perception, may require me, a naïve realist, to take a disjunctivist approach in my explanation of compatibility. So, whilst I shall not be discussing disjunctivism in terms of illusions and hallucinations, it was crucial to set out the disjunctive parameters of naïve realism.

Part Two – The Objects of Experience

The next two sections and the discussions in them arise from the following remark by Martin, “On the one hand, they are concerned with what can be present to the mind: can the presented elements in experience exist independently of our awareness of them? On the other hand, they are concerned with the manner or mode in which objects are presented to one in having experience: can the presented elements of experience be so presented as not to require their actual existence for one's experience to be so?” (1997, p.176). Following Martin, we can formulate two questions from this: what are the objects of perception, and what is the structure of perception? The second question is slightly more complex, as it addresses how exactly we perceive objects in the world. The following two sections will go into detail on these questions. This serves to elaborate on the previous introduction of the theory of naïve realism and explain the elements in further detail.

Perceptual experiences, at least according to the ordinary conception of perception, are of ordinary objects that are mind- independent.

For the naïve realist, perception is of *ordinary* objects. What are these ordinary objects? They are the objects which people encounter in their everyday lives, and thus, they are those that are familiar to us. They are the objects that are the subject matter of ordinary thought and talk. Some examples of ordinary objects are those which we encounter in our everyday lives, like pens, tables, and trees.

There are, in contrast, other mind-independent entities such as dark matter or other theoretical posits, for instance, which we, the general population, are not familiar with, in that we do not and cannot meet or encounter them in everyday experience. They are not experiential entities. The vast majority of people have no knowledge of how they might operate or even what they may look like, if they look any way at all, so they are completely unfamiliar.

These objects, therefore, are unable to be categorised as “ordinary” objects and as such are not the subject of discussion surrounding perception.⁵

So, according to the naïve realist, the objects of perception are, at least, ordinary mind-independent objects, those that are familiar in the world, like books or cars. It is not a view that states that the objects of experience are all of a piece, as all sorts of different things can count as ordinary mind-independent objects. For instance, qualities of objects, physical objects of many different sorts, their features, and so on. This is a view shared by Austin, as he remarks in his book ‘Sense and Sensibilia’, “There is no *one* kind of thing that we ‘perceive’ but many *different* kinds... pens are in so many ways though not in all ways unlike rainbows, which are in many ways though not in all ways unlike after images...” (1962, p.4).

The view that perception is of ordinary mind-independent objects is not a standard one across all theories of perception.

For instance, the Sense datum theory argues that in a perceptual experience, we are perceiving sense data, and that the sense data are the objects of perception. It is a theory of more than veridical perceptions, as it also applies to illusions and hallucinations. But what exactly are sense data? In its most basic definition, it is ‘what is given to sense’, and they are that which “constitute what we, as perceiving subjects, are directly aware of in perceptual experience” (Hatfield, 2021, p.1).

So, they are just the objects that you are directly presented with in a perceptual experience. To offer an example of what we mean within a perception, if one has a perceptual experience of a white wall, then one is perceiving ‘white wall sense data’.

Yet, this does not do much to distinguish them from the naïve realist view. If sense data are just ‘whatever we directly perceive’, then the naïve realist can agree, and identify sense data with ordinary objects, at least in veridical cases. So, how can we indicate that this is a different theory? We can see the differences in the way the sense datum theorists elaborate on the theory.

Typically, sense datum theorists claim that, in addition to being immediate objects of perception, sense data are non-ordinary objects and serve as intermediaries for the ordinary objects.⁶

There are various interpretations of what exactly sense-datum are, with some claiming that sense data are mind-independent objects and others denying this (Moore, 1913, Russell, 1997, Bermudez, 2000).⁷ What these interpretations share is that perceivers are directly presented with sense data in a perceptual experience. This is because, whilst there is no kind of thing in

⁵ This discussion cannot be reduced to perceptible vs non-perceptible, as ordinary and non-ordinary objects do not fit neatly into those categories.

⁶ As I go on to mention, some sense datum theorists believe that sense data are mind-independent, others do not. There is not one unified view of what exactly sense data are beyond being non-ordinary objects.

⁷ I prefer to use the term ‘acquainted’ when discussing objects and perceivers, yet for the sake of elaborating on the difference between naïve realism and other theories of perception, I will use the terminology from the relevant literature, such as the term ‘presented’.

the external world that we can point to and call sense data, we *can say* that they are those direct objects of experience that we demonstrate when discussing perceptual experience, and, we *can say* that they are non-ordinary objects.

It is significant in this section to differentiate between ordinary and non-ordinary objects as in some early iterations of the Sense datum theory, philosophers, such as Moore (1993, p.45-58), posited that the ‘sense data’ were mind-independent objects in the world that *shaped* perception, and that they constituted it; they were private, not mind-dependent, *but* they were not something physical in the world. Other philosophers, such as Robinson (1994), took sense data to be mind-dependent entities. However, despite various iterations of whether sense data is mind-independent or mind-dependent, it does not seem that we ought to classify these ‘sense data’ as ordinary objects within perception. Sense data are, therefore, objects that ought to be left for the Sense datum theorists to explain, and naïve realism focuses its theory on ordinary objects.

Yet not all other theories of perception rely on non-ordinary objects. Representationalism (otherwise known as Intentionalism) explains perception as a direct experience of ordinary objects, in which “perceptual states are representations: they represent the world as being a certain way” (Nanay, 2015, p.1). So, for the representationalist, the objects of experience are ordinary ones, which is the same view that the naïve realist holds.

Insofar as an aspect of experience is naïve realist, then for that aspect, there are no non-ordinary intermediaries or non-ordinary other objects included in that aspect of experience. There can be, and are, naïve realists whose view of naïve realism is somewhat impure. For instance, they can be naïve realists regarding shape perception but take a Sense datum view on colour perception. This makes them no less naïve realist regarding the aspect to which naïve realism is applied. Thus, it could be that the overall experience involves intermediaries if the naïve realism is impure, but the aspect of perception that is completely naïve realist involves nothing of this kind.

Mind-Independent

The following section is very significant to this entire chapter, as this is what the ‘realism’ aspect of naïve realism pertains to. As such, I would like to make clear what I mean when I claim that an object is mind-independent.

Mind-independent objects are objects within the world that have no reliance on the presence of a person, hence a ‘mind’, for their existence or appearance. For instance, the presence of an oven in one’s kitchen does not rely on the presence of a person for it to exist the way it does. It will do so with or without minds or mental states.⁸ To be clear on this, when an object has no ‘reliance’ on the mind, this refers to a metaphysical reliance.

This is a lack of reliance in the sense that they are separate from minds. To take this to the extreme, had there never been human beings, there would still be objects such as rocks in the

⁸ For clarity, from this point onwards in the chapter, I will use the terms; ordinary object, independent object, and mind-independent object interchangeably, to mean ‘ordinary perceptible entities that are mind-independent’ as defined here.

world. These rocks bear no relation to minds; they exist regardless of the presence of people. The rock will have the properties of hardness and greyness, even though there is nobody to perceive it.⁹ It is at this point that we are able to make a comparison to the causal. To help us understand this, let's elaborate on the oven in the kitchen. It is accurate to claim that humans did invent ovens and that they, more than likely, made the very oven that is sitting in the kitchen. Humans did, in fact, cause the oven to exist. However, this does not imply metaphysical dependence. The oven's existence does not *consist in* mental activity directed toward it. For the oven to exist, it does not require people to be thinking about and perceiving it so that it is as it is. The oven does not depend, for its very being, on our cognition or perception of it, even if we brought it into existence.

The other 'ordinary objects' of perception are of the same ilk: they do not have metaphysical dependence on any type of cognition or perception and are therefore completely metaphysically (even if not causally) mind-independent.

One thing that is crucial to this section is to determine whether naïve realism is committed to the weak or strong objects claim. The strong claim being that *only* mind-independent objects are the objects of perceptual experience, and the weaker claim being that perceptual experience can involve more objects than just mind-independent ones, *but* that perception proper *must* include mind-independent objects.

It seems that the strong version of the objects claim completely rules out any type of hybrid naïve realist theory, in which the mind-independent objects are the focus of the experience, but where other objects, such as mind-dependent sense data, can also be involved. Whilst I am not specifically endorsing such a case, I think it would be remiss to hold a view so rigid a view of perceptual experiences.

It is important to note here that the weak objects claim is still naïve realist. If an experience involves more objects than just mind-independent ones, *but* that perception proper *must* include mind-independent objects, then the subject must still be in a relation to the mind-independent objects whenever they have genuine perceptual experience. Additionally, most naïve realists only commit to the idea that experience is *at least in part* naïve realist.

Holding the weaker claim leaves naïve realism more flexibility and openness to adaptations, which can be used to solve some of the problems that the theory faces, like the ones I address in the rest of the thesis (rich perception, cognitive penetration and unconscious perception) and thus is, in my opinion, the better view to hold. Naïve realism is, at a base level, *committed* to the weak objects claim and that there is no need to hold the strong claim, and in fact, it seems better not to.

Part Three – The Structure of Experience

This section of the chapter will address the structure of experience, or in other words, how the objects of perception are objects of perception. Do the experiences depend on their objects?

⁹ This part of the discussion is taken from a dissertation essay on naïve realism and illusions, submitted in 2021 by Chloe O'Dowd to the University of Nottingham.

There is a significant principle within the discussion of perception, “If there sensibly appears to a subject to be something which possesses a particular sensible quality, then there is something of which the subject is aware which does possess that sensible quality” (Robinson, 1994, p.32). Robinson is here presenting what we refer to as the Phenomenal Principle, which is an attempt to explain why, in perceptual experiences, objects appear the way they do to the subject. For instance, the stick under water appears bent to the subject because there is something being directly presented to them that is, in fact, bent. There are various interpretations of this principle, with some taking the principle to be an obvious statement regarding perception, like H.H. (Price, 1932 #129), stating that “When I say, ‘this table appears brown to me’ it is quite plain that I am acquainted with an actual instance of brownness” (Price, 1932, p.63).

This principle has been used to examine the objects of perception insofar as it calls into question the theories that say that the objects of perception do not *actually have to exist* in order for subjects to perceive them. Naïve realism is not one of these theories, as it is a relational theory, in which there must be something that the subject is in a relation to when they have a perceptual experience.

So, for naïve realism, the way in which we explain perceptual experience is via a primitive relation. As also claimed, this relation can be and has been described in a multitude of ways: acquaintance, presentation, awareness, and many more. What remains the same across all explanations, however, is that we perceive via a primitive relation to the objects. When Ashley perceives a red apple, it is via his relation to that red apple. Many naïve realists favour one type of relation to use when explaining the structure of perception in order to make it clear what is meant. I often use ‘acquaintance’ to indicate the relation between a subject and an object, and it is the phrase that will be used in subsequent sections of the chapter when discussing naïve realism.

The structure of experience involves how the subject is related to the object that they are perceiving. But what does it mean for a perception to be *of an object*? It seems to depend on the theory of perception we are working with. For some, like naïve realism and the sense datum theory, it means to be in acquaintance with that object, and for others, like the representationalist, it means the object is represented to you in some way. Given that there is differentiation in this, then there could be differentiation in other aspects of the structure of experience. The question we are asking is, does an experience depend on the object for its existence and character?

To answer this, I will look at some other theories of perception in more detail and compare and contrast their views with a naïve realist one.

One theory that has a different view on the way that we perceive is intentionalism (which can also be referred to as Representationalism). We can say that it is a direct realist theory inasmuch that in genuine perception there are no intermediaries between the subject and the object of the perception, as mentioned previously. When looking at intentionalism as a theory of *perceptual experiences*, it is not a relational theory, as it does not make experience a matter of direct acquaintance with an object. This differs from theories such as naïve realism, which

have what we can call a ‘double direct realism’, where not only are the *perceptions* direct relations to external objects (which is agreed upon by naïve realists and Intentionalists), but the *experiences involved in such perceptions* are constituted by such relations (something which only the naïve realist would agree with).

In this way, intentionalism is different to naïve realism in that the representationalist states that perceptual experience is a representation, and thus not relational. For instance, when one is having a perceptual experience of a red apple, the experience they have is a representation of that red apple. This is the structure of the experience: it is a representation rather than a relation. This allows the intentionalist to say that the perceiver is able to have perceptual experiences without there being an object. For instance, one can have the perception of the red apple, without there actually being a red apple in front of them.¹⁰ Although in many cases the intentionalist explanation is used to explain veridical perceptions, in which the object is there in reality. From this, we can see that intentionalism accepts the Common Kind Claim, as all cases; veridical, illusory and hallucinatory are phenomenologically the same.

I am going to take a moment to make clear that not all views on representation are presented as above. There are representational views that *do* involve relations, and some philosophers, such as Nanay (2015) have written about reconciling relationism and representationalism. For the purposes of explaining naïve realism and how it differs from other theories, I have given and will be referring to purely representational views.

Contrarily, according to the Sense Datum theory, the structure of perception is relational. When one is perceiving sense data, the subject is in a relation with sense data. For instance, if one has a perceptual experience of a red apple, they are in a relation with the red and round sense datum. This is similar to naïve realism, where the structure of a perception is via a relation to the object of that perceptual experience. The difference only lies in the objects that are being perceived.

So, having explored the various ways one can cash out exactly what the structure of experience is, we can be clear that for the naïve realist, the structure of experience is relational.

Part Four – The Character of Experience

To further clarify naïve realism, I want to add to Martin’s two questions and explore how we should explain the *character* of experience.

So far, we have been considering two questions that Martin raises to help us understand precisely what naïve realism is: the objects and structure questions. I want to suggest that to best capture the way the literature has developed since Martin wrote in 1998, we should distinguish and acknowledge a further element to the character question, to get a fuller account of what the naïve realist is saying.

Conscious Character

¹⁰ For more discussion of the intentionalist tradition to treat perception as non-relational, see Zahavi (2003).

It is important to clarify here what is meant by conscious character (which is the same as phenomenal character). When we perceive objects, there is something it is like for us to have that experience, and that is a matter of how that object is presented to us.¹¹ For instance, when a subject has a perception of a blue book in a dark room, there is something that it is like for them to perceive the blue book in that scenario.¹² When we reflect on what it is like to have that experience, we look at what is presented, the object, and how it is presented to us, as blue and in a dark room. That is the conscious character of that experience.

It is incumbent on any theory of perception to explain the character of perceptual experience. The ‘character’ of perceptual experience refers to the phenomenal character of an experience, or what it is like to have that experience.

The naïve realist has their own view on what exactly constitutes the character of our perceptual experiences. In its most basic form, naïve realism states that the character of one’s perceptual experience is, at least in part, constituted by the object of said experience. It is built from the objects of experience.¹³ The subject is in a relation with the object of experience, and that object is constitutive of the character of experience. For example, when one has a perception of green grass, the grass is constitutive of the character of that experience, insomuch that the subject of this experience could not have that same experience without the grass.

Type/Token Distinction

Here, I am referring to the token experience that the subject is having, as they cannot have that same experience without that bit of grass. Token experiences are dependent on that particular. However, when looking at *type* experiences, such as subjects perceiving a piece of grass, all that is required is *some such* mind-independent object as the actual grass, i.e. that is *qualitatively* similar. Let us take the following example: a subject, P is having a perception of a patch of grass. It is a patch of real grass. However, there is also a patch of fake grass, lying next to the first patch, so well created that it is completely and utterly identical in perceptible qualities to the patch of real grass.¹⁴ Say, during P’s perception of the grass, during the moment when they blink, the two patches of grass are swapped over. P would not think that the grass they are perceiving is any different, and the phenomenal character of the experience would be the same. Therefore, the patches of grass have the *sameness* required for this idea, despite not being the same particular. The subject has the same phenomenal character across the transition, and it is world-dependent, as in both cases, there is some such object as the real grass that has all of the same relevant qualities, involved in this *type* of experience.

¹¹ This is the most basic explanation of perception and the character of it.

¹² Phenomenal/conscious character focuses on types of experiences rather than particular ones. There is a separate notion known as ‘phenomenal nature’ which can be used to discuss conscious dimension of *particular* experiences. This was introduced by Martin (1998). For more on this see French and Gomes (2019).

¹³ Whilst this section of the chapter is focusing on the objects importance to character, it is important to note that the structure of the experience is also a significant contributor to the character of the experience.

¹⁴ In this case, the patches of grass and fake grass are identical, it is not the case that there are differences that are not discriminable, rather that there are no differences in perceptible qualities.

So, naïve realists believe that the mind-independent objects of perception are, at least partly, constitutive of the character of perceptual experience. Does this mean that we have to take it that naïve realists believe that experience is diaphanous: that the conscious character of the perceptual experience is wholly constituted by the object that is perceived? Not necessarily.

Take the views of some prominent naïve realists, that naïve realism does not entail diaphaneity. The first is Logue, “That is, Naïve Realism can appeal to *both* relata in accounting for the phenomenal character of veridical experience, as well as to facts about the relation itself.” (2012, p.222). Here, Logue is stating that the naïve realist can argue that it is more than just the object that the subject is in a relation with that can account for the character of the experience. Similar views can be seen from Brewer, when he says that “The way things are for the subject in perception are certain of the ways that the objects of perception are from the subject’s point of view.” (2011, p.99). Whilst it seems like Brewer is indicating just the object when talking of the character, he also mentions the subject’s point of view, indicating that something else is at play.¹⁵

In addition to these views from naïve realists, there is also the possibility of holding a view that does not fall neatly into one theories explanation of perception. For instance, one may be naïve realist about veridical perceptions and believe the Sense datum theorist’s explanation of illusions. This means that one may have different views on what constitutes that character of perceptual experience. It does not make one less naïve realist to believe that Sense datum may be just as significant as the object when accounting for the character.¹⁶

As a result of this, we can say that whilst naïve realists can believe that the character of experience is diaphanous, it is not required.

So, to what extent is character constituted by the external world? It depends upon one’s specific view of naïve realism, and how strict they are regarding diaphaneity. All options are open for the naïve realist, which version is best will depend upon how they choose to develop the theory.

What now?

So, I have explained the core commitments that the naïve realist makes. Does this mean that we are done with naïve realism? Ought we just accept the theory as it is? No, as there are some aspects of perception that the basic version of the theory fails to capture.

Unless we are a little more committal and a little less open in how we present naïve realism, we might worry about the ability of naïve realism to explain certain significant things.

As it stands, naïve realism may or may not explain why perceptions of the same object by the same person can differ depending on what light there is, it does not account for illusory experiences, nor does it explain how the character of perceptions by two people of the same

¹⁵ This is a reference to a version of naïve realism that explains experience as a three-place relation. More will be said on these kinds of theories in the next section.

¹⁶ There will be more discussion on this and the various iteration of the Transparency thesis in a later section on Martin.

object can be different. Naïve realism does not explain cases of perception where it seems that the conditions of the perception affect the character of the experience, and not just the object. This raises the question of whether naïve realism *can* explain these cases. For it might seem that, as stated, naïve realism is committed to either the stronger claim of diaphaneity or the weaker one of there being no constitutive role for the conditions of the experience. If we return to the Campbell quote, “The phenomenal character of your experience, as you look around the room, is constituted by the actual layout of the room itself.” (2002, p.116). What can the naïve realist say when the character of the perception has changed, but the layout of the room has not?

To offer an example, a subject, A, sees a pink flower at midday in the sunlight. They then see that same flower at nine o’clock at night under a streetlight. In both perceptions, A is in a relation with the same pink flower, yet it appears different to them in each scenario. It seems like something other than the object is having a significant effect on the way the object appears to the subject. So, in this example, it seems that the character of the experience has changed, but it is unclear what a naïve realist can say to account for this change, given that (as far as we can tell) the presented world has not changed.

Ought we just to deny naïve realism as a theory then, as it cannot explain these types of cases? No, that is a little too hasty, as there have been some attempts to elaborate or alter naïve realism so that it can explain what is going on in these perceptions. These versions are motivated to be more committal in their presentation of the view.

Selectionist Views

One way in which the naïve realist can attempt to explain this discrepancy between the character of perceptual experience and how they explain that character is to refer to changes in the presented world. This can be stated to be a selectionist view. What is selectionism? Beck explains it as two commitments, “The first is that a perception has the phenomenology that it does completely in virtue of the items perceived in the perception. The second is that standpoint conditions serve to select which of the many items in the subject’s environment the subject perceives.” (2019, p.610-611). So, the phenomenal character is wholly dependent on the objects of the perception, and it is the conditions of the perception that *select* what the subject perceives.

There are multiple ways of expanding on this, including an argument from Fish, which is the most easily explained using the above example. To recapitulate, there is one subject perceiving one flower, at two different times. The object of the perception *does not change*, but the character of the experience does.

Fish denies the premise that the flower does not change and argues that there is, in fact, a change in the relational properties of the flower. He elaborates on this, stating that the flower looks different because there is a difference in the presented world: the shade of the flower. He states that there is an aspect of colour, called ‘shade’, that is a relation between the intrinsic colour of the object and the lighting of the environment. In the flower example, the shade of pink has changed because of the change in lighting, causing a change in the

relational property of the flower, ergo the shade of the flower.¹⁷ So whilst some property of the object has changed, it was still in the presented world. This allows a naïve realist explanation that states any changes are in the presented world, they are mind-independent, and that the character is constituted *only* by the object of the experience.

Whilst this does maintain a naïve realist view and explains the changes in character, it does so at a cost: the cost of simplicity. Take the following Simplicity Principle, which states “the character constituting presented elements of ordinary veridical experiences are just ordinary visible features of the mind-independent world: the objects we ordinarily take ourselves to see and their basic visible properties” (French and Phillips, 2020, p.3). The selectionist views move away from this. Fish’s view has the theoretical posit of *shades*, and these are special relational properties of an object. Special properties are not something that are easy to assimilate into a theory of perception that purports to be the view that is practically identical to the ordinary conception of perception. If we need to acknowledge them, it should be as a last resort. If the naïve realist could address the concern about the character of experience, without adding special properties, it would be vastly preferred. But can they?

It seems that they can. An alternative way to explain the differences in character, whilst keeping to the simple nature of naïve realism, is to include some form of a way of perceiving. This idea comes from Martin, where he asks, “Why cannot the ways in which things are presented in experience make a difference to what the experience is like, in addition to what is presented?” (1998, p.175). Here, he is indicating that it is not only the presented object that is important for the phenomenal character of an experience, but also the way in which the object is presented to the subject. This is a simpler view than Fish’s shades because it utilises elements that we already accept occur during perception. The way in which an object is presented has always been an aspect of one’s experience of an object; it is just that now Martin and others are arguing that the way an object is presented has bearing on the phenomenal character of that experience.

Since then, there have been many different theories that present their own interpretation of a way of perceiving, in order to account for cases such as the ones above. In what follows, I discuss a few of them.

Part Five – Versions of Naïve Realism

Beck

The first version of naïve realism in this discussion, which attempts to account for cases of perception where something other than the object has a significant effect on the character of the experience, is from Beck. He has a version of naïve realism called ‘neurocomputational naïve realism’ which centres on a subject’s neurocomputational properties. These are the features of the subject’s visual system, their attention patterns, and their cognitive processing. They are the properties that come into play when a subject is having a perception.

¹⁷ He has a similar view on different instances of perception, insofar that relational spatial properties can change, explaining the change in the character of the perception. For instance, the way the object appears ‘from here’ is different than the way it appears ‘over there’. The spatial relation has changed.

This version of naïve realism accounts for his belief that perceptions are internally dependent, and that the phenomenology of the experience depends upon neuro-computational properties of the subject of the experience. This is because he wants a theory of perception that can account for the “external directedness” and “internal dependence” (Pautz, 2010) of perception. These refer to our perceptions acquainting us with objects in the external world and contributing to our knowledge, *and* the dependence on the neuro-computational properties of the subject, respectively.

To create this version of naïve realism, he utilises empirical phenomena, such as *Shifted Spectra*, to explain that one’s race, age or sex can affect the way that colours appear to its subjects. See Neitz and Jacobs (1986), Hardin (1988), Lutze et al. (1990), and Neitz and Neitz (1998).

So, two people of a different race, age or sex can be perceiving the exact same object, but the perceptions can have different colour phenomenology. This case suggests that perceptions can be internally dependent, and that the phenomenology of a perception is dependent on the neuro-computational properties of the subject having the perception.

Beck expands this example from colour perception to all instances of perception and argues that the neurocomputational properties determine how objects appear to a subject in perceptual experiences. In terms of the phenomenology, having certain neuro-computational properties changes the way in which the experiences obtain, especially in terms of their appearance properties. To have an appearance property, according to Beck, is to be appeared to in a specific way, for instance, a subject can be appeared to in a reddish or greenish way (Beck, 2018, p.624).

In order to maintain its naïve realist form, Beck argues that the perceptual phenomenology is partially determined by a subject’s neuro-computational properties, as well as being partially determined by the mind-independent objects that the subject is perceiving. This means that a naïve realist theory can include the ‘internal dependence’ which Beck thinks is vital.

The addition of neurocomputational properties to naïve realism is not something that I wish to endorse. It very much complicates what ought to be a very simple theory. It posits these neurocomputational properties that we do not ordinarily recognise and moves away from the ordinary view of perception. As before with the selectionist view, this theory goes beyond the naïve, familiar objects to unknown special properties, in the form of appearance properties, which is something that I, as a naïve realist would want to avoid.

So, I would not wish to accept neurocomputational naïve realism, unless it is absolutely necessary to maintain a naïve realist position, whilst simultaneously explaining the cases of perception where something other than the object is having a significant effect on the way the object appears to the subject. So, whilst I am not outright rejecting Beck’s version of naïve realism, it is a very last resort theory given its move away from simplicity. This is because whilst I can accept that neurocomputational properties exist, the manner in which Beck is presenting them as an explanation of perception is unique *but* also complex. This is not something that is desired for a naïve realist theory.

So, is there another option?

Yes, there are at least two other approaches that we can take. They both do what we want a naïve realist theory to do, which is to understand ways of perceiving in perception simply, whilst explaining the character of perception with more than just the object.

Whilst what I am about to discuss are quite similar theories, we can distinguish them as ‘Third relata’ theories presented by people such as Brewer and Campbell, and a theory that describes perception as a determinable two-place relation, presented by French and Phillips.

Third Relata

The first approach is to look at naïve realist theories that include a ‘third relata’. These are theories claiming, “that perception is a three-place relation between subjects, objects, and “perspectives” or “standpoints” (e.g., Campbell 2009; Brewer 2013; and French 2016). This third (“standpoint” or “perspective”) relatum is intended to capture the fact that we can consciously perceive features in a host of different ways depending on the circumstances and idiosyncrasies of our perceptual situation. To be perceptual, then, an effect need not involve a difference in *what* is seen, it might instead involve a difference in *the way* in which features are seen.” (Phillips, 2016, p.376).

The introduction of a third relatum has been used to address some of the issues that a naïve realist might face, such as the problem of illusion. It is also essential for explaining the character of experience within these theories, as it adds an element that changes ‘what it is like’ for the subject to have that experience. Third relata, are, therefore, an important aspect of our perceptual experiences.

These theories can, therefore, account for scenarios like the one above, in which the pink flower appears different to A depending upon which lighting condition that A perceives the flower under. How A perceived the flower has an effect on the character of the perception, which is just as important as the object itself.

Third relata theories are more palatable than neuro-computational naïve realism because they maintain the naiveness and simplicity which naïve realism prides itself on. They do not posit additional objects or unusual properties but rather draw more upon the ordinary conception of perception, that things and properties around the object at the time of perception will have an effect on how the object appears to the subject.

French and Phillips

French and Phillips (2020) also have an account of naïve realism, dubbed Simple, Austere Naïve Realism, in which the character of one’s experience is constituted by the object of perception but also by the *way* it was perceived. This is not necessarily a third-relatum theory, as French and Phillips would describe *ways of perceiving* as a two-place relation that is determinable. However, it arises from the same discussions as the third-relata theories and is not too dissimilar.

It is an account of both veridical perception and illusions. Their theory combines the concepts of Simplicity and Austerity, the former being “the character-constituting presented elements of ordinary veridical experience are just ordinary visible features of the mind-independent world: the objects we ordinarily take ourselves to see and their basic visible properties” and the latter meaning “Illusions do not differ from veridical cases (as understood in Simplicity), neither in relational nature nor in the kind of character-constituting presented elements to which they are relations”. (French and Phillips, 2020, p.3). This combination produces a theory that states that the simple and mind-independent presented elements that are constitutive of the conscious character in veridical perceptions, also are constitutive of the conscious character of illusory perceptual experiences.

This is a controversial idea because some philosophers accept the Difference Principle, which states “Necessarily, if two experiences differ in phenomenal character, then they differ in character-constituting presented elements.” (French and Phillips, 2000, p.4.). This means that if the character of the experiences is different, then it must be that the objects and/or features that are presented to the subject are also different. This poses a problem for the explanation of illusions, as it means that the objects and features that are presented in illusory experiences are not the same as those presented in veridical experiences. If that is the case, then what exactly are subjects presented with in illusory experiences?

Rather than agreeing with this Difference Principle and having to give an alternate explanation for what subjects are presented with in illusory experiences, French and Phillips offer a version of naïve realism that can account for illusions. This allows for both veridical and illusory experiences to have the same character-constituting presented elements. This version of naïve realism explains how one is able to appeal to the ways the presented elements are presented, causing differences in experiences despite the character-constituting presented elements being fixed and the same. The experiences can differ because the objects are perceived in different ways.

To support their account, they draw on Martin’s scepticism of Diaphaneity where he asks, “Why cannot the ways in which things are presented in experience make a difference to what the experience is like in addition to what is perceived?” (Martin, 1998, p.175). The ways can be determined by elements such as perspective or perceptual conditions but are not always that simple.

To paraphrase the example given in French and Phillips’ paper, when one has an illusory experience of an orange lorry, what the subject is actually presented with is the red lorry (which is the actual colour of the lorry), and it is the way that the lorry is being perceived, perhaps under streetlights, that accounts for it appearing orange.

So, the Simple, Austere naïve realist is able to argue that there is not only one way of perceiving a scene or mind-independent objects. The very same elements of the experience can be presented to the subject in a multitude of ways because of there being differences in the perspectival aspects. Therefore, in French and Phillips’ account, the character of one’s experience is constituted by the object of perception but also by the way it was perceived.

This can easily explain cases of perception like A, seeing a pink flower at midday in the sunlight and at nine o'clock at night under a streetlight. In both perceptions, A is in a relation with the same pink flower, yet it appears different to them in each scenario. This is because the lighting conditions can be seen as a *way of perceiving* and thus can explain the character of the perception.

One issue with this theory arises when looking at illusory cases. If there is no difference in the presented objects in veridical and illusory cases, then where does the illusory property come from? How does the *way* in which the lorry was perceived make it *look orange*? How does the appearance of orange get into the character of the experience?

The response to this is to draw on Martin's discussion of looks (2010). In illusory cases, it is the actual colour of the object, in this case red, that is relevantly similar to the paradigm look of an orange thing. You may be asking exactly what the paradigm look of an orange thing is, well, it is just its orangeness. So, in the case of viewing the red lorry under the streetlights, the redness is similar to orangeness, and thus the subject perceives the lorry in illusory circumstances, as orange.

A positive element of this version of naïve realism is that it allows for many external elements to play an important role in perception, one that is assumed to be occurring anyway. Under the ordinary conception of perception, when you think of seeing an object, it makes sense that lighting, the angle, its positioning among other objects, etc, would have an effect on how the object appears to you. Simple, Austere naïve realism allows us to retain a naïve realist view whilst also considering other external factors of perception. As the name indicates, it is a simple theory of perception that offers a persuasive explanation.

It does differ from the third-relatum views I explained before, insofar that the way of perceiving is not a presented element of perception. It is rather a multiply determinable two-place relation that holds between the subjects and the presented elements. The way of perceiving is determining the relation, rather than itself being a third relata of experience.

Which Version of Naïve Realism should we accept?

As mentioned, third relata theories and those similar (like French and Phillips) are more palatable than neuro-computational naïve realism because they maintain the naiveness and simplicity which naïve realism prides itself on. They do not posit additional objects or unusual properties. They just seem to match our ordinary view of perception: that the conditions of the perception will shape it just as much as the object one is perceiving.

In terms of choosing a version of naïve realism, I am not going to put my support behind one specific theory. Rather, I want to argue that the explanation of perception needs to include some kind of *way of perceiving*. This could be in the sense that Campbell and Brewer argue for, or it could be in the way that French and Phillips argue for. I am remaining neutral on how we specifically spell out 'ways of perceiving'. This is because it is not necessary for my argument to come down on one side or the other. I am going to keep them all in mind for use in further chapters, as my discussions on Unconscious Perception, Rich Perception, Cognitive

Penetration and the Rationality of Perception may require different formulations of naïve realism with ways of perception built in.

So, on my preferred version of naïve realism, perceptual experiences had in cases of genuine perception are instances where a subject is in acquaintance with a mind-independent object, in which both the object and the *way of perceiving* it are constitutive of the character of that experience.

Whilst it is a positive thing that we have now got a version of naïve realism to work with; we may still be asking the question of why we ought to be working with it at all? In the next section, I am going to be looking at what motivates naïve realism, namely introspection, and how different philosophers have argued in favour of the theory.

Part Six – Arguments in favour of Naïve Realism

In this section, not only are the motivations for naïve realism important, but also how we get from the core commitments of naïve realism to the fully fleshed-out theory. I look at introspective support from naïve realism and how philosophers such as Fish and Martin argue for naïve realism by trying to explain this move.

Introspection

Introspection seems to lend support to naïve realism. We can say this as perceptual experience is an introspectable phenomena, which allows us to reflect upon the conscious character of the experience. When one introspects on a perception or perceptual experience that they have had, they would find the objects of their perception. So, when I introspect upon my perception of my yellow blanket, I would see my yellow blanket. There are no intermediaries when I introspect, nor does it particularly seem like a purely representational experience, leading us to potentially disregard, or at least not favour, some of the main alternative theories to naïve realism.

At most, there are potentially the conditions of the perception, like which light we perceived the object under, or in which position the object was in, but as we have seen with *ways of perceiving* and third-relata theories, naïve realism is able to accommodate that. Ways of perceiving can also accommodate a more internal way, insofar as the clarity with which one sees an object (whether it is blurry or not) or the extent of the subject's visual field when they see an object, are *ways of perceiving* that are coming from the subject themselves, rather than the environment. Again, to return to the example, when I introspect upon my perception of my yellow blanket, I would see the object but also the way in which I perceived it. So, in a case where I am wearing glasses, I would see my yellow blanket clearly, under the light from my lamp, lying over my chair. That is all. The character of my experience, based on my introspection, is constituted by the object that I perceived.

This support for naïve realism, from introspection, speaks again to the idea that naïve realism is most similar to the *ordinary conception* of perception. Introspecting on mental states is the method for people to describe their own experiences and thus their own perceptions. If this introspection naturally results in descriptions of perceptions that align with the way in which

naïve realists explain perception, then this would indicate that the naïve realist is correct. It has the support of the ordinary conception and now of introspection.

What runs throughout this introspective support for naïve realism is this idea that the way experience *seems to be* is the way it is. The way that people talk about perceptual experience is the way that the naïve realist explains it to be. This contrasts with the Sense Datum theory and Intentionalism, in which they are arguing perceptual experience is not as it seems and is the way that they present it to be. There are, of course, consequences for arguing that perception is as it seems, as the naïve realist must reject both the Argument from Illusion and the Argument from Hallucination. Yet, this seems like less of a price to pay than to argue that perception is *not* as it seems.

But how do we bridge the gap from introspective data supporting the idea that perceptual experience is the way that it seems to accepting the theory of naïve realism as a whole? Both Fish and Martin offer an explanation for this in their arguments for naïve realism.

Fish

In the first chapter of his book, *Perception, Hallucination, and Illusion* (2009), Fish discusses the theory of naïve realism and considers some motivations for supporting the theory. He is using his book, and indeed this chapter, to attempt to show that the theory of naïve realism (referred to as Broad's first pass view) is a philosophically significant theory within the philosophy of perception.

Fish characterises naïve realism via Broad's passage on it, in which the theory is described as a direct one, in which "seeing seems to bring one into direct contact with remote objects and to reveal their shapes and colours" (C. D Broad, "Some Elementary reflections on Sense-Perception").¹⁸ The view focuses on how our perceptual experiences seem to us and how the features of the objects in the external world are revealed to perceivers.

From there, Fish formulates naïve realism similar to the way I do, by claiming that "when we see external objects and their properties, [they] shape the contours of the subject's conscious experience" (Fish, 2009, p.3). Or, in other words, the objects of our perception constitute the conscious character of our experiences.¹⁹ He also leans into the idea of the perceiver being acquainted with the mind-independent objects and their features. This distinct feature allows us to explain certain things about our perceptions, for instance, "why is it like *that* to have that experience? Because in having the experience, the subject is acquainted with thus-and-such objects and their properties" (Fish, 2009, p.9). This, therefore, allows the naïve realist to bridge an explanatory gap regarding the conscious character of experience.

Having determined Fish's interpretation of naïve realism, we must turn to the motivations for supporting the theory. The first and most significant being that naïve realism can be thought to be the 'pre-theoretical' or naïve view of veridical perception. However, this may not be the best motivation to hold in support of a philosophical theory, given the following things: that agreeing

¹⁸ This is thought to be a 'first pass' view as Broad attempts to capture the view of non-philosophers.

¹⁹ Fish does indicate that the *shaping* is in a constitutive sense and not a causal sense. (2009, p. 3).

with the ordinary conception of perception may lead to holding naïve views on other related situations, such as hallucinations, that the naïve realist will have to reject, or that there is not much point to pursuing philosophical or scientific reflection if we assume that the naïve position is the best one to hold.

Yet, this motivation does reflect the earlier point of support for naïve realism, that the theory can articulate how our experiences seem to us during introspection. Where Fish does not go far enough is explaining how this phenomenological reflection uncovers the other aspects of naïve realism, such as perception being a direct relation or being of mind-independent objects. So, whilst Fish's argument does motivate us into taking naïve realism seriously, it does not adequately explain how we start at introspection and end with the intricacies of naïve realism.

Let's move on to Martin to see if his argument succeeds at this.

Martin - Beyond Dispute

In this article, Martin focuses on introspection, or in other words, how an experience 'looks' to us upon reflection of our perceptual experiences. This argument provides more detail than Fish's, and thus, he gives a more persuasive introspective case for naïve realism.

First, the positive thesis of *Transparency* is introduced, "that the character of one's experience involves in some sense or is directed on or of the mind-independent objects and their features which we take to be around us in our environment" (Martin, 2000, p.26-27). There are two versions of the transparency thesis to be discussed. The first, which is most similar to the quoted explanation above, is the Weak thesis. This is the idea that introspection of our experiences reveals the mind-independent objects and features of said experiences. That leaves it open that introspection could reveal other features as well. The stronger version of the thesis must commit to the fact that when we introspect upon our perceptual experiences, we find *only* the features of the object that we perceived, including some relational features, such as distance relations.

There are other ways to characterise this distinction, as we can see in Soteriou's book, 'The Mind's Construction' in which he explains it as follows, "This idea is sometimes expressed in terms of the claim that introspection of one's perceptual experience seems to one to reveal *only* the objects, qualities, and relations one is apparently perceptually aware of in having that experience, and not qualities of the experience itself." (Soteriou, 2013, p.88) This is the stronger version of the thesis, and it mirrors what I explained.

It is the weaker thesis that Soteriou explains slightly differently, "A weaker version of the claim is that when one attempts to attend introspectively to what it is like for one to be having a perceptual experience, it seems to one as though one can only do so through attending to the sorts of objects, qualities, and relations one is apparently *perceptually* aware of in having the experience. That is, when one tries to introspect one's visual experience and its qualities, it seems to one as though one can only do so by *looking at* the objects, qualities, and relations one seems to be aware of in having that experience." (Soteriou, 2013, p.88). Here, Soteriou characterises the weaker thesis by claiming that we are only able to attend to our experience *by*

attending to the mind-independent objects, as it is these objects that are at the core of our introspections. This is not to say that there may not be other features, qualia, for instance, but that to get to those features, one must attend to the mind-independent objects.

Let us take an example: if one has a perception of a lake, when one introspects, they will find the features of the lake, blueness, wetness, and so on, but also relational features such as “from here” (indicating the distance between the perceiver and the object in question). It is the mind-independent objects, their features and how it is that they relate to the perceiver that is revealed during introspection, in both the weak and strong versions of transparency. It is important to note here that to be a naïve realist, one must only endorse some kind of transparency. We can concede that it can be either the weak or strong version, as they both place mind-independent objects at the core of experiences.

A further thesis that Martin discusses is *Actualism*, which is the thesis that states that when we have an experience of something, then there must be some object or quality in existence for us to experience. For instance, if a subject has an experience of a tree in front of them, then there actually has to be a tree in front of them to experience. As Martin puts it, “if I can see a table, and it looks to me as if there is a table there, then what I sense is a table which exists independently of my mind, *and I could not so experience if the table were not there*” (Martin, 2000, p.28, emphasis added).

Martin explains that if we were to accept both theses regarding perception, then we would be left with a theory that is extremely similar to the view held by naïve realists. Taking what is claimed about reflecting upon our perceptual experiences, say a perception of a tree, Martin claims that “the very same objects and features [of the perception] remain the focus of attention as aspects of how I experience” thus lending support to transparency *and* “it is evident to me that I am experiencing these things, and not merely thinking about them, or imagining or remembering them” (Martin, 2000, p.28), thus recommending actualism. So, Transparency plus Actualism seems to equal naïve realism, as combined, they present the idea that the objects of the perception can explain the character of the experience and that the experience is of objects in the world, there is actually something that the subject is experiencing. Naïve realism, as we know, is the idea that during a perceptual experience, the subject is in a relation with the object of the perception *and* that the object plays a key role in the character of the experience.

Martin’s argument utilises the support given by the opponents of naïve realism on the theses in order to provide an argument *for* naïve realism. Let’s walk through this.

Intentionalists accept Transparency and also make the claim that we know this through our introspection. So, they agree that there is introspective support for the transparency thesis. They also reject actualism, but not because they think introspection doesn’t provide evidence that when we have an experience of something, then there must be some object or quality in existence in our environment for us to experience, but rather, they reject it on theoretical grounds. Intentionalists take the argument from hallucination to be persuasive and draw the conclusion that we must reject actualism and acknowledge the intentionality of experience instead.

In a similar vein, the Sense datum theorists accept actualism on the grounds of introspection, claiming that experience introspectively seems to be a relation to its object. But they reject transparency. Again, this is not for introspective reasons but for theoretical ones, in the form of the arguments from illusion and hallucination.

So, we have introspective support for transparency from Intentionalists and introspective support for actualism from the sense datum theorists. Martin ingeniously combines these two introspective claims from each of the theories to show that we have introspective support for both transparency and actualism. Thus, we have introspective support for naïve realism. Opponents of naïve realism may agree with this, but they state that they must reject naïve realism and what introspection tells us because of the problem of perception. The naïve realist can just say that they will reject the problem of perception, hence the introduction of disjunctivism, and that they accept the introspective support for their theory.

So, Martin explains that introspection indicates a preference for naïve realism when it comes to explaining our perceptual experiences.

Now, I want to add to the argument from Martin. He shows that there is introspective evidence for a basic version of naïve realism, and I want to show that we can extend this to encompass *ways of perceiving*. When introspecting on our perceptual experiences, not only do we find the object of perception, but also the manner in which we perceived it. Let's look at some examples of this. When I introspect upon my experience of sitting in my garden looking at a red rose, I would find the rose, its properties *and* the angle from which I perceived the flower. Similarly, when I introspect upon my experience of my yellow wall, I would find the wall, its properties *and* the lighting conditions of the room. The manner in which we perceive something is central to how that thing appears to us, and thus we would find it during introspection.

Therefore, introspection suggests that the best way to explain perception is the one which I argued for previously. That perceptual experiences had in cases of genuine perception are instances where a subject is in acquaintance with a mind-independent object, in which both the object and the *way of perceiving* it are constitutive of the character of that experience.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the core commitments of naïve realism; that the subject is in a *relation* with a mind-independent object, that the subject is in a *direct* relation with the object they are perceiving and that the character of experience is at least partially constituted by the object of the experience. I have shown that there are different ways that one can build on the theory, by explaining versions such as Beck's and French and Phillips' and how they utilise the same core commitments to create their own naïve realist accounts. I have also explored how naïve realism is motivated by introspection and looked at some of the different arguments presented in favour of naïve realism.

After doing this, I have argued for my preferred version of naïve realism moving forward. This is that perceptual experiences had in cases of genuine perception are instances where a subject

is in acquaintance with a mind independent object, in which both the object and the *way of perceiving* it are constitutive of the character of that experience.

This chapter has therefore argued for naïve realism and situated my version of naïve realism for use in the remaining chapters of the thesis.

Chapter Two

Unconscious Perception and Naïve Realism

There has been much philosophical debate regarding unconscious perception, with questions raised on whether it is possible, the nature of it and what kinds of theories of perception it is compatible with. The primary question is whether our perceptions, which we so often associate with consciousness, can occur unconsciously. If they can, then how similar, or different, are the unconscious perceptions to our conscious ones? Are unconscious perceptions of the same kind or nature as conscious perceptions? Do they both involve the same kinds of objects? We can also ask questions about the nature of the different types of perception, such as whether it is possible to move from an unconscious perception to a conscious one, and vice versa.

These are just some of the interesting questions about unconscious perception that I am going to explore in the first part of this chapter, in order to determine a view of unconscious perception. I will draw on the work of Phillips and Block, in their collaborative discussion on unconscious perception, but also on some of Phillips' solo papers that explore some of the empirical experiments that produce evidence for accepting unconscious perception. In the second section of this chapter, I will be looking at whether naïve realism is able to accommodate unconscious perceptions and how it might do so. This compatibility discussion arises from the idea that all of our unconscious perceptions are somehow representational by nature and thus pose a problem for theories of perception that reject perceptual representations.

Overall, this chapter will argue both that unconscious perception occurs *and* that it is compatible with naïve realism.

Part One – Unconscious Perception

Defining Some Key Notions

A concept that is central to this discussion is phenomenal consciousness, meaning what it is like for a subject to have an experience. One of the most well-known discussions of phenomenal consciousness comes from Nagel. Nagel states that “the fact that an organism has consciousness *at all* means, basically, that there is something it is like to *be* that organism” (Nagel, 1974, p. 436). When one has a conscious experience, such as seeing a red apple, there is something that it is like for the subject to be having that experience. This phenomenon can also be referred to as the subjective character of experience, as it is individual to the person having the experience. This is key to my discussion, as the rest of this chapter argues that there are examples of unconscious perception, where the perceptions do not have phenomenal consciousness, but are in fact *still* perceptions.

When looking at the possibility of perception being able to occur unconsciously, we ought to define the notion of perception to which we are referring. Typically, perception is used to

denote sensory experiences of mind-independent objects in the external world. For example, Jack is perceiving when he sees the brown bookshelf in his bedroom, as it is a sensory experience, seeing, and it is of a mind-independent object, the brown bookshelf.

But here, following Phillips in his discussion of unconscious perception, we can understand perception in terms of having a subjective perspective on an objective world. In more detail, “In order to constitute perception, an informational state must (a) have objective content representing how particulars are arranged in the subject’s external environment, and (b) be attributable to the individual, not merely, say, to their visuomotor system.” (Phillips and Block, 2017, page 165).²⁰ For instance, consider Jack seeing a red apple. This is attributable to the individual: *Jack* has seen the apple, rather than his visual system just taking in information about the apple. And Jack thus has a perspective on the objective world, the apple.²¹

This view of perception, as mentioned, can be contrasted with instances of a subject’s visual system taking in information. These types of informational states cannot be attributable to the individual. This strikes me as similar to sub-personal movements of the body, such as one’s heart beating. The individual is not intentionally causing their heart to beat; it does so because of the electrical pulses and circulatory systems of the body. Thus, the heart beating is attributable to these systems rather than the individual. This is contrasted with an action such as raising an arm to reach a high shelf, as this is a deliberate and thought-out action, which is, therefore, attributable to the individual. I am taking this idea from Phillips and Block, where they contrast being attributable to the ‘individual’ with their ‘visuomotor system’. There is, of course, a sense in which all the actions performed by various systems of the body are attributable to the individual, as they are *their* systems. Yet, looking at Phillips and Block’s explanation, we are able to separate the two notions.

We should consider the notion of being ‘attributable to the visual system rather than the individual’ in more detail. According to Burge, “a representation’s being attributable to the individual turns, paradigmatically, on whether the representation’s content is available to a central, coordinating agency” (Burge, 2010, p. 333). As far as I understand this, this means that the content of perception, for instance, is attributable to the individual when the action that the subject has performed in order to have the perception is “grounded in *functioning, coordinated behavior* by the *whole organism*, issuing from the individual’s *central behavioral capacities*, not purely from subsystems.” (Burge, 2010, p.331). For instance, a perception of a white book is attributable to me if that perception leads to coordinated behaviour, such as picking up the book. So, if the perceptions serve a personal level action, then it is attributable to the individual.

²⁰ I will be using Phillips’s definition for the purpose of discussion, primarily because the proponents of unconscious perception seem to accept it. However, it is important to note that this definition is not theory neutral, as it entails that perception involves representational content.

²¹ A similar line of discussion that I will not get into in this chapter is the difference between a ‘perception proper’ and a ‘perceptual experience’. These terms are often used to distinguish between veridical or illusory experiences and hallucinatory experiences. They are used to delineate when one is in some form of contact with the external world and when one is not. Whilst it is significant to be able to distinguish these types of experience, this distinction is not so relevant when examining unconscious perception. This is because it is assumed that for it to class as an unconscious perception at all, there needs to be something in the external world in which the subject is in contact with.

An experience being attributable to the visual system does not have this quality. A person's visual system can take in visual information about the external world, yet the individual does not necessarily have access to this information. This is a significant difference. Perceptions need individual attributability.

It is, however, important to note that this definition of perception does not build in consciousness. Objectivity does not require consciousness; otherwise, the starting point of this debate would render the remaining discussions irrelevant. In the following section, I am going to be assessing some of the paradigm examples and experiments that some take to be evidence of unconscious perception, by looking at whether they can be classified as *cases of perception* and whether or not they are *actually unconscious*. I will be drawing on the work of Phillips and Block, in their debate on this very topic, in order to determine whether unconscious perception is possible and occurs or whether it does not occur and is not possible.

Before we enter further into this discussion, we should note that theories of experience involve commitments to *possible* cases. When a theory states a certain belief regarding a certain phenomenon, it is committed to the possible cases of that phenomenon. For instance, if there is a theory of unconscious perception, then they are committed to possible cases of unconscious perception. Even if we cannot prove that there exist actual cases of unconscious perception in the world, the question still remains whether it is *possible* for there to be unconscious perceptions. If we cannot show that unconscious perceptions can occur right now, we still might be able to at some point in the future. Otherwise, why would we take time to create theories about previously unidentified phenomena? ²²

Empirical Cases of Unconscious Perception

There have seemingly been multiple empirical examples of unconscious perception, often under experimental conditions, but also in clinical cases. These are examples such as blindsight (Weiskrantz, 1986, 2009, Cowey, 2010), visual agnosia (Nanay, 2020), and also in cases of subliminal priming (Greenwald, Schuh, 1995) and continuous flash suppression (Yang, Zald, Blake, 2007). These examples are often taken to indicate the existence of unconscious perception. Another question, and one that I will be further examining, is that if we do take them to be cases of unconscious perception, do they provide evidence for the claim that mental states of the *same fundamental kind (SFK)* that occur in conscious perception are also able to occur unconsciously. In other words, do they show that the same type of perception can occur both consciously and unconsciously. ²³

²² This distinction between something being possible and something occurring is an important one, yet in this debate both often yield the same results. If unconscious perception is possible, then we need to study its parameters and intricacies, just as much as if it is occurring. This is because even if we have no instances of unconscious perception, but it is possible, then we still need to study how it can affect existing theories, such as the knowledge around conscious perception. For instance, if unconscious perception is possible and is representational, whether that will entail that conscious perception is as well. This is something I will return to later in the chapter.

²³ Whilst there is not a dedicated paragraph to answer these questions, the discussion had around various aspects of unconscious perception will determine whether unconscious perceptions are of the *same fundamental kind* as conscious perceptions.

I use phrases such as ‘seemingly’ as there exists the worry that these examples are not actually cases of unconscious perception. Some argue that the subjects in the examples are not unconsciously perceiving but rather perceiving with reduced consciousness. Another worry is that these examples are not examples of perceptions, but examples of the phenomena that were mentioned before, a subject’s visual system taking in information. In the paragraphs that follow, I will examine some of the strongest cases that are so often provided as evidence for the occurrence of unconscious perception to argue that there are cases of unconscious perception.

I look mainly at two different types of unconscious perception cases, Blindsight and Continuous Flash Suppression (CFS). For blindsight, I will argue that the case studies are instances of unconscious perception, but that due to the mechanism of inducing blindsight, they are not the paradigm case to use to support the view that unconscious perception occurs.

In the later section on CFS, I argue that CFS is the form of unconscious perception that is the most convincing. This is because the CFS experiments can be replicated on a variety of people and produce longer lasting unconscious perceptions. I use both of these empirical cases to argue that unconscious perceptions do occur.

Blindsight

Blindsight is a phenomenon in which a subject is able to respond to stimuli that they cannot consciously perceive, often due to certain types of brain injury or damage. Weiskrantz published a study on Blindsight, which included the case of the subject named ‘D.B’. He underwent intensive clinical tests for blindsight after having a tumour removed earlier in his life that also removed his visual cortex in one hemisphere of his brain. In such tests, Poppel et al (1973) found that brain-damaged subjects, like D.B., could “move their eyes to the location of an ‘unseen’ stimulus in their blind fields” (Weiskrantz, 1990).

However, there is now the view that D.B did not in fact, have blindsight. As more studies are completed on blindsight, Cowey states that “...patient DB, whose performance led to the birth of the term blindsight, cannot be structurally scanned to determine whether his striate cortex is really missing in the right hemisphere. As well, there is still no explanation for the temporary recovery of real sight in one quadrant of his impaired hemifield (see Weiskrantz, 2009) and for the revelation nearly 30 years after his operation, that he experiences visual after-images when a visual stimulus is turned off (Weiskrantz et al., 2003). How ironic if the discovery of blindsight proves to be based on a patient who does not possess it!” (Cowey, 2010, p.7). So, if D.B does not have blindsight, does this mean that we can write off the phenomena of blindsight completely?

No, we cannot. There are other studied cases of blindsight. Beyond D.B, one of the most extensively studied blindsight patient is dubbed G.Y, who was involved in an accident as a child. He can be noted saying ““I’ve lost all the vision to my right.” As a boy, “I literally used to

walk into lampposts.” (Rawlence, 2001).²⁴ Yet, in the studies he was involved in later life, he could indicate when objects were shown in his right-sided vision. Despite his claim of unawareness, G.Y seems to have the capacity to locate objects in his blindfield. In one of the studies, G.Y was given a task to determine the intricacies of his blindsight. He was asked to identify in which location, when provided with two, the target was presented in a “spatial two-alternative forced choice paradigm” (Kentridge, Heywood, Weiskrantz, 1999). G.Y also had to respond as to whether he had any awareness of *an event* happening during the study.

The results indicated that G.Y.’s performance, in his right field (which is his blind one), was significantly above chance in all conditions. This study also indicated that G.Y.’s performance was improved when there was a cue present. These can be seen in the Figure below.

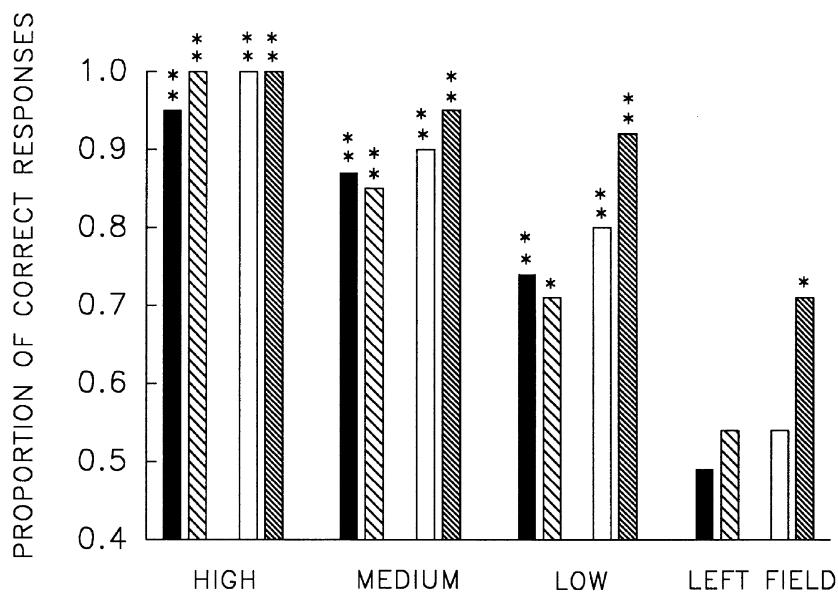


Figure 1 - The proportion of correct discriminations are shown for high (93%), medium (43%) and low (22%) contrast targets compared to chance. (Kentridge, Heywood, Weiskrantz, 1999).

So, G.Y was correcting able to identify the location of the target at a rate that indicates that he was not just guessing, ergo it was not chance. This would seem to show that G.Y. was perceiving the targets.

This is one of the examples that is commonly depicted as empirical evidence of unconscious perception. In many cases of blindsight, a subject can respond to external objects in their environment that they cannot consciously perceive. According to Burge, “blindsight patients perceive environmental conditions. The perception involves perceptual constancies – including motion, location, and size constancies. Their perception guides their action. There is strong reason to believe that some of these patients lack phenomenal consciousness in the relevant perceptions” (Burge, 2010, p. 374). Perceptual constancy is the tendency to see familiar objects as having a standard, or *constant* shape, size, colour or location, despite changes in external perceptual conditions.

²⁴ This quote comes from a television interview, Christopher Rawlence’s PBS NOVA series “Secrets of the Mind” first aired on the 23rd of October 2001.

This is significant because, for Burge, perceptual constancies are definitive of perception. Without perceptual constancies, there is no perception, so the fact that blindsight patients have experiences involving perceptual constancies means we can classify their experiences as perception.

So, for G.Y., he is perceiving his environment, insofar as he is able to identify whether or not there is an object, or target, in a specific location. Yet, he maintains that he did not have awareness of something occurring during the tests. Therefore, we would say that he lacks 'phenomenal consciousness' in his perceptual experience, yet he is still perceiving.

When looking at the case of G.Y., despite performing accurately on many of the tests given to him, G.Y. was certain that he could not see anything, only sometimes 'feeling' as if something were there. This is a further reason why it is often believed that G.Y. is an example of a subject demonstrating unconscious perception. G.Y. was able to locate the object, despite not being able to consciously perceive it, yet something must have occurred for him to be able to accurately locate the object. The proponent of unconscious perception would argue that if it is not conscious perception, then it must have been unconscious perception.

One way in which proponents of blindsight could support their argument is to rule out perception in a *non-visual modality*, for instance, the blindsight subjects have no visual awareness, but they have auditory awareness, which could account for the really quite accurate results. To do this, they could deliberately block the subject's other senses, for instance, by providing noise-cancelling headphones. This is not something that is explicitly referenced in the above studies, more than likely because the tests that the blindsight patients were subject to did not leave any room for this interpretation. Of course, given an experiment in which the only *target* presented to the blindsight patient is visual, then it seems almost obvious that they will not be using their other senses to complete the task of the experiment. So, whilst ruling out non-visual perception in unconscious perception can be a significant way of testing the results of blindsight tests, and thus make the argument for blindsight stronger, it may not always be necessary.

There have been studies in which it was argued that blindsight may in fact be 'm', a term used to reference when we perceive body movement. In terms of blindsight, there is the suggestion that instead of the subject perceiving objects in their blindfield, they are in fact monitoring the changes in the muscles and are responding to that. It could be that the information is received by the visual system and processed unconsciously. This processing could include ocular reflexes, like blinking or pupil movement. The suggestion is that subjects with blindsight can monitor these slight changes in the eye and how they can correspond to the presence of something in their blindfield, which allows for the above chance performance in the tasks. As Phillips states, "Does successful forced choice responding in blindsight reflect a direct visual response? A long-mooted alternative is that such responding reflects indirect awareness of autonomic reflex responses to visual stimulation, including but not limited to pupillary responses, blink reflexes and optokinetic reflexes." (Phillips, 2016, p.433, footnote 20).

So, it could be the case that blindsight is not actually perception of the external world, but rather perception of the inner workings of the physical self. Is blindsight just proprioception?

Whilst this is one interpretation of the studies done on blindsight; it is not the case that every instance of blindsight is in fact proprioception. There is reason to be sceptical of this hypothesis, as blindsight subjects do report phenomenology in certain cases of blindsight, and this would provide us with good reason to believe that this is visual and not proprioceptive. For instance, “In blindsight type II, not only are these objective discriminatory capacities present, but they are also accompanied by some phenomenological subjective experience: patients have ‘feeling’ in their blind VF and thus report some form of awareness” (Weiskrantz, 1988).²⁵

Because of this scepticism, I am going to take the stance that blindsight is visual and not proprioceptive, in the very least for the case of G.Y.

Part Two – Scepticism about Unconscious Perception

Up until now, I have argued that cases of blindsight are, in fact, cases of unconscious perception. Yet not all take that view. In what follows, I discuss some of the key areas of scepticism around unconscious perception.

Not unconscious after all

Ought we accept that these cases do lack phenomenal consciousness? It can depend upon one’s view of how consciousness can be assessed. There are some philosophers, like Phillips, who are not convinced that cases of blindsight, like G.Y.’s, are examples of unconscious perception. He raises the issue of how we can really know whether a lack of awareness reporting translates to an actual lack of awareness.

It is important here to look at Phillips’ ideas in terms of my discussion. He uses the terminology of awareness, whereas up until this point, I have been using consciousness and phenomenal consciousness. Awareness refers to conscious awareness, which, in my terminology, means having phenomenal consciousness. One is aware of what it is like to have that experience; they are conscious of it. Having no awareness is not to say that nothing is happening, but rather that it is unconscious. Going forward in this chapter, I will be using both sets of terminology.

Response Bias Argument

Phillips’ first argument against blindsight cases being examples of unconscious perception is that they are actually cases of conscious perception without the subjects knowing.

He refers to the subjects as having a “liberal or conservative response bias” (Phillips and Block, 2017, p.167).²⁶ This bias can be quite independent of awareness, some subjects may

²⁵ I do wish to flag that there are different opinions on whether these cases can be called blindsight or whether they are ones that show degraded conscious vision (see Phillips, 2021). For this chapter, I am going to take the view that they are, in fact, cases of blindsight.

²⁶ Phillips supports the idea of subjects having ‘response biases’ with the workings of ‘Signal detection theory’. This theory states that “responses in a perceptual task are the joint upshot of two factors: discriminative capacity (d’) and response criterion (c). (Phillips and Block, 2017, page 167). In forced-choice scenarios, the subject adopts unbiased criteria but in other tasks, the decisions they are making are not symmetric and subjects exhibit

have a conservative bias due to low mood, under-confidence, or pre-conceptions about their individual abilities. For instance, a subject may be consciously aware of a stimulus, but because they also know that they cannot perceive properly, they become less confident that they are aware of anything and thus adopt a conservative response bias. When translating this over to the tests, this means that “a failure to report stimulus presence or awareness in the presence of preserved discriminative capacity cannot be assumed to reflect unconscious perception.” (Phillips and Block, 2017, p. 167). In the blindsight tests, G.Y. reported that he has no awareness of the stimuli in front of him when locating the objects, which could just mean that he is consciously perceiving the objects but distrusting this awareness and adopting a conservative response bias, leading to the conclusion that he has no awareness. In fact, Phillips argues that it is possible that the subjects have low levels of perceptual sensitivity and that this is able to account for the accurate results in the blindsight tests. Perceptual sensitivity is the measurement of sensory response to a stimulus. So, having low levels, in the above context, means that there is a low sensory response to the objects around the subject.

I am not convinced by this argument, particularly in relation to the subject G.Y. He underwent a vast number of different tests over a long period of time; he is one of the most widely studied blindsight patient. As was reported, G.Y. was informed of the results of these tests after having completed so many of them. If it were the case that he was adopting a conservative response bias when reporting his awareness, perhaps due to pre-conceptions about his perceptual ability, would this not have changed after hearing how accurate he was? Would G.Y. not have thought to himself that he could perceive something after all, even if it was not consciously? Biases can alter upon the learning of new information or having of new experiences. If this is the case, then this would have an effect on the ‘conservative bias’ as it would become less conservative as the tests continue, meaning that G.Y. is more likely to claim he does have some conscious awareness. This is not the case, however, there is no point in the tests in which G.Y. claims that he has conscious awareness, only that he ‘cannot see’ at all, despite his accuracy in the tests and trials.²⁷ Therefore, we ought to accept that G.Y. is perceiving unconsciously, as is argued by the unconscious perception theorists. As such, Phillips is mistaken.

There is a potential response to this, however, in the following question. What if we could identify neural correlates of consciousness, and then check whether or not they are present in the cases? This may be possible and would be able to indicate whether or not the subjects were conscious. Yet, this experiment does seem to have a focus on *conscious awareness*, over just neural indications of consciousness. Say we could identify these neural correlates and state that in the experiment involving G.Y., they were present, thus indicating consciousness. G.Y. would, more than likely, still deny being consciously aware of the objects in front of him. He would still deny being able to see them. This makes me question the idea that we ought to rely on neural correlates to determine consciousness, and thus it remains a possibility that G.Y. is perceiving unconsciously.

strong biases towards a particular response. The threshold for one response may be variable. Hence, they will have a liberal or conservative bias.

²⁷ There is, as far as I know, no concrete way of determining whether a person has conscious awareness during experiences like perception, beyond accepting their word on whether they have conscious awareness or not. This is why can be quite difficult to say whether the clinical examples of phenomena like blindsight constitute cases of unconscious perception.

Broader View on Response Bias

However, whilst my argument shows that Phillips cannot appeal to this *one particular explanation for a conservative bias*, it is short of showing that he is wrong to appeal to a conservative response bias more generally. Michael and Lau (2020), however, *do* argue that the response criterion idea, as a whole, is unstable. This is because they believe that criterion effects reflect awareness. So, a subject with a conservative perceptual criterion may have a conservative response bias due to it, “This is not to say, of course, that blindsight never *involves* response criterion effects. Outside of experiments, blindsight patients most likely adopt a conservative response criterion *because* of their conservative perceptual criterion.... When required to adopt a less conservative response criterion in experiments, they cannot adopt the same strategy to anchor the response criterion to the perceptual criterion in the blind field”. (Michael and Lau, 2020, p. 10). Therefore, Phillips’s idea that biases can be independent of awareness and rest on mood or confidence seems to be questionable.

Does this mean that a blindsight subject, who has a natural conservative bias due to their awareness, becomes even more conservative when they have low confidence? I would be loath to say yes, as it does not seem like a concept that should stack. Even if we restrict this conservative response bias to awareness, this will mean that G.Y. had some natural conservatism because of his complete lack of awareness in his blind field. His responses to the tests, therefore, rest completely on his levels of awareness, of which he reports is very little to none. There are no levels of perceptual sensitivity combined with a conservative response bias that are causing G.Y.’s results. It is more likely that G.Y. has a natural conservative response bias *due to* his lack of awareness and is still performing well under the tests, thus showing that this is a case of blindsight and, more broadly, a case of unconscious perception.

Levels of Consciousness

An interesting side note that arose in this debate is that the subjects potentially having different levels of consciousness. When we think of consciousness, in this case, we are thinking of conscious awareness leading to subjects having conscious perceptions. Being consciously aware of the objects in the external world that are the constituents of perceptions. It seems that being consciously aware of something means that the subject can instantly reflect on the experiences had and be more aware of ‘what it is like’ to have that experience. Having no conscious awareness means that the experiences had are unconscious, and the subject can reflect on those experiences, like perceptions, but only after the fact and when prompted by another experience. For instance, I can have an unconscious perception of an image of a blue bee, but until I am prompted by a conscious image of a black and yellow bee, and thus notice the difference, I cannot properly reflect on my unconscious perception. I would not necessarily have known that I had had such a perception without further conscious perceptions.

Experiences having levels of consciousness is a pertinent topic to think about, as it allows us to examine questions such as, what is the required level of consciousness to have a conscious perception? Also, questions regarding at what level of consciousness are we able to have

instant reflections of our perceptions. Phillips talks of low levels of awareness (or conscious perceptual ability) being enough for the results of the blindsight tests to be questioned and not necessarily providing evidence for unconscious perception. This is interesting, as it seems that there is not a cut-off point for a subject's experience to be classed as conscious. For instance, if we translate levels of awareness into percentages, we could say that someone with as little as one per cent will count as having conscious awareness. The view that small amounts of consciousness equal conscious awareness also favours the view that almost all cases of perception are conscious, as they only require a minimal amount of conscious awareness.

Some might say that this is not quite right, for instance, take emptiness to be like unconsciousness. We wouldn't say that a container having one drop left means that it is not empty, so why would one per cent of consciousness equal being conscious. I would say that this depends on people's view of emptiness and what standards one is using. Colloquially, emptiness is a lack of something, meaning that having a few droplets does not mean that the glasses are now suddenly not empty. One wouldn't offer someone a drink with only a few drops left, as the receiver would claim that the glass is empty.

However, I would say that emptiness is a complete lack of something, so that even if a cup has one drop, it is not, despite its appearance, empty. The cup just contains very little. Emptiness does not come in degrees: it is either empty or not empty. Of course, there are differing standards for emptiness. For instance, say F is a bartender clearing up at the end of the night. On one of the tables, there is a glass with no liquid left, but it does contain a balled-up napkin. From one perspective, the glass is not *empty* because it contains a napkin, and if we zoom out a little further, it also contains air particles and atoms, and so on. However, by the bartender's standard of empty, meaning no drink left in the glass, the glass is empty and can be cleared away. Having different standards for emptiness, however, does not mean that emptiness is gradable. Once the standards are fixed, X is either empty or not empty.

This transfers over to consciousness, which makes me think that conscious awareness is less of a spectrum, but more of a hard cutoff. Conscious awareness is *not gradable*, in the same way that emptiness is not gradable. Any amount of conscious awareness means that the subject is conscious, and a complete lack of conscious awareness means that a subject's experience is unconscious. One thing that is significant to note here is that I am specifically speaking about conscious awareness in perception, not consciousness as a whole. It is important to flag that here, as we can have cases in which consciousness seems gradable, one can be in and out of consciousness after a head injury, for instance. Yet, in terms of conscious awareness in perception, there cannot be degrees. So, one can have a partial perception of a man across the street, *but* the subject is consciously aware of them. In a perception, the character of conscious awareness is variable, but conscious awareness, in general, is not.

I want to make clear that what I am arguing is that conscious awareness is both something that is either on or off *and* is something that is not gradable. One does not come from the other, as something can be both on or off and gradable, like a light dimmer switch or volume control. This is not what conscious awareness is. Once one is consciously aware (ergo it is on), it does not come in grades, it is either fully on or fully off, there is no in-between. You cannot turn it up or down; once it is on, like one would with a light and dimmer switch.

This, of course, makes it even more difficult to determine when one is having an unconscious perception versus a conscious one. We would need a different view on how to assess the consciousness of a subject's experience.

I believe that instead of claiming that an experience like perception is conscious if there is any element of consciousness, we should instead rely on the subject's own reporting. This applies particularly in cases like G.Y., where there are multiple tests occurring, where phenomena like conservative response bias are not really in play. There is no one in a better place to determine whether they can consciously perceive an object than the perceiving subject themselves.

Introspection

The above claim, however, is somewhat contentious, and some would disagree with my assessment of the perceiving subject's authority. When I argue that subjects are best placed to comment on their consciousness levels, I do so because I believe that it is something that one is able to introspect. Introspection can tell us if an experience is conscious. Some well-versed in the field of introspective psychology hold that introspection "of currently ongoing or recently past conscious experience is difficult and prone to error if the introspective observer is insufficiently trained" (Schwitzgebel, 2019, Section 3). Yet, in the literature on introspective training, the subjects get better at introspecting by introspecting. They practise introspecting upon their experiences, some auditory and some visual, and get better at noticing details about their experiences (Schwitzgebel, 2018, p.63-73). Therefore, it seems that the unconscious perception subjects, particularly blindsight subjects, would be well-trained in introspection, as they experience the experiments and frequently introspect on their conscious and unconscious perception.

One potential flaw with this kind of introspection that I am focusing on is that it seems contradictory to the later work of psychophysicists,²⁸ as they moved from *subjective* methods of assessing introspection to more *objective* ones. A shift from asking "subjects to report on their experiences or percepts—to a focus on *objective* methods such as asking participants to report on states of the outside world, including insisting that participants guess even when they feel they don't know or have no relevant conscious experience" (Schwitzgebel, 2019, section 3.3). Here, I am stating that we rely on *subjective* methods, such as "are you consciously aware of any objects in front of you" rather than "describe the room", as the purpose is to detect *subjective* conscious awareness. Yet, I am not aware of an *objective* method of determining a specific subject's conscious awareness, so whilst this may be in conflict with the type of methodology, it may be that it is a necessary conflict. *Subjective* testing of introspection of this type (of conscious awareness) is necessarily *subjective*. Additionally, the difference between the questions involved in both *subjective* and *objective* methods would, in most cases, be negligible when looking at the answers given.

One reason to support my argument that the subjects are in the best place to determine their consciousness levels is the idea that we have *privileged access* to our own mental activity,

²⁸ For more, see Green and Swets 1966; Cheesman and Merikle 1986; Macmillan and Creelman 1991; Merikle, Smilek, and Eastwood 2001.

including perceptions and conscious awareness. Some philosophers, including Descartes, ascribed a sort of *infallibility* to our judgements of our own minds (Audi, 1993, p.167-169). Consider the following proposition, “I am feeling tired”; this is infallible because when I sincerely make such a judgment, it is not possible for it to be false.²⁹ Thus, it is possible to state that one’s judgement on whether they have conscious awareness is infallible, insofar as if S makes the judgment that P, then P cannot be false, S is infallible with respect to such judgements.³⁰

Unfortunately, whilst this may be true for ‘in-the-moment’ judgements, when introspecting, there is room for error, “If introspection or self-knowledge involves a causal process from a mental state to an ontologically distinct self-ascription of that state, it appears that however reliable such a process may generally be, there is inevitably room in principle for interference and error.” (Schwitzgabel, 2019, section 4.1.1). It could be that the subject does not realise they were consciously aware during the perception, and thus their introspective description of the perception will be flawed, and thus not a reliable account.

This can place doubt on whether the subjects in the above experiments are able to confidently state that there was no conscious awareness, just in case, during the process of introspection, knowledge of consciousness is lost, thus rendering the judgment fallible. However, Schwitzgabel’s unreliability thesis, as quoted above, is very much a radical and complex view. He is rejecting *infallibilism* about introspection whilst also rejecting *scepticism* about introspection. In other words, Schwitzgabel is arguing that introspection is neither wholly reliable nor wholly unreliable, as such, introspection is *sometimes but not always* a source of knowledge. This does not seem like a radical view. What is radical is that he is arguing that introspection is “no more reliable than other ways of knowing about the world, including sensory perception; indeed, if anything, it is less reliable” (Smithies, 2013, p.5).

One way that we can reject Schwitzgabel’s view on introspection is to accept a weaker version of the argument, and state that our judgements about our mental activity are not infallible but that they are *first-person privileged* and involve some kind of epistemic guarantee. One example of this comes from Shoemaker, who argues that it is impossible to have *self-blindness* when it comes to one’s beliefs, desires, and intentions.³¹ *Self-blindness* is the phenomena in which “A has the conceptual capacities to conceive of M’s (where M is a mental state type) and A lacks introspective access to M’s.” (Speaks, 2004, p. 11). So, a failure to meet the conditions of introspection results in self-blindness. Why ought we accept this view from Shoemaker?

One reason is that it is intuitive to claim that people are *privileged* when it comes to their own mental activity. If one is able to conceive of mental state types, like beliefs and experiences, and is able to introspect them, then they have more knowledge of them than anyone else possibly can. It is also important that Shoemaker accepts that this knowledge and judgment of our mental activity is not infallible, but privileged, meaning that people can have this privileged

²⁹ Whilst it is possible that one can confuse their feelings, say confusing tiredness for illness. However, to the subject, the way that they are describing their own mind and feelings is accurate. So, it is plausible to state that statements like this one are infallible.

³⁰ In these scenarios, it is possible for the proposition to be false, just not the judgements.

³¹ He also includes pain on this list, but it is for a different reason and not relevant to the discussion at hand.

access, but that it can also go wrong. This addition means that despite the potential room for error when introspecting, we can keep the view that subjects have privileged access to their own mental states and subsequent judgments of them.

Additionally, Shoemaker argues against the idea of self-blindness on the whole, utilising Moore's Paradox (Shoemaker, 1998, p.193), however, I wish to argue that it is slightly more complicated than this argument makes it out to be. Take the following example.

'S lives in a room without any windows. At night, whilst S sleeps, the sounds of various weather phenomena are played to him and are fed to his subconscious mind. On day two, the sound of rain falling was played to him. On day three, S is asked what he believes the weather was the previous night. S says he believes it was raining. When asked why, he is unsure and claims it was just a gut feeling.'

This appears to be a case in which the subject, S, has the conceptual capacities to conceive of his mental state, ergo the belief that it was raining the night before, but is unable to introspect upon that mental state in any meaningful way. S cannot explain why he believes what he does or alter that belief based on any kind of self-reflection. Of course, it *is the case* that S has the capacity to introspect upon that experience, insomuch that, although it would be increasingly difficult, it would be possible. Perhaps, the use of hypnosis would reveal the mental states that caused the belief to S. Yet, in ordinary circumstances, S is self-blind, in that he cannot introspect upon his belief and mental states, without significant work. He may not be explicitly self-blind according to Shoemaker's definition, yet he is close to it.

Perhaps we need a notion of being unable to introspect whilst still maintaining the capacity for it. We can already see that introspective access is more complex than first thought, as Spener explains, "the three modes of access [inner attention, inner apprehension, retrospection] – all routinely classes as introspective are different basic ways of discerning aspects of one's conscious mind from the first-person perspective" (Spener, 2024, p.5). If introspective access can be divided into different modes, then it seems possible to have various means to explain a lack of introspective access. So, it could be the case that S, from my example, *appears* self-blind because he cannot easily introspect. This is contrasted both with a subject who can readily offer up explanations for why they believe what they do, for instance, and cases that Shoemaker gives, of a subject who lacks rationality and thus lacks the capacity to introspect, and is thoroughly self-blind (Shoemaker, 1988, p.35).

So, how does this relate to the case of G.Y.? There are two options when looking at introspection and G.Y., either take him at his word and accept that there is no conscious experience linked to his blindsight experiences *or* claim that G.Y. is mistaken and that he had degraded conscious vision but is unable to recognise this. Yet, if we take the second option, then we owe an explanation of this introspective failure. This is where I cannot agree with the hypothesis that G.Y. is mistaken about his experience.

This is because there are no worries about his more general introspective capacities in all of his other experiences. Now, one may say that the damage caused by his accident has itself caused degraded conscious vision and introspective issues, and as such, G.Y. cannot be believed about these specific cases and their consciousness levels. However, there is no

positive reason to think this, no specific evidence to indicate that G.Y.'s specific introspective capacities have been damaged, where his more general ones are fine. So, it is far simpler to take G.Y. at his word and accept that the blindsight cases are examples of unconscious perception.

The case becomes a sort of counterfactual: if we had a clear and positive case for the failure of G.Y.'s introspective capacities, then we could argue that G.Y. is self-blind, or almost-self-blind, but because we do not, then we cannot. Thus, we ought to accept G.Y. at his word that he is neither self-blind, nor almost-self-blind, and thus that he has no conscious vision in his blindsight experiences.

In this foray into introspection, I have shown that whilst there are some people who resist the idea that introspection is the best way of obtaining knowledge about a subject's mental activity, there are also those who argue that we have privileged access to his knowledge. Therefore, barring any new technological ways of assessing a subject's levels of consciousness, we should defer to subjects' privileged access to their mental activity, including whether or not they have conscious awareness.

If therefore, we are to accept my initial argument, that the perceiving subjects are the best people to determine consciousness levels, this would mean that in cases such as G.Y.'s, we would be able to classify his blindsight as an example of unconscious perception, as G.Y. self-reports that he 'cannot see' anything and is only guessing when it comes to the tasks he completes. Contrary to Phillip's argument, I would state that patients exhibiting signs of blindsight are perceiving in an unconscious way.

Not actually Perception

A further argument against the belief that perceptions can be unconscious is that the cases we typically use as examples are not cases of perception at all. Some argue that they are closer to the automatic responses of the visual system, which was previously discussed as phenomena that are not perception, but natural processing. This can often be in response to examples such as 'continuous flash suppression', something which Block claims is his "favourite case of unconscious seeing" (Phillips and Block, 2017, p. 170).

Continuous Flash Suppression

To begin with, I will explain the details of Continuous flash suppression (CFS) cases. These are cases that involve 'binocular rivalry' where a subject is shown different objects in each eye. For instance, one eye receives a face stimulus and the other a tree stimulus. What occurs in these scenarios is conscious alternation, with the entire visual field being filled with the image of the face and then filled with the image of the tree. The subjects in these trials report that when they have an awareness of the face, they are not at all aware of the tree. This is because the face-processing section of the brain is much more active in its processes than the tree-processing section, so the image of the tree is suppressed. This also occurs in reverse, when the entire visual field is filled with the image of the tree, and the subject is unaware of the face, as they are conscious of the tree. In the experiment, the reporting suggested that the suppressed representation of the image is not conscious. This was further developed when

Nao Tsuchiya introduced a “Mondrian”³², a stimulus that is able to make the perception in the other eye (the one that is suppressed) unconscious very reliably for a period of 10 seconds. The following is an explanation of when ‘CFS’ works properly,

“1.) Subjects are at chance in making a choice between alternative pictures that have been projected to the suppressed (non-Mondrian) eye. 2.) Subjects give the lowest confidence rating on almost all trials. 3.) Subjects often insist they are seeing nothing other than the Mondrian. I have used a low-tech version of this “CFS” procedure (using red/green glasses) in many classes and talks. People often comment that nothing is being projected other than the Mondrian. 4.) There is no difference in confidence between correct and incorrect choices of the input to the suppressed eye (Raio et al, 2012)—that is, confidence does not predict accuracy. And this suggests that even when subjects think they might have consciously seen something, they did not.” (Phillips and Block, 2017, p.171-2).

The Mondrian is suppressing the image that is presented in the other eye. They are not consciously seeing the other image. The experiment also raised interesting points regarding processing under CFS and in conscious seeing, in that there are differences in kind between them. This indicates that there is unconscious processing occurring in these types of cases, but does the type of processing involve perception? There are conflicting beliefs.

Now, let’s see how this can provide evidence of unconscious perception. In the debate, Block refers to another study, this one completed by ‘Mudrik et al.’ (2011), the results of which show that there was perceptual integration within the scope of unconscious perception. The test was very similar to CFS, in that there was a Mondrian presented in one eye that decreased in contrast as the image presented to the other eye increased in contrast. The images were of regular everyday scenes, but all included a twin with an anomaly. For instance, one of the images was a tray of food being put into an oven, and its twin was a chessboard being put into an oven. The subjects of these tests were told to press a button on the right or the left whenever they saw an indication of a scene (whenever they saw the image in the non-Mondrian eye that is typically suppressed). The test found that the anomalous images managed to break through the “cloak of invisibility” faster and the image, which was normally suppressed, was able to be seen. This suggests that there is some perceptual skill involved when the subjects perceive the images of the scenes. They are not just automatically processing the information, as the anomalous scenes make them respond faster than the normal scenes, meaning the subjects actively noticed the strangeness of the image presented, despite seeing the Mondrian in the other eye.

These cases are thought to be ones of perception because of the reactions of the subjects. As far as I understand it, the fact that the subjects broke through this cloak of invisibility when presented with the anomalous images rather than the regular ones provides us with evidence of perceptual integration within these unconscious perceptions. The unusualness of the images meant that the subjects were able to perceive the images, rather than them being suppressed. A perhaps simpler way of testing whether or not the subjects perceive the anomalous images whilst being presented with a Mondrian is to present the subjects with the

³² A Mondrian is an image stimulus that is almost static-like in appearance. An example is an image of multiple, coloured shapes that are overlayed. It is a quite a chaotic image to behold. A good example of this can be seen on page 171 of the Phillips and Block chapter, “Debate of Unconscious Perception” (2017).

regular images after the test has concluded. If the subjects notice that the image is different from what they remember, for instance, they are shown an image of a baking tray going into an oven, but they remember the image having a chessboard rather than a baking tray. This implies that the subjects had previously perceived the image, unconsciously, when they were presented with it during conscious perception. It is similar to a situation in which a subject consciously perceives a red apple at time t , but is then presented with and consciously perceives a green apple at time s . The subject will notice the difference in colour between the two perceptions: they are able to know that there is a difference between the perceptions.

A similar test to the above experiment that suggested the same results was done with nude images and subjects' attention being drawn or repelled depending on their personal gender preferences. As Block states, "Thus, unconscious perception can involve high-level perceptual categorisation that is relevant to personal-level concerns" (Phillips and Block, 2017, p. 173).³³ The subjects are unconsciously perceiving the images and reacting according to their personal-level concerns.

CFS is the form of unconscious perception that is the most convincing. This is because, unlike phenomena like blindsight, CFS does not involve instances of brain damage, which could potentially skew the results and create uncertainty about the conclusions drawn from the experiments. This is not to say that my earlier assertions about G.Y.'s blindsight being unconscious perception were wrong or weak, but rather a more general observation. Often, in the scientific community, conclusions are drawn based on the universality and reproducibility of an experiment. Cases like G.Y.'s do not constitute that, as he was subject to a very specific type of brain damage. It would not be ethical, if at all possible, to attempt to recreate these circumstances in order to investigate unconscious perception. The CFS experiments, on the other hand, can be completed easily with a large variety of people in order to reproduce the same result of unconscious perception. In my opinion, because of this, CFS experiments can more commonly and reliably show examples of unconscious perceptions. It can also be said that in CFS experiments, the unconscious perceptions are longer lasting, "lasting many seconds", which makes the fact that the subjects insist that they have no awareness of the stimulus, much more convincing. The perceptions are not fleeting, as if the subject has seen the image and unconsciously processed it.

On reflection of Block's arguments and the other CFS adjacent tests, I would say that CFS does offer evidence of unconscious perception. The subjects respond to the stimuli in the same way that they would if it were a conscious perception, all the while being presented with a Mondrian which actively suppresses the image that they respond to.

Also, as the cases of the nude images and the anomalous images show, the subjects react to personal-level preferences, views, and expectations, meaning that there is some perceptual integration. In this context, perceptual integration is the subject's ability to "integrate

³³ A further test of the same sort shows that fearful faces are also able to break through 'the cloak of invisibility' much faster than happy or neutral faces. I think that this shows that there is perception occurring unconsciously in this test. This is because fearful faces often require more of a response than happy or neutral ones. Either the person is in danger, or they are scared of you; both of which the subject would consciously react to. When shown these images under CFS conditions, the subjects are unconsciously perceiving the things they would normally consciously perceive and acting accordingly.

fragmentary visual input into a perceptually organised collection of surfaces and objects” (Fahrenfort, Leeuwen, Olivers, Hogendoorn, 2017). For example, take a man walking in a forest. He is seeing objects in his surroundings, gaining information such as there is a tree to his left and a river to his right. During this process of taking in information, he is categorising the objects, for instance, things that will hurt me and things that I am just moving past. This is perceptual integration: the ability to organise the sensory inputs into collections of information. The man in this scenario is *perceiving* the objects surrounding him. In the case of CFS, the subjects are categorising the images they take in, in the non-Mondrian eye, which is why the anomalous images break through the ‘cloak of invisibility’ much faster than the regular ones. The images did not automatically fit into a category and thus caused the subject to break through the suppressive state induced by the Mondrian. The CFS cases, including perceptual integration, are seemingly the best empirical evidence of subjects being able to unconsciously perceive, and these perceptions being of the same fundamental kind as conscious perceptions.

Is this actually perception?

Yet not everyone is agreeable to the idea that CFS cases are the best empirical evidence for unconscious perception.

Phillips’ second argument is that there is no unconscious perception occurring here, stating that CFS “does not demonstrate that perception of the same fundamental kind as ordinary conscious perception occurs unconsciously” (Phillips and Block, 2017, page 174). We can call this argument *Not Perception*.

In *Not Perception*, he is disputing the assumption that a perception being attributable to the individual is based on its content and rather claims that it is its *role* that allows it to be attributable to the individual. Thus, the content of the experiences had in CFS do not show that they are examples of unconscious perception.

As mentioned previously, the idea of content making perceptions individually attributable rests on some kind of acknowledgement or reflection. What Phillips is stating, however, is to be individually attributable relies upon the role of the perceptions. For instance, a role of our perceptions could be grouping and categorising. I can perceive a yellow book, and this is then grouped with all other perceptions of books that I have had. Categorising could have the purpose of aiding recognition or even something more basic as avoiding objects that are deemed dangerous to me. This results in the claim that sensory experiences are perceptions, and are thereby individually attributable, when they embody the role of categorisation. I would disagree here and state that it is the content of a sensory experience that makes it a perception. I believe that the role of categorisation can occur in non-perceptual experiences. For instance, the visual system can take in information, such as a bear in the corner of one’s eye and categorise it into the internal ‘danger’ category, without the person actually perceiving the bear. Additionally, I can categorise 1 as a number, something that happens only in thought and does not have anything to do with perception. However, Phillips is not restricting categorisation to perceptions, so what exactly is it that I disagree with?

If categorisation is something that can occur in both perceptual experiences and non-perceptual experiences, then I do not believe that it can be that which distinguishes whether something is 'attributable to the individual' and thus classed as a perception. It is too broad. When looking at what makes an experience a perception, the content of that experience is a more specific indicator. So, the *content* of the experiences had in CFS cases seems to indicate unconscious perception,

Yet Phillips argues that the cases presented above, the fearful faces and the anomalous scenes, do not necessarily suggest that high-level unconscious perception has occurred, but that certain stimuli are "easier (consciously) to detect than others". (Phillips and Block, 2017, p. 175). For instance, a subject could consciously perceive a yellow car much faster than a grey car, which says nothing more than the yellow car is easier to spot. This could be the same for the cases in which the anomalous scenes break through the 'cloak of invisibility' faster than their normal counterparts. It does not have to mean that any unconscious perceptions were occurring.

There has been an opposing study completed by Stein, Hebart, and Sterzer (2011), where they argue that the control conditions used in the CFS style tests are inadequate. "Stein et al. (2011) show that when CFS and control trials are intermixed within blocks, the stimuli which break suppression faster do exhibit a corresponding detection advantage in control trials. This suggests that faster breakthrough is due to differential detectability." (Phillips and Block, 2017, p. 175). This would mean that the CFS-type cases do not provide enough evidence to show that these are cases of unconscious perception.

However, this criticism does not apply to the case of anomalous images, as they do not differ from the normal images in terms of low-level saliency, so are not necessarily easier to detect, "Thus, if it is easier to spot a visible picture of someone shaving with a fork rather than with a razor, that can be explained by the same unconscious perception of anomaly underlying both conscious detection and breaking CFS." (Phillips and Block, 2017, p.177). The subjects perceived the anomalous images, but not because they were easier to perceive than the regular ones. As such, we can say that cases of CFS are, in fact, ones of perception.

After explaining both Block's and Phillips' arguments regarding whether the cases of CFS can count as perception, I firmly agree with Block's position that CFS and CFS adjacent cases are empirical examples of unconscious perception. They are able to fit the definition of perception given at the beginning of this chapter as they are attributable to the individual, rather than their visual system. Yet, I believe that these perceptions are attributable to the individual because of the role of their content, rather than their content in itself, which differs from Block's conclusion. CFS cases are cases of perception because the content of them is available to one's central coordinating agency and thus can guide action.

The type of seeing described by the cases of the anomalous/normal images, at least in my opinion, is a more active type of seeing. This is because the image is registering beyond the automatic 'that is colours and shapes' response. The fact that the subjects were able to break through 'the cloak of invisibility' faster with the anomalous images implies that the subjects were registering the 'oddness' of the images and reacted accordingly, by breaking out of the suppressed state. This means that they perceived them, rather than just automatically

acquiring the information about the scenes. They perceived them as they can access the information regarding the anomalous images when presented with the normal images, and they are able to reflect.

Overall, I have argued against Phillips to show that CFS cases are examples of perception, and more than likely are also examples of unconscious perception.

Does unconscious perception occur?

Despite the many criticisms that are levelled against the empirical cases, mainly worries about them actually showing experiences that are unconscious and perceptual, they do provide us with evidence that unconscious perception is occurring. I do concede that the cases of CFS are more convincing than those of blindsight, because of the lack of brain damage involved, so the results of the tests are more easily reproducible and are more reliable. I believe that I have been able to utilise the debate between Block and Phillips to show that there are empirical cases, which are both unconscious experiences and also perceptual ones, thus providing us with evidence of unconscious perception.

Having argued that unconscious perception does occur, as exemplified by cases of CFS, I now want to look at the relationship between conscious and unconscious perceptions.

Moving from One to Another

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the questions that I want to examine, regarding unconscious and conscious perception, is whether one type of perception is able to become the other. To look at this, I first want to see whether token cases of unconscious perception can become conscious perception and vice versa.

Let us take the following case. A subject is involved in a clinical trial looking at unconscious perception, using CFS methods. He is placed in a room and shown a Mondrian in the left eye and a banana on a plate in the right eye. This means that the subject is having an unconscious perception of the banana, due to the suppressive nature of the Mondrian. If we then remove the Mondrian from the subject's left eye and allow the subject to continue perceiving the banana, then it seems that they have moved from having an unconscious perception of the banana to having a conscious perception of the very same banana. Could this be two separate instances of perception? It is possible that we can explain this scenario by stating the subject had two separate perceptual experiences, one immediately after the other, inasmuch that one is conscious and the other unconscious.

However, this is not convincing to me. The subject is perceiving the exact same, unchanging, mind-independent banana, both during the unconscious perception and then when the Mondrian is removed, and it becomes conscious; it is one continuous perception. It strikes me as similar to a case where a subject is perceiving a car at dusk, where it changes from a perception in the daylight to a perception at night. It is the same perception, but the conditions of it have changed. This token case has, therefore, moved from an unconscious perception to a conscious perception. We can expand this to type cases: unconscious perceptions are able to become conscious perceptions.

A question can be raised about this assertion: Why should I think that my perception goes from lacking consciousness to having it? In terms of the token case above, the Mondrian is preventing the subject from having consciousness of the banana that they are perceiving, it is an unconscious perception. Yet, when the Mondrian is removed, the subject can consciously perceive the banana. Consciousness has been added to the experience.

There is a further issue and potential counter-case to this view, however. Take the following example, 'I am confronted with one mind-independent object - a freshly baked loaf of bread that smells lovely. But my nose is blocked. I can see it, but I cannot smell it. Whilst seeing it, my nose gets unblocked, and now I can smell it too. So, what happens is that I see it, and then a new experience starts partway through, smelling it. It is not that my experience of seeing it goes from lacking an olfactory part to now having one.' Yet, I do not think that this is entirely correct. The example seems to imply that consciousness, in the cases of perception, is akin to an additional sense. This is not the case. The above counter example *does* have two different experiences, one of the sight of the bread and then one of the scent of the bread, because of the introduction of a new manner of perceiving.

Unconscious to conscious perceptions are more akin to the following: 'I am with one mind-independent object - a freshly baked loaf of bread that smells lovely. But I am not wearing my glasses, and thus the bread is blurry. Partway through perceiving the bread, I put my glasses on, and my experience of the bread goes from blurry to clear.' In this case, the experience is one, it is just that an additional factor has been introduced to the experience. My glasses made the experience clear, and consciousness made the experience conscious. It, however, remains the same *one* experience.

I do, however, want to state that I do not believe this can occur in reverse, conscious perceptions, type, or token cases, cannot become unconscious perceptions. When a subject has a conscious perception, they often retain information about the object that they are perceiving, perhaps in memories, for instance. Due to this, it would be nigh on impossible to prove that the subject does not have residual awareness of the object if they then move into a situation where one eye is presented with a Mondrian. The subject is not necessarily able to have an unconscious perception of the same mind-independent object, of which they had a conscious perception immediately beforehand. There is, of course, the question of whether the subjects have *phenomenal consciousness*. Can the subject move back into a phenomenally unconscious state? I would still say no. If one has had a conscious perception of an object, then, as I claimed above, they may have memory awareness of the perception. This could mean that when placed back into a scenario in which one can perceive the same object unconsciously, *there is something that it is like* for them, to have that experience. Almost like a sense of Deja vu, there may be some kind of recognition of the object, creating phenomenal consciousness. As such, I am arguing that the subject is able to move from having an unconscious perception of the banana to having a conscious perception of the banana, but they cannot move from a conscious to an unconscious perception of the banana.

To sum up this section, token cases of unconscious perception are able to become conscious perception but not vice versa. It is a one-way movement. This means that, more broadly, unconscious type cases of perception can become conscious type cases of perception.

Part Three – Naïve Realism and Unconscious Perception

Having decided that perceptions can occur both consciously and unconsciously, we should now look at the relationship between naïve realism and unconscious perception. Throughout the debate between Phillips and Block, and in some other papers, the idea that unconscious perception would not be compatible with naïve realism is a common one. This is often because unconscious perceptions include some form of representation, and there is a worry that this will have implications for conscious perceptions, thus ruling out naïve realism for any form of perception. There is also the worry about naïve realism typically defining perception as a ‘conscious acquaintance with the external world’ which, on the face of it, does seem to rule out unconscious perception. In this section, I will work through these issues and others similar to show that naïve realism is compatible with unconscious perception.

Naïve Realism and Acquaintance

To start, I am setting out my argument on how naïve realism can account for unconscious perception. My naïve realist view is that during an unconscious perception, the subject is in an acquaintance relation to the object they are perceiving. This means that the same mechanism of perception, as in, the acquaintance relation, is employed in both conscious and unconscious perception. This is important as it means naïve realists do not have to alter their theory in order to accommodate and explain unconscious perceptions. This does seem like an easy solution, to make unconscious perception have the same explanation as conscious perception, an acquaintance relation. Is it this simple?

The version of naïve realism that I often work with defines perception as ‘an acquaintance with an object in the external world’, where acquaintance, more often than not, means conscious acquaintance. Even if we do not explicitly state that it must be conscious acquaintance in order for it to be a case of perception, it is difficult to imagine how one can be acquainted with something unconsciously. This is because our everyday usage of the term ‘acquaintance’ often implies an element of consciousness. The idea of being acquainted with something, or someone, often means an action that is active and intentional, which leads to the view that acquaintance is conscious.³⁴

I would more easily state that I am acquainted with the person I just said hello to on the street than I would say that I am acquainted with the green leaf that flew past my head that I was not consciously aware of. This is not to say that one cannot take information in unconsciously, rather that there is the question of how a subject can be unconsciously acquainted with an object, because of our typical everyday usage of the term ‘acquaintance’. Acquaintance seems to be a conscious relation.

So, acquaintance is constitutive of our conscious experiences, as the relation between the external object and the subject is central to perception. Yet, whilst acquaintance could be

³⁴ Actions that are intentional must be conscious.

constitutive of conscious experience, you could still have the same kind of acquaintance in a scenario where you don't have conscious experience, meaning in unconscious perception.

To accept this, we need to accept that we can have conscious acquaintance but also unconscious acquaintance. These could entail differing experiences, in fact, they do, as being consciously acquainted with external objects entails phenomenal character and being unconsciously acquainted with an external object does not, but they are both instances of acquaintance.

I do believe that the initial objection to my argument here rests solely on a terminological point, that much previous knowledge of acquaintance was within a conscious framework. To accept that unconscious perception also involves acquaintance, we ought to just shift our views on what acquaintance entails. Acquaintance, therefore, entails a relation between the subject and a mind-independent object that occurs during perception experiences. It is not restricted to only conscious perceptions: it can also be involved in unconscious perception.

So, I have presented my argument for how the naïve realist can account for unconscious perception. In the section that follows, I will discuss some potential issues or objections to the compatibility between the two phenomena. To begin with, let's explore the relationship between naïve realism and phenomenal character.

Naïve Realism and Phenomenal Character

I have already determined the naïve realist view of perception in the previous chapter, and to briefly recapitulate, naïve realism is a theory that argues during a perceptual experience, the subject is in a relation to a mind-independent object, and that object is, at least in part constitutive of the phenomenal character of that experience, and that the way of perceiving also plays a role in the character of experience.

Selectionism

Some philosophers endorse the theory of Selectionism, a branch of naïve realism that states that "(S1) A perception has the phenomenal character that it does completely in virtue of the mind-independent items perceived in the perception, (S2) Standpoint conditions merely *select* which of the many mind-independent items in the subject's environment the subject perceives." (Beck, 2022, p. 3).³⁵ What is a standpoint condition? They are the set of conditions that bear upon the phenomenal character of the perception. In visual perception, they are the external conditions and potentially the psycho-perceptual state of the subject. For example, "the phenomenal character of your perception of a blue ball is sensitive to whether you are perceiving it from a standpoint in which it is illuminated by pink-light, or in which you suffer from certain kinds of color-blindness." (Beck, 2022, p.3). The theory has been further expanded to explain what the perceptual standpoints are and how they contribute to the phenomenal character.

³⁵ Standpoint in perception is a complex subject, especially for the naïve realist. For this chapter, I will be utilising Beck's view, as can be seen in the quotation. However, there is a much more detailed discussion on standpoints and *ways of perceiving*, in Chapter One of this thesis.

Take selectionism, which states that when you see a blue pen, standpoint conditions can determine that you perceive the pen as being blue and pen shaped. In cases like this, it is “completely in virtue of your perceiving” the pen being blue, and pen-shaped that the pen *appears* blue, and pen shaped to you. (Beck, 2022, p. 3).

One problem that arises from an endorsement of selectionism rests on the possibility of unconscious perceptions. If unconscious perceptions exist, then there is, for some objects or properties, the possibility for there to be both a conscious and unconscious perception of the same mind-independent object. Let’s look into that a little more. Say there is a subject, A, who is perceiving a green bottle. They are doing so consciously. Simultaneously, there exists a subject, B, who is sat in the same room and is also perceiving the same green bottle. However, B is also taking part in a CFS experiment and is thus perceiving the green bottle unconsciously. If we accept that it is possible for B to be perceiving unconsciously, then we have a scenario in which there is a conscious and unconscious perception of the same mind-independent object.

This makes it a possibility that there could be two perceptions of the same mind-independent object, but that they differ in their phenomenal character.³⁶ Such a possibility is inconsistent with selectionism, a theory that states that perceptions have the phenomenal characters that they do, *completely* in virtue of the mind-independent object which was perceived. This is because, in the example above, there is no difference in the presented elements to constitute the difference in the experiences. The only difference is that one perception is unconscious and the other is conscious. This inconsistency could lead those who endorse selectionism to reject the existence or the possibility of unconscious perception.

There are some routes that the naïve realist can go down to avoid this problem. One of these routes is that they could restrict naïve realism so that it only applies to conscious perception. This, in my opinion, is an interesting solution. Being disjunctivist about conscious and unconscious perceptions, within naïve realism, does seem like a viable solution to the problem. If the phenomenal character of an experience is somewhat dependent on the object of the perception, then it is difficult to accept that there can be two different perceptions of the same object (conscious and unconscious) that can differ in their phenomenal characters without any difference in the object or content of experience. The object is not changing in any way that can explain the difference in phenomenal character, so it requires additional explanation.

Some naïve realists take a disjunctivist view when discussing the ‘Problem of Perception’ and hallucinatory experiences in particular, so it is clearly possible for naïve realism to have restrictions.³⁷ So, it could be the case that the naïve realist can also take a disjunctivist view on conscious/unconscious perceptions.

³⁶ I want to make clear that I understand that unconscious perceptions do not have phenomenal character. In this discussion of *difference*, it is the fact that one has character, and the other one does not that enacts the difference.

³⁷ Here, I am referring to the naïve realist claim that hallucinations are not of the same fundamental kind as veridical and illusory experiences. This is a rejection of the Common Kind Claim. For more information on this line of argument, please see Section 3,4 of ‘The Problem of Perception’ (2021), *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, by Tim Crane and Craig French.

The naïve realist, however, does not have to restrict itself to only conscious cases of perception and thus can avoid adding another branch of disjunctivism. This is because they can invoke cases such as ‘Spectrum Inversion’, where there can be two conscious perceptions of the same mind-independent object which differ in their phenomenal character. In ‘spectrum inversion’ cases, the coloured hues of the objects that are perceived are inverted. So, in these experiences, the subjects are presented with objects, more specifically, some fruits. The hues of these objects are inverted, so that the colours become different to how they were. This creates a new scene for the subjects, one in which nothing has altered but the ‘hues’ of the fruits (Byrne, 2020, section 2.1).

For instance, a banana that appeared yellow now appears blue, the colours have been inverted. This means that one subject can have one perceptual experience of a mind-independent banana in which the banana appears yellow to them. Another subject can then have a perceptual experience of the same mind-independent banana, but it appears blue to them because, in the experience, the colours have been inverted. This means that the phenomenal character of each experience will be different, despite them being of the same object.³⁸ Therefore, if there can be two conscious perceptual experiences that differ in their phenomenal character, then there can also be an unconscious perception and a conscious perception that differ in their phenomenal character, and the naïve realist does not have a problem.

Unfortunately, it is not that simple. Whilst this example of ‘spectrum inversion’ shows that there can be cases in which “two subjects perceive the same items under the same extra-dermal conditions and the items look different colours to them” are possible, it actually brings doubt to a key part of the Selectionist view, that phenomenal characters of perceptions are completely dependent on the mind-independent item perceived.

Here, I want to refer back to a less restrictive view of naïve realism and reject the Selectionist version. I have already, in chapter one, argued for a naïve realism that does not commit to the strong version of the transparency thesis, and so it does not make sense for me to go back to that and accept a selectionist view when looking at unconscious perception.

I also want to do this because I agree with the idea that Beck raises, that it is better to have a unified view of both conscious and unconscious perceptions, rather than relying on disjunctivism. There is no theoretical reason for this, as many widely accepted theories involve disjunctivist parts, but to have a theory that can account for both types of perception, is to have a unified theory of multiple types of perception. This makes it a simpler theory to grasp, as there is only one explanation of perception.

As I have argued, there are other versions of naïve realism that believe the phenomenal character of a perceptual experience is only, in part, constituted by the object of the perception. These theories allow for perceptual standpoints to contribute to the phenomenal character of a perception over and above the identity of the perceived objects. For instance,

³⁸In addition to the perceptions being of the same object, the conditions of the perception are also identical. The lighting, the angle of the perception, the room that the object is in, are all the exact same for the subjects. The only difference is that the colours of the object have been inverted for one of the subjects.

one's perceptual standpoint can determine whether a perception is blurry or clear (French, 2014), which is more than just determining what object one is perceiving. If the standpoint of the perception can determine whether one perceives objects blurrily or clearly, then this could explain a scenario in which two subjects perceiving the same object have different perceptual experiences and thus phenomenal characters. They have two different perceptual standpoints, so one is seeing the object blurrily, and the other is seeing it clearly. This could mean that the naïve realist can accommodate both conscious and unconscious perceptions, and with it the possibility of two perceptions of the same object that are phenomenally different. Unconscious perceptions have different characters from the conscious ones, even when they are of the same object. This is due to the differing levels of conscious awareness of the subject. If the naïve realist is able to introduce 'standpoints' to explain how perceptions can be of the same object but different, then they can also introduce the idea of having versus not having conscious awareness. In some experiences of an object, the subject will have conscious awareness, and in other experiences, the subject does not. This can explain why there are two perceptions of the same object that differ in their phenomenal character.

We can relate this back to spectrum inversion cases, which are cases offering an example of a scenario in which the phenomenal character of each experience will be different, despite them being of the same object. Spectrum inversion can be viewed as a standpoint, as the subjects in the experience are perceiving the objects with the colours deliberately inverted from how they are. This supports the idea that the inclusion of an additional factor, such as being in a spectrum inversion experience, something that is not the object, can alter perceptions. Therefore, as I argued previously, levels of consciousness can be the factor that can explain a difference in the phenomenal character in perceptions of the same object.

Other Naïve Realist Views on Unconscious Perception

In a later section of Beck (2022), Beck goes on to suggest that we adopt a new version of naïve realism. The version of naïve realism he endorses is neuro-computational naïve realism, which treats both conscious and unconscious perception the same, "If S unconsciously perceives x, then, 1. S perceives x, but 2. In virtue of some set of neuro-computational properties of S's, S instantiates no relevant appearance properties, and x fails to appear to S in any way." (Beck, 2022, p. 7). This also allows for phenomenally different perceptions of the same items, as the subjects have different neuro-computational properties. The theory relies on the idea that the appearance properties of a subject, if any at all, are completely determined by their neuro-computational properties, which Beck believes are a part of a subject's 'perceptual standpoint'. Due to this, it denies that appearance properties are determined, even partly, by the object that the subject is perceiving.

Whilst this is a well-thought-out theory that does seem to provide solutions to problems that are raised regarding naïve realism and unconscious perception, particularly the phenomenally different perceptions of the same object, it is not necessary to agree with this argument in order to have compatibility between naïve realism and unconscious perception.

One reason is that my preferred version of naïve realism argues that the appearance properties one has during a perception are at least in part attributable to the object being perceived. This explains the acquaintance relation that subjects have with objects. The subject is acquainted

with the object and the appearance properties that it has. In Beck's version of naïve realism, the subject is in a relation with the object, unconsciously, but it does not have any appearance properties. Whilst this is logically possible, it does raise more questions than it answers.

Beck utilises neurocomputational properties to explain how a subject can have unconscious perceptions, in a way that can still be placed in a naïve realist framework of relation. What the theory does not do, however, is to explain what the relation between the subject and object consists of. If there are no appearance properties being presented to the subject, then what is there for the subject to be in a relation with?

On the contrary, the more basic version of naïve realism that I argue in favour of is that the relation between the subject and the object remains the same during perceptions, but that the levels of conscious awareness differ between conscious and unconscious perceptions. The idea of differing levels is being used to denote that, in conscious perception, there is conscious awareness, whereas in unconscious perception, there is no conscious awareness. The relation remains the same, but whether there is conscious awareness differs.

So, the subject is acquainted with the object and its properties, even in an unconscious perception. The relation is explained by the object and its properties. Thus, we can have a simpler version of the theory that accommodates unconscious perception *and* more clearly explains the relation between the subject and the object. This is not to say that Beck's version of naïve realism is wrong or indefensible, just that it raises complex questions that it does not answer, and thus, is not a theory that we ought to adopt.

Given this difference in levels of explanation, we do not have an obvious reason to agree with Beck's version of naïve realism over a more basic one in order to accommodate for unconscious perceptions. Unconscious perception can be compatible with the basic version of naïve realism, and we do not need to complicate the theory by adding in neuro-computational properties.

Naïve Realism and Representations

Whilst I have argued that confining naïve realism to just conscious cases of perception is not the best solution for the issues of phenomenal character, particularly for Selectionism, it is a potential response to Block's argument about the incompatibility of naïve realism and unconscious perception. Block's argument can be explained in two stages:

“Base Case: Unconscious perception is representational.

Spreading Step: Conscious perception and unconscious perception are fundamentally the same.

So, conscious perception is representational.

1. Naïve realism fails to account for unconscious perception.
2. Spreading step: Conscious perception and unconscious perception are fundamentally the same.

Therefore, 3. Naïve realism fails of conscious perception.”³⁹

Block’s theory rests on the idea that conscious perception and unconscious perception are of the same fundamental kind, so if one of them is identified as representational, then the other one must be too. The notion of being of the same fundamental kind refers to the idea that the two experiences are fundamentally alike and therefore have the same nature. As Martin presents it, fundamental kinds are “maximally specific essential kinds” (Martin, 2004, p.61-62 and 2006, p. 360-372). For instance, the Common Kind Claim states that veridical, illusory, and hallucinatory experiences (as) of F are fundamentally the same; they form a common kind (Crane, French 2021, section 1.6). They are essentially the same kind of experience, hence Martin’s use of ‘specific’ and ‘essential’ in his definition. Fundamental kinds are those that address the essential nature of specific types of similar experiences.

This idea of conscious perception and unconscious perception being of the same fundamental kind is a contentious claim. Some might argue that unconscious perceptions involve representations, as they represent the objects of perception, but that does not mean that unconscious perception is fundamentally representational. There is a difference between *pure representationalism*, the thesis which argues that “phenomenal properties are identical to pure representational properties”, and *impure representationalism*, the thesis which states “that phenomenal properties are identical to impure representational properties” (Chalmers, 2004, p. 2). A pure representational property is the property of representing certain intentional content, and an impure property is representing intentional content *in a certain manner*. In unconscious perceptions, it can be argued that the so-called impure representational properties are doing so under a relational framework.

So, whilst unconscious perception does have the property of representing the mind-independent objects, that does not mean that all cases of unconscious perception are fundamentally representational, they just involve representations. If unconscious perception is not fundamentally representational, just involving representations, then this means that conscious perception also does not have to be fundamentally representational. As a result of this, naïve realism does not fail of either conscious perception or unconscious perception.

In addition to the above discussion, unconscious perception is *not* necessarily representational. In my view, they are more than likely not representational at all. I believe that unconscious perception involves those same relations between subjects and mind-independent objects as conscious perception, they simply behave in a different way when it comes to the phenomenal character of the experiences. If one were to accept my view, it would be the case that in both conscious and unconscious perception, the subject is acquainted, in some form, with a mind-independent object. This means that conscious perception and unconscious perception *can be* of the same fundamental kind.

In what follows, I want to say more about the relations involved in perception and, in particular, the acquaintance relation.

Naïve Realism and Perception Relations

³⁹ The terms ‘Base Case’ and ‘Spreading Step’ are first used in Snowdon, 1992, seen in “How to Interpret ‘Direct Perception’” in Crane, 1992, page 48-78.

Another worry about unconscious perception and naïve realism is that claiming that they both involve the same kind of relations and are of the same fundamental kind leads to the belief that they are equal forms of perception. I mean this in terms of the weight that is given to the form of perception in general. For instance, when viewing a painting, we would say that visual perception is more relevant than aural perception, and the same for when we are smelling flowers, we would think that olfactory perception is more fitting than visual perception. It is based on the situation. Different types of perception perform better in different perceptual scenarios. The same can be said for unconscious and conscious perceptions. In everyday perceptions, people will have more of and rely on their conscious perceptions, meaning that conscious perception is the better type of perception in that scenario.⁴⁰ Therefore, the idea that they are equal forms of perception is not always true, as both types of perception can have the same relations whilst still remaining separate entities, that are best suited to different instances of perception.

I have already stated that there can be unconscious perceptual relations and conscious perceptual relations in my discussion on acquaintance. The naïve realist also believes that whether a given perceptual relation is conscious is based on the relation, the subject perceiving, and the perceived object. For instance, viewing a brown wooden table in the daytime is an example of a perceptual relation that is conscious, as the perception is conscious. Viewing an image of a face at the same time as viewing a Mondrian is an example of a perceptual relation that is unconscious, as this is an unconscious perception.

This view, that there can be both unconscious and conscious relations within perception, is compatible with the idea that conscious perception and unconscious perception are of the same fundamental kind. It is also, as Zieba states, “consistent with the view that conscious perception is a paradigmatic case of perception (and unconscious perception is non-paradigmatic)” (Zieba, 2017, section 3.1). We can still view unconscious perception as defective or underdeveloped cases of perception when compared to conscious perception. Both types of perception being able to have the same relations does not have to entail that they are equal in every other respect.

Can be involved in both?

Block seems to assume that the relations that constitute the phenomenal character of conscious perception could not also be involved within unconscious perception. However, I have argued that these relations can also be involved in unconscious perception, so this assumption is not correct.

Broadly speaking, even if A is constitutive of B, it does not follow that whenever you have A, you must have B. Thus, even if the relations between the subject and mind-independent objects are constitutive of conscious perception, this does not mean that those same relations cannot be involved in experiences in which the subject perceives unconsciously. Both types of

⁴⁰ This does not bear on the quality of the perceptions, nor mean that one is necessarily more desirable than the other.

perception are remarkably similar, containing the same relations and being of the same objects; it is only the level of conscious awareness which varies.

Phenomenal Character

There is a further worry for my naïve realist view of unconscious perception. If they are both fundamentally acquaintance relations with the objects of perception, then that means that the perceiving relation isn't *essentially* conscious, and it is *contingently* conscious. This raises the following question: what is it which constitutes the phenomenal character of the experience in the conscious case?

Here, I would like to introduce the concept of 'access consciousness'. This is the idea that "A state is access-conscious (A-conscious) if, in virtue of one's having the state, a representation of its content is (1) inferentially promiscuous (Stich 1978), that is, poised for use as a premise in reasoning, (2) poised for rational control of action, and (3) poised for rational control of speech." (Block, 1995, p.231). It is a more functional approach to consciousness. Block further discusses this type of consciousness in terms of the *Global Workspace Model*: a neural network approach in which there is "competition amongst the neural coalitions involving both frontal and sensory areas, the winning coalitions being conscious" (2008, p.301). In other terms, there are competing states in the brain, and the ones that connect are the conscious ones.

To relate this concept to the above worry, I argue that the states in which the subject is in during 'CFS', which I have argued is the paradigm case of unconscious perception, are not states that are able to interact with other states. Perhaps unsurprising since they are states in an unconscious perception. Contrarily, during a conscious perception, the states the subject is in *are* able to interact with other states. In both instances of perception, conscious and unconscious, the subject is acquainted with the object they are perceiving. There are no special properties in the unconscious case; it is the same type of acquaintance relation.

The difference, and that which explains the presence of phenomenal character in one and not the other, is this state-to-state interaction. A conscious perceptual experience has a phenomenal character because of the interactions. The availability, as Block puts it, for the perceptual state to interact with other cognitive states is what accounts for there to be 'something that it is like' (Nagel, 1974), to have that experience.

To be clear, I am not arguing that it is *access consciousness* that explains how the conscious perceptions have phenomenal character, where the unconscious perceptions do not, despite both being the result of an acquaintance relation. Conflating access consciousness and phenomenal consciousness is a very controversial position to take, as can be seen by the vast literature on this (Block, 2007, Tye, 2008, Armstrong, 2010, etc). This is because, as Van Gulick (2025) explains, for something to have access consciousness is for "the information in that state is richly and flexibly available to its containing organism, then it counts as a conscious state in the relevant respect, whether or not it has any qualitative or phenomenal feel in the Nagel sense" (section 2.2). They are distinct; one is a functional notion, and the other is not.

Rather, I am saying that the availability for state-to-state interaction, in any sense, in the conscious perception cases can offer an explanation as to why there is something it is like to have a conscious perceptual experience, where this is not mirrored in the unconscious cases. It is a weaker claim than Block makes when proposing access consciousness, as it does not require one to access its content for use in reasoning, just that there is the possibility for some conscious interactions.

It is the consciousness that allows for a phenomenal character in perception.

Is naïve realism compatible with unconscious perception?

After having dismissed a few of the central worries about naïve realism and unconscious perception, I think that we say yes, they are compatible. I have determined that two perceptions of the same object can have differing phenomenal characters, that unconscious perception is not necessarily representational, that both conscious and unconscious perception involve the same acquaintance relation and that they can be of the same fundamental kind but are not equal forms of perception.

There have been philosophers who offer their own version of naïve realism to specifically account for unconscious perceptions, Beck's neuro-computational naïve realism, for instance. However, this is not necessary, as unconscious perception is compatible with the version of naïve realism I gave at the beginning of this section, which went as follows,

'Naïve realism is a theory that argues during a perceptual experience, the subject is in a relation to a mind-independent object, and that object is, at least in part, constitutive of the phenomenal character of that experience.' There is no need to add unnecessary complication to the theory of naïve realism, which prides itself on being so simple, by introducing neuro-computational properties, when the basic version of naïve realism is compatible with unconscious perceptions and can address all of the mentioned problems.

Unconscious perceptions are cases in which the subject is in a relation to a mind-independent object. Therefore, unconscious perceptions are compatible with this simple version of naïve realism.

If naïve realism is compatible with unconscious perception, that means that the theory is able to account for it, so these unconscious perceptions, like blindsight and CFS, are able to occur and be accepted under the above definition of naïve realism. There is no need for a disjunctive theory of the different types of perception. This is a positive for naïve realism, as it allows the theory to maintain its rather simple nature, as it is one theory to explain both conscious and unconscious perceptions. Naïve realism is such an adoptable theory because of its simplicity, so the fact that it is able to maintain this when talking about unconscious perception means that it is, at least in my opinion, still the best and most simple theory of perception.

Conclusion

This chapter has been one of two halves, albeit two halves that are very closely linked.

First, I looked at whether unconscious perceptions actually exist by examining some empirical cases that are typically taken to be examples of unconscious perception. I looked at this predominantly through the lens of Block and Phillips, in their debate on unconscious perception, and whether these empirical examples were, in their natures, unconscious or perceptions. I argued that we ought to defer to the subjects on matters of their levels of conscious awareness because of the privileged access they have to their own mental activity. In this half, I concluded that, despite these worries about the nature of the empirical examples, they do constitute examples of experiences that are both unconscious and perceptions. I talked through some of the most prominent examples of unconscious perception, blindsight and CFS, and concluded that CFS offers the more reproducible examples of unconscious perception, especially due to the fact that it is induced through clinical trials rather than through some kind of brain injury. I determined, much like Block did, that the criticisms of these cases are not enough to rule them out as cases of unconscious perception.

In the second half of the chapter, I explored the relationship between naïve realism and unconscious perception by working through some of the most common objections to naïve realism being able to accommodate unconscious perception. I examined objections to the idea of perceptual experiences of one object having different phenomenal characters, showing how this is more than possible. I looked at the claim that unconscious perceptions are necessarily representational and the implications this might have for cases of conscious perception, ultimately showing that unconscious perceptions can be representations without being representational and thus will have no impact on cases of conscious perception, and more broadly on naïve realism. I also touched on the relations that are involved in perceptions, according to the naïve realist, specifically acquaintance. I showed how, despite being constitutive of conscious perceptions, these same relations can play a role in unconscious perceptions as well. I also noted that despite involving the same relations, we can still state that conscious perception is the paradigm case of perception and is higher in the hierarchy of perception than unconscious perception. This section ends with the argument that naïve realism is compatible with and can account for cases of unconscious perception.

Unconscious perceptions are something that it seems many people will not encounter, or at least not in their everyday lives. Nevertheless, it is important to determine exactly what kind of experience it is, and which theories can account for it within the philosophy of perception. I believe that in this chapter, I have done both of these, with a specific focus on naïve realism.

Chapter Three

Cognitive Penetration and Naïve Realism

In this chapter, I will be examining the phenomenon of cognitive penetration and how it can relate to naïve realism. In Part One, I explore exactly what cognitive penetration is and how it can be distinguished from similar but different phenomena, such as shifting attention. Part Two is the most detailed, as here I will be looking at arguments both for and against the plausibility of cognitive penetration and the scope of cognitive penetration. In this section, my main argument is that cognitive penetration does occur.

Having argued in favour of cognitive penetration occurring and also having determined the scope and content of cognitive penetration, I then introduce naïve realism. I examine the compatibility between naïve realism and cognitive penetration, in both a logical and general sense, giving my own argument for how we are to explain cognitive penetration under a naïve realist framework. This will allow me to conclude that naïve realism *is* a theory that is compatible with the phenomena of cognitive penetration.

To make this argument, I critically engage with the work of Cavedon-Taylor (2018). In this, I do two things: (1) reject his arguments, and (2) develop a naïve realist account/explanation of cognitive penetration. The latter here goes beyond looking at the compatibility between naïve realism and cognitive penetration; it *also* makes sense of how cognitive penetration occurs in perceptual experience.

Part One – What is Cognitive Penetration?

Say that I would like a biscuit, and I believe that there is a packet of biscuits in the cupboard. The combination of my belief about the location of the biscuits and my desire to eat one means that I am motivated to go to the cupboard and take the packet of biscuits. Due to this chain of causal events, I have a perceptual experience of the biscuits, insofar as I smell, touch, see and taste the biscuits. This seems to be an example of my cognitive state influencing my perception of the world. *However*, this is not an example of the phenomenon which we call ‘cognitive penetration’.⁴¹ This is because it is an indirect cognitive influence. The subject’s perceptual experience has been influenced by their cognitive states insofar as their mental states, or beliefs, have been part of their decision making and following actions. The influence is indirect because the relevant cognitive states don’t proximally cause any of the perceptual content. To illustrate this, let’s revisit the example. The causal origin of my perceptual experience of the biscuit includes my desire (my mental state), but that mental state has not altered the content of the perceptual experience.

Attention Influencing Perception

It is important to remember that not all cases of cognition influencing perception count as cases of cognitive penetration. Take the following example. I am sitting in a country park on a

⁴¹ In this chapter, I will alternate between using cognitive penetration and ‘CP’ to indicate the same phenomena.

summer's day. I know that swallows also frequent this park, and thus I direct my attention to the tree to the left of me. I see a swallow perched on one of the branches. Therefore, my cognitive state of knowing about swallows led to my perception of the swallow. Yet, the results of the cognition in the swallow example are both unsurprising and indirect, as directing attention occurs commonly. Directing attention toward something *will* have an effect on the subsequent perception, but not in an interesting way. Bodily movements that result in a shift in attention can be easily redirected. Say in the swallow example, I then look to my right and perceive children playing in the park; this shift in attention and direction of vision does not mean that I have been influenced by cognition to alter my attention. From a very basic point of view, we all alter where our attention is directed constantly, simply through the movement of our eyes. This example is also one of a *voluntary attentional shift*⁴², something that is deliberate and will typically always end with a different perceptual experience.

It is not a case of cognitive penetration, even if the attentional shift was a result of the subject's mental state.

What is Cognitive Penetration?

When thinking of cognitive penetration, it is a more direct cognition to perception causal influence. A subject's mental states have altered or influenced the content of their perceptions and thus their following actions. The mental state (or cognition) is central to their perception in a way that it would not be in non-cognitively penetrated cases. It has caused the character of the experience to be the way that it is.⁴³

An example of this more direct cognition to perception causal influence can be seen in the following: I would like a cup of tea. I also have the belief that my teabags have been stored in a cupboard with my chocolate (even if they have not). As a result of this, when I go to drink my tea, it tastes like chocolate to me. Had I not had the belief about the tea's storage place, I would not have tasted chocolate. My prior belief has influenced my perceptual experience of the tea.⁴⁴ A cognitive state has *altered* the content and thus the character of my experience, in the way that, without that cognitive state being in play, my experience would not have been the way that it was. In this case, the belief that my tea tastes chocolatey could be completely false. The chocolate could have been stored in the fridge, and my perception of the taste of the tea would remain the same due to my belief. This is the kind of experience that people are referring to when they say that a perceptual experience has been cognitively penetrated. My perception occurred the way that it did due to the cognitive states I had, not due to the way that the external world was.

This is an interesting phenomenon as perception has traditionally been taken to be *cognitively impenetrable* (Stokes, 2013; Pylyshyn, 1999), where cognitive states do not affect the way that we perceive the world. A cognitive penetration thesis works to deny this traditional view and show ways that perceptual experiences can be altered by our cognitive states. In the rest of

⁴² For more on the types of attention shifts, see Most and Simons (2001).

⁴³ Macpherson (2012) has argued for a mechanism of indirect cognitive penetration, but this is not the typical explanation for how cognitive penetration occurs.

⁴⁴ This section has been influenced by the example provided by Stokes in his paper, 'Cognitive Penetrability of Perception' (2013), page 3.

this section, I am going to explain what exactly cognitive penetration is, with reference to similar experiences that are *not* cognitive penetration.⁴⁵

Basic Elements

When looking at cognitive penetration, it is important to separate it into its two basic elements: cognition and penetration. The first refers to “the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses” (Cambridge Cognition, 2015). This is a good starting point when looking at cognition; however, it does have a focus on knowledge and understanding. In philosophy, it is believed that cognition can also be the acquisition of beliefs, the creation of desires, the use of imagination, and so on. So, an alternative definition of cognition is as follows: “cognition is a process that in some way or other involves inner content-bearing, representational states and processes” (Ramsey, 2017, p.1). This view of cognition allows the inclusion of the kinds of states we would want to say are cognitive, like beliefs and desires.

So, the mental states that we have, such as beliefs, fears, desires, moods, expectations, hopes and attitudes are all cognitive states.⁴⁶ In CP, it is states such as believing bananas are yellow or expecting someone to be angry with you that have an effect on one’s perceptual experience (These, of course, referring to the CP examples given by Gegenfurtner, 2006 and Siegel, 2011). These various cognitive states can *influence* a subject’s perceptual experience, thereby *altering* it, so that it is different to how it would be if the subject were not in those specific mental states. The second element of CP is penetration. This is when the content of the experience is causally reliant on the subject’s mental states, and those mental states have causally *influenced* the experience. Thus, in the tea example, the subject’s belief about the location of the tea bags has *altered* their sensory perception, predominantly being the taste of the tea. It is the direct and causal nature of the influence that allows scenarios, such as the tea example, to be understood as penetration.

Here, I am going to present an empirical case to help our understanding of the basic elements. This example centres on the idea of memory colour, which is the theory that many objects have typical colours that are committed to the subject’s memories (Witzel and Gegenfurtner, 2013). These memory colours are used to guide a subject’s visual system in the task of assigning colours to objects. Hansen et al set up the experiment as follows: “We presented digitized photographs of natural fruit objects on a uniform gray background. The color of the fruit objects could be interactively manipulated to produce, for example, bananas of any arbitrary colour” (Hansen, Olkkonen, Walter, Gegenfurtner, 2006, p.1).

They found that subjects viewed the grey banana as more yellowish and overly adjusted the image until it was slightly blue, in order for them to view it as the neutral grey. According to Hansen et al, “All 14 subjects had positive memory color indices, indicating that they all

⁴⁵ This section is just an explanation of the phenomena that is cognitive penetration, but I would like to acknowledge that it is contestable viewpoint. I will pick this thread of discussion up in part two of this chapter, when I look at some of the intricacies of cognitive penetration and the arguments surrounding them.

⁴⁶ This is not an exhaustive list of the types of mental states that can be involved in cognitive penetration, it is just a sample of them. For more, see Georgakakis and Moretti, ‘Cognitive Penetrability of Perception and Epistemic Justification’ (IEP)

adjusted the fruits in the direction opposite to their typical settings.” (2006).⁴⁷ Positive memory colour indices mean that all of the subjects have memory colour when it came to the objects in the experiments. The subject’s perception of the image was influenced by the memory colour, their knowledge of a banana typically being yellow constituted a memory colour, which in turn altered their perception. This is evidenced by the fact that they over altered the images of bananas to get them to the neutral colour, having perceived them as a different colour than they actually were. I would imagine that this effect could happen with a variety of objects that are usually associated with a specific colour, such as tomatoes or lips.⁴⁸ This effect is limited to only those objects that are, almost universally, associated with a specific colour, and it would most likely not occur for an object such as an apple, as they are known for being both red and green.

So, here we have an example where the memory of the subject, an example of cognition, has penetrated and influenced their perception. Without this memory, the perception would have been different and thus had a different phenomenal character. These are the two elements that are *necessary* for a case to be considered an example of cognitive penetration and must be seen in all examples of cognitive penetration, both scientific and philosophical.⁴⁹

Philosophical Definitions of Cognitive Penetration

There have been many attempts to try and define the concept of cognitive penetration by various academics. I am going to present two of them in order to try and settle a definition.

Pylyshyn

One of the most famous definitions comes from the psychologist Pylyshyn, “if a system is cognitively penetrable then the function it computes is sensitive, in a semantically coherent way, to the organism’s goals and beliefs, that is, it can be altered in a way that bears some logical relation to what the person knows (1999, p.343)”. He argued that the content of early vision was cognitively impenetrable.⁵⁰ Early vision here meaning, “stages of vision that involve the capture, preprocessing, and coding of visual information, but do not involve interpretation or other cognitive processing of visual information.” (Watson, 1990). According to Pylyshyn, cognitive penetration has to be sensitive to the subject’s existing mental states and has to bear a logical relation to the subject’s existing cognitive states. He gave these conditions to avoid cases such as the following counting as cognitive penetration, “I believe that today is the day of an important exam. This belief causes stress and brings on a migraine. The migraine

⁴⁷ In the paper, Hansen et al, explain that they determined this by looking at the parameters of colour adjustment away from their typical setting. They ‘normalised’ the memory colour index by dividing through the objects, ergo the fruits, typical setting, and the control settings they had put in place. The results amounted to an effect that was three-five times above the threshold of discrimination, which was reliable for all observers. For more detail on this, see ‘Memory Modulates Colour Appearance’, 2006, Nature Neuroscience.

⁴⁸ For an additional empirical experiment that shows cognitive penetration, see the paper shapes experiment, in Delk and Fillenbaum, ‘Differences in perceived color as a function of characteristic color’ (1965).

⁴⁹ I would like to draw attention to the fact that much of the literature on cognitive penetration within philosophy is about the impact that CP has on epistemic justification and knowledge. This chapter, however, does not look at that area, as it would deviate too far from the aim of this chapter, which is to show compatibility between cognitive penetration and naïve realism.

⁵⁰ For more on Pylyshyn’s view on early vision and cognitive penetration, see his 1999 paper, “Is Vision Continuous with Cognition? The Case for Cognitive Impenetrability of Visual Perception”.

causes disturbances to my vision, and I now experience flashing lights at the periphery of my visual field in addition to experiencing the scene in front of me. In this case, my visual experience has been altered on account of my belief but there is no intelligible connection between the content of the belief – my exam is today – and the content of my visual experience – the apparent flashing lights – even though we understand why the belief caused this experience (namely, stress can cause migraines, and these can cause visual disturbances).” (MacPherson, 2011, p.26). We can see how a case like this differs from the one I gave earlier about tea and chocolate, insofar that my belief about the storage place of the tea has an intelligible connection to the experience of tasting chocolate in my tea; they are related. Whilst this addition to the definition of cognitive penetration does seem important for distinguishing CP cases from other similar scenarios, Pylyshyn’s definition focuses on the content and function of the early visual system and not on perceptual experience. Given that the opinions on cognitive penetrability and impenetrability are about perceptual experience, at least within philosophy, we need to look further to try and capture this element.

Siegel

An alternative discussion can be found in Siegel’s work. In her paper discussing CP, Siegel provides a necessary condition for cognitive penetration, “If visual experience is cognitively penetrable, then it is nomologically possible for two subjects (or for one subject in different counterfactual circumstances, or at different times) to have visual experiences with different contents while seeing *and attending to* the same distal stimuli under the same external conditions, as a result of differences in other cognitive (including affective) states.” (Siegel, 2011, p. 5-6). She is indicating here that cognitive penetration is a causal relation, the differences in cognitive states have *caused* the differences in the experiences.

It is important here to include the following counterfactual, which would be satisfied in most cases of cognitive penetration, “If the subject were not in background state B but was seeing and attending to the same distal stimuli, she would not have an experience with content p.” (Siegel, 2012, p. 6). Siegel argues that if there are any cases of cognitive penetration in the world, then this would hold. Yet is that necessarily the case?

If we look at the tea example, would this counterfactual be satisfied? If I did not hold the belief that my tea bags were stored with my chocolate, but still drank a cup of tea, then I would not have had the same perceptual experience of tasting chocolate in my tea. So, the counterfactual is satisfied by this case of cognitive penetration.⁵¹

However, it is rather simple to think of a counterexample to this counterfactual. Let’s take the banana example from earlier. Imagine that someone misidentifies the banana and thinks that it is something else - an apple, say. But suppose they also think (incorrectly) that all apples are yellow. This person has two false beliefs in play: that bananas are apples and that apples are yellow. So, they have a different background state to the subject in example but are attending

⁵¹ One may ask would it hold if the tea bags were in fact stored with the chocolate. I would say that yes, it would because the tea would have a different taste because of their actual positioning and thus fail to satisfy the ‘attend to the same perceptual stimuli’ criterion.

to the same stimuli *and* having an experience with the same content. The counterfactual fails in this case of cognitive penetration.

Does this mean that we have to abandon Siegel's view on what cognitive penetration is?

No. Siegel argues that for an experience to be cognitively penetrable, then two different people, or the same person in different circumstances, could have perceptual experiences that differ in phenomenal character whilst perceiving and attending to the same object, in the same external conditions, due to differences in mental states. We can take the essence of the counterfactual, that is, the subject had a completely different mental state than they would have an experience with different content, whilst accepting that the counterfactual, as it is, does not hold for all instances of CP.

Additionally, we ought not to rely on the counterfactual because it does seem to hold in cases of indirect cognitive influence. As such, it may not be the best way to explain the cases of direct cognitive influence. This does not mean we need to ignore what Siegel is presenting; she has provided a description of cognitive penetration cases which serve to isolate them from cases of indirect cognitive influence. This is useful for determining what cognitive penetration actually is.

Moving Forward

So, I have shown two potential versions of what cognitive penetration actually is. Yet, I feel that neither of them completely captures all the relevant details. Pylyshyn captures the idea of semantic/logical connections, showing that the cognitive states that influence one's perceptual experience must be in some way *logically or semantically* related to that experience. I think this is important to make clear, so that we do not think beliefs like 'the sun will rise today' have cognitively penetrated one's perceptual experience of the food they are eating. Siegel centres her account on *visual experience* and emphasises the phenomenal character of the experience and how it is affected by our cognitive states.

It is important to state here that both accounts are compatible with each other. We do not have to pitch them against one another in order to proceed with the best account of cognitive penetration. Both accounts have something to offer when it comes to defining what cognitive penetration is and highlight different essential elements. For the rest of this chapter, I will be using a combination of both Siegel's and Pylyshyn's accounts for an optimal version of cognitive penetration. Siegel's emphasis on visual experience and Pylyshyn's semantic connections are both significant to keep in mind.

To summarise, the necessary conditions for cognitive penetration are as follows. It must be possible for two subjects to have visual experiences with different contents whilst perceiving the same stimuli under the same conditions, due to differences in cognitive states. It must also be that the cognitively penetrating states are sensitive to and bear a logical relation to the subject's existing mental states. I would also state that these are also sufficient conditions for cognitive penetration as they capture the essence of what cognitive penetration is *and* can be applied to all cases of it.

Types of Beliefs in Cognitive Penetration

Something we ought to consider is the types of beliefs that occur in these scenarios and how they are linked to cognitive penetration.

Let's take the following example. At some point, Sam comes to hold the belief that Sarah's got green fingers.⁵² This belief causes Sam to perceive Sarah's grass as greener than his when he looks at it. Yet, this perceptual experience is not reliant on the conscious mental state that the subject is in when they are having that perceptual experience. In other words, when perception P is penetrated by cognitive state C, at time t, the subject does not have to be in C at t.

What does this mean? Are there different types of beliefs that can explain this? Yes, there are.

There are two types of beliefs in play here.⁵³ They are occurrent and dispositional beliefs.⁵⁴ All of which can come into play when one is cognitively penetrated. In this case, an occurrent belief is one that is currently being considered by the mind: it is conscious, explicit and active. The traditional view is that a dispositional belief is a belief that causes the subject to have the disposition to do other things, like act, speak and so on. It is a belief not currently being considered by the mind but is still held by the subject. (Braithwaite, 1932-33, Marcus 1990). To illustrate this distinction, take the following examples.

Whilst sitting in the library, I believe that shelf A contains non-fiction books. This is an occurrent belief: it is one that I am consciously holding as it relates to my environment. Contrast this with something like believing that my name is Chloe. This is a dispositional belief, one that I am constantly holding but not one that is always conscious or active. Holding this belief means that I am disposed to do various things, like turn around if someone calls 'Chloe' or begin speaking if someone asks for Chloe's opinion, and so on. Of course, in these scenarios, my belief that my name is Chloe has been made occurrent, but for the most part, it remains a dispositional belief. Stokes explains dispositional beliefs as follows: "This has a relevant physiological basis: belief states do not depend in any direct way upon current activity in one's sensory organs. One cannot see when one is completely blindfolded, but one can still have and consider one's beliefs." (Stokes, 2013, p.2). Dispositional beliefs are not reliant on a subject's current experiences and environment.

Returning to cognitive penetration, we can therefore state that perceptions can be cognitively penetrated by both occurrent *and* dispositional beliefs. The mental state that I was actively in when perceiving my tea as tasting chocolatey is cognitively penetrating my perception in the same way that Sam's belief about Sarah's gardening prowess cognitively penetrates his

⁵² As in an ability to garden, not the colour green.

⁵³ There is some debate about whether 'occurrent judgments' class as beliefs, for instance, Schwitzgebel (2008) argues that only dispositional states are genuine beliefs, but for the sake of this argument I am taking both occurrent and dispositional to be types of belief.

⁵⁴ This is not an exhaustive list of the types of beliefs one can hold, but they are the one that are relevant to this discussion.

perception. One is an occurrent belief, and the other is dispositional, but they can influence the subject's perceptions in the same way.⁵⁵

Part Two – Does Cognitive Penetration Occur?

In this section, I am going to argue that cognition penetration is a plausible phenomenon that does occur. I will do so by examining various aspects of the debate around cognitive penetration.

Cognitive Impenetrability

First, I look at whether it is a phenomenon that is plausible. In their paper, 'Why cognitive penetration of our perceptual experience is still the most plausible account', Newen and Vetter (2017) argue against some of the cognitive impenetrability claims, stating that cognitive penetration is the most plausible theoretical account of what is occurring in the brain states during a perceptual experience, when we assess the empirical evidence.

Their first argument is from neuroscience, in that there is "no evidence for an encapsulated and impenetrable visual module" (2017, p.28). There is not any evidence that our perceptual experiences are impermeable from a neuroanatomical perspective. They argue that V1, an area of the brain, has a lot of unexplained processing functions, and thus it is unjustified to restrict a brain module [region] to one specific isolated function. So, we cannot determine that it is cognitively impenetrable. Additionally, recent studies show that the cortical brain areas are more interconnected than was previously believed, potentially by 66%. Gilbert and Li put it in the following way, "As such, each neuron is a microcosm of the brain as a whole, with synapses carrying information originating from far-flung brain regions." (2013, p.360). Therefore, it seems implausible to argue that there is any area of the brain, such as the visual modules, that cannot be penetrated by other aspects of the brain, including cognitive processes.

A different argument against cognitive impenetrability comes from temporal processing and the idea that basic visual processing happens far too fast to be affected by top-down processing (the cognitive states I referred to in the first section). However, "Time-resolving electrophysiological evidence showed that the visual cortex is activated within 50 ms and pre-frontal areas within 80 ms after visual stimulus onset. This leaves plenty of time for iterative top-down processing between "cognitive", e.g., frontal and parietal, areas and sensory, e.g., occipital, areas, within the first 100–200 ms after visual". (Newen, Vetter, 2017, p.30). This data shows that higher level processing, or cognition, can occur very quickly and influence our visual processing very early on. Our mental states can have an effect on our visual processing, and thus our perceptual experiences, since all the processes are occurring within 200 milliseconds. So, cognitive states can influence perceptual states within this small temporal window.

⁵⁵ There are philosophers, Soteriou (2011) and Boyle (2009), who believe that currently believing that p (i.e. judging that p) entails believing that p (i.e. being in the dispositional state of believing that p). This is not a universal belief, however, and just something to flag.

Whilst these arguments are useful to provide some empirical support for the cognitive penetrability of perception, they are focused more on neuroscience, on brain states and brain areas. This argumentation is not quite where we want to go. I do not necessarily want to tie cognitive penetration to a certain area of the brain, nor do I want to focus on the idea that modules of the brain are penetrable. Whilst these are interesting fields of study, they do not address the cases of cognitive penetration that we see in philosophical literature, as empirical studies focus more on brain areas and brain processing, and my work in this chapter looks at mental state centred instances of cognitive penetration.

Additionally, these examples, whilst showing that perception is not impenetrable, do not prove that there are cases where perception *is* cognitively penetrable.⁵⁶

Cognitive Penetrability

We need to move towards a more psychologically based argument in support of cognitive penetration, in order to show that cognitive penetration, as I have presented it, is possible. Thus, to move further with this argument in an attempt to show that CP does occur, I am going to present some experimental evidence that shows cognitive penetration of perception.

An example of a mental state changing a perception can be seen in the case of impoverished black and white images, for instance, “the well-known case of the Dalmatian dog. The image only seems to consist of randomly distributed black and white dots until we know to look out for a Dalmatian dog. Suddenly, we develop a different perceptual experience: we recognize the dog and can never go back to seeing the picture just as randomly distributed dots.” (Newen, Vetter, 2017, p.33). It is the same visual scene under the same perceptual conditions, insofar as the angle, lighting and subject are the same, yet the perceptual experience has changed. So, what explains these changes?

One potential explanation is an attention based one. The subject is attending differently after the employment of the concept ‘dalmatian’. The subject now knows what image they are supposed to be seeing, and thus they would group the dots in a different manner. The difference in the character of the experience can be explained by the difference in attention. The subject is attending differently. As Newen and Vetter put it, “One way would be to argue that the activation of the concept and related visual template changes attentional processing and thereby produces new sensory inputs and thus influences perceptual experience.” (2017, p. 33). There are different sensory inputs despite the scene being the same because the subject’s attentional processing has changed. The way they see the scene is different.

Yet, there is another explanation for consequent recognition of the Dalmatian within the black and white dots. It could, in fact, be a case of cognitive penetration. The subject’s knowledge that the image ought to be a dalmatian has penetrated her perception, and as a result, the subject perceives (and recognises) the image as one of a dalmatian. The subject is attending in

⁵⁶ There are various parallel discussions to this one regarding cognitive penetration and whether or not it occurs. Whilst they are not specifically relevant to this section of my chapter, in that many of the empirical arguments in favour of cognitive penetration are brain centred, they are still significant in the literature. To read more on this, see Stokes (2015) and Firestone and Scholl (2016).

the same way, but their mental states have changed and thus penetrated the experience. We ought to prefer this explanation to the attention based one because it does not posit that the sensory inputs are different when the subject perceives the Dalmatian. The dots on the page are the same in both instances; it is the subject's knowledge of what the image ought to be that influences how she sees it. So, we can argue that the Dalmatian case is actually one of cognitive penetration.

A further study from Frith and Dolan (1997) provides support for the idea of 'cognitive integration of impoverished stimuli', as they provided subjects with impoverished black and white images of a banana. Barely any of the subjects are able to recognise the banana; they just perceive a pattern of black and white dots that do not form any specific or meaningful image. At a later time, the same subjects are presented with a clear normal image of a banana, before being shown the impoverished image of dots again. They found that "Contrasting the fMRI signal of the perception of the impoverished image before and after it was paired with the clear image resulted in a significant activation of the medial parietal lobe. The medial parietal lobe cannot be regarded as a candidate for early visual processes; it is thus most plausibly a candidate for higher-level processing." (Newen, Vetter, 2017, p.33). The subjects were able to see the shape of the banana within the impoverished image of black and white dots, now that they had seen the clear image of the banana. Their recognition of the banana altered their perceptual experience. This leads me to believe that the changes in the perceptual experience of the impoverished image can be best explained by cognitive penetration from a 'high-level area'. The subjects recognised and subsequently remembered the image of the banana when perceiving the image of dots. We can say that it is these mental states that have penetrated the experience and thus can explain the changes in perception.

Can we not argue that there has been some perceptual learning at play, rather than cognitive penetration? The objection can be phrased as follows: "the perceptual system supposedly learns what a Dalmatian dog or a banana looks like independent of any input from higher cognitive processes" (2017, p.15). Yet, for the observed change in perceptual experience, Newen and Vetter argue that we need 'situational activation of the template of the Dalmatian dog', and that this kind of template is interwoven with higher cognitive processes. A one-off instance of the visual template (which is required for perceptual learning) is thereby rather implausible.

Overall, I have shown that the arguments given for cognitive impenetrability are implausible when faced with empirical evidence, both regarding encapsulated visual modules and temporal processing. I have also shown that there are experimental and philosophical arguments *for* the plausibility of cognitive penetration, showing that in these types of experiments, the results often point toward some form of cognitive penetration. Thus, cognitive penetration is not only possible, but in many cases, it is plausible.

The Scope of Cognitive Penetration

Here, I want to look at the scope of cognitive penetration. What are the types of experiences that can be cognitively penetrated? Is it only perceptual experiences that are susceptible to alteration by cognitive states, at least in an interesting way? We can, of course, say that mental states can affect other mental states, say a belief influencing a belief, and so on. For

example, we can say that my belief that I have a morning meeting influences my belief that I need to get out of bed early. This, however, is not as philosophically interesting as cognitive states altering perceptual states, as it seems much more intuitive that states of the same kind can be interlinked. Cognitive states affecting cognitive states seem like they happen in the same 'system'. Perceptual states are a separate kind of state, and thus, cognitive states affecting perceptual states are more philosophically interesting.

Typically, the interest in the cognitive penetration of perceptual states lies in the subsequent consequences for a subject's epistemological condition. However, in this chapter, as I stated, I am more interested in the finer details of cognitive penetration and whether it can be compatible with the theory of naïve realism.

An interesting question that arises is the limits on the modality of cognitively penetrated experiences. As with many investigations within the philosophy of mind, cognitive penetration is a phenomenon that is explored with a focus on vision. Even in Pylyshyn's early philosophical definition of cognitive penetration, he argued that it was only early vision that was cognitively impenetrable, not all early sense modalities. But is it possible for other sense modalities to be cognitively penetrated?

It seems that the answer would be yes, given some of the examples of cognitive penetration that I have provided thus far in the chapter. In the tea example, it is the subject's gustatory experience that is altered, insofar as the way they taste the tea is altered. It is not a visual experience of the tea's flavour. This could mean that all the sensory systems, visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile, can be subject to cognitive penetration. In the above discussion, a neuroscientific argument against cognitive impenetrability was that there are no impenetrable and encapsulated visual modules in the mind. We can extrapolate this to the other modalities, in that the modules of the mind are linked, so all of our perceptual systems *have the possibility* of being altered by other aspects, like cognition.

As with the tea example, there have been studies into cognitive penetration of the auditory system (Brogaard, 2015) and olfactory cognitive penetration (Kellar, 2016), indicating that cognitive penetration is not exclusive to visual perception.

A further question to consider is thus, can a perceptual experience be cognitively penetrated by more than one mental state? For instance, if a subject has a belief that they have an incredible singing voice *and* a desire to be liked by the audience, it seems that both the belief and the desire work together to cognitively penetrate the subject's perceptual experience of their performance.⁵⁷ Their singular perceptual experience has been penetrated by both mental states, their belief, and their desire. I would suggest a caveat, however, that the mental states ought to be focused on a similar subject. For instance, it would be implausible to suggest that a subject's belief regarding the storage of their tea and their desire to be on a beach will work together to penetrate the experience and have an effect on the taste of their tea. But a belief about the storage of the tea and their desire for chocolate *could* combine to penetrate the experience and alter the tea's taste. Therefore, if there are two mental states, they have to be coherently linked in order for them to both cognitively penetrate a perceptual experience. As

⁵⁷ This example has been influenced by the one given by Susanna Siegel, in 'The Rationality of Perception', as she discusses Vivek the Vain performer.

such, given that we can conceive of examples of this kind, I would argue that it *is* possible for a perceptual experience to be cognitively penetrated by more than one mental state.

So, in terms of the scope of cognitive penetration, we can say that it affects perceptual experiences, that it is not limited to only one sense modality, as CP has the possibility to occur across all of our senses, and an experience can be cognitively penetrated by more than one mental state.

Part Three – Cognitive Penetration and Naïve Realism

As set out in Chapter One of my thesis, the basics of the theory of naïve realism are as follows: it is a theory that states that during perceptions and perceptual experiences, the subject is in a relation with the ordinary, mind-independent objects of those experiences. The character of these experiences is constituted by those objects.

Additionally, as I argued in the previous chapters, the optimal version of naïve realism includes ways of perceiving, in which the way the object is perceived is significant for the character of the experience. Naïve realism also allows for the relevant relation to obtain non-consciously.

For the rest of this section, I want to look at the compatibility between naïve realism and cognitive penetration, both in a logical sense and also from a more general perspective.

Logical

In this part, I will be looking at the logical compatibility between the theory of naïve realism and cognitive penetration. As explained in the previous section, there are three main ideas to naïve realism. They are, that perception is a relation, that it is of mind-independent ordinary objects and that these objects play a constitutive role in the character of the perceptual experience. Is there anything that is necessary for cognitive penetration that creates a logical incompatibility for naïve realism?

There is nothing about cognitive penetration that is logically incompatible with naïve realism. We can say that in a cognitively penetrated perceptual experience, the subject is still in a relation with a mind-independent object which is constitutive of the character of the experience. It is just that the character has also been affected by the mental state of the subject.

So, naïve realism is logically compatible with cognitive penetration. Does this mean that the matter is settled? Of course not. The interesting questions to be raised about the two fall into a more general compatibility question. In the next section, I raise and respond to some of these questions.

General Compatibility

In this section, I am going to address some of Cavedon-Taylor's (2018) objections to the compatibility between naïve realism and cognitive penetration. He argues this view in a couple of ways. The first of which is to argue that a representationalist framework is much better

suited to explaining cognitive penetration, and as such, the inclusion of representational content to account for penetrated aspects of phenomenal character screens off the naive realist properties from doing any explanatory work in constituting that character. The second objection is to say that a “dyadic” naive realism is *inconsistent* with naive realism, and a “polyadic” naive realism does not go far enough in explaining how mental states ‘get into’ the experience.⁵⁸ I am going to take each of these objections in turn, highlighting and explaining Cavedon-Taylor’s views, and then I will argue against them. As such, I am arguing that naive realism *is* compatible with cognitive penetration.

Representation

Cavedon-Taylor states that cognitive penetration gives us reason to believe that perceptual experiences have representational content. He illustrates his point through his extensive examples. I am going to include a couple of these here.

The first is entitled ‘Dinner Party’. You are attending a dinner party at your boss’s house. Halfway through the meal, she reveals that the meat she has served is pigeon. You believe pigeons to be diseased-ridden vermin. But since you were just discussing the possibility of a pay rise, you resign yourself to swallowing a few mouthfuls more. Believing the meat to be pigeon, it now tastes *different* than before: more slimy, sour, and disagreeable” (2018, p. 391).

The second example, entitled ‘Arranging Furniture’, features a different type of cognitive penetration. “Having moved into a new apartment, you are in the process of deciding how to arrange your furniture. You look around the lounge and visualise the sofa, bookcase, dining table, etc., in different locations. You don’t imagine the furniture in phenomenal space (‘the mind’s eye’). You mentally project the items around this very room. In doing so, you see this room to be a potential location for this or that piece of furniture.” (2018, p.391).

Cavedon-Taylor’s argument is that in both of these examples, the cognitive penetration can be explained by adopting a representationalist view. In ‘Arranging furniture’, the image of the bookcase is represented as being in one’s actual egocentric space. In other words, one can see the bookcase in the room they are arranging. This can be more easily explained by stating that the subject is acquiring additional representational content to the content of the mental image.

In ‘Dinner Party’, a shared representationalist framework makes intelligible how a belief can causally influence a perceptual experience. He argues that “if your gustatory experience of the meat is also one with representational content—if it represents the meat as being some way—we thereby make it *prima facie* intelligible how the content of your belief about the meat can have a direct causal impact upon your perceptual experience of the meat: the former has that impact because its representational content affects the latter’s representational content.” (2018, p. 414).

The argument is that if the perceptual experience is representational, then the idea that mental states can *causally influence* them is much more palatable and easier to explain. It is one type

⁵⁸ I will explain the terms dyadic and polyadic as I further examine this criticism.

of representational content influencing another. Yet, this is not necessarily the best argument to make since representational states can cause bodily movements and bodily movements don't have representational contents. Thus, as it stands, this argument doesn't seem very compelling.

Cavedon-Taylor attempts to bolster this argument by claiming that holding this view on representations, one can also make clearer the Semantic Coherence condition that Pylyshyn endorses if one assumes they are both states with representational content. Cavedon-Taylor puts this as follows: "In effect, the semantic coherence condition on cognitive penetration may be understood as having this as a prior condition: that the penetrating and penetrated states have representational content." (2018, p. 416). There is nothing, at least on initial look at the view, in the naïve realist view to play that explanatory role.

So, in Cavedon-Taylor's view, it is not only that a representationalist view is better suited to explaining cognitive penetration and semantic coherence, but that a relational view like naïve realism fails to show *how* mental states can influence a perceptual experience.

There is an explanatory problem for theories such as naïve realism, which are relational accounts of perception. If a subject has a cognitively penetrated experience, in some cases, it is argued that the subject has misrepresented the scene in front of them. If cognitive penetration causes Jack to perceive Mary as angry when she is not, Jack has misrepresented the scenario, as it is inaccurate to the occurrences in the external world.⁵⁹ The representationalist can easily explain this kind of thinking, as for them, perceptual experiences represent the world as being in a certain way, and these experiences can either be veridical or not. With cognitively penetrated experiences, the mental states of the subject have influenced and are constitutive of the character of the perceptual experience. The world is represented in a different way than it would have been without the mental state. Yet, it can still be explained through representation.

However, naïve realism is a theory that, as we know, posits a closer relation between the perceptual experience and the external world. The subject is in a relation with the object, and it is that object that is partly constitutive of the character of the experience. So, how can they explain the inclusion of representational content when an experience is cognitively penetrated? If the perception's phenomenal character is characterised by the objects of the experience, then where does that leave the mental states that do the cognitive penetrating? If the character of the subject's experience in Dinner Party is constituted by the meat they are eating, then how can it taste differently before and after having a belief about its identity?

I disagree with Cavedon-Taylor's assessment. I believe that there is an explanation that the naïve realist can offer for cognitive penetration. Cognitive Penetration does not have to mean representationalist. To show I this I am going to take a step back from the representation issue and look at the theory of naïve realism and how it can be adapted.

⁵⁹ This is a reference to an example of cognitive penetration given by Siegel, 2011.

Acquaintance

Naïve realism, as I have explained, is a theory that explains perception as a relation between an external object and the subject. The argument we have been looking at states that it is difficult to imagine what kind of relation it would be, in order for a mental state to bear upon it and alter the perception of the subject. It differs from, say, cases where the subject's perception is 'unclear', perhaps due to distance or lack of spectacles or fog, as there are a number of potential reasons for an unclear perception. However, if we accept a certain view of naïve realism, the perception is the way that it is due to the environment of the object or the perspective of the subject, insofar as we refer to the distance between the subject and the object, the lighting conditions of the perception, and the angle of the perception, as perspectival.⁶⁰ It is less obvious how we could explain the relation between the subject and object, being influenced by the mental states of the subject. How can a mood or belief impact an acquaintance relation?

Let's take an altered version of an earlier example. I would like a cup of tea. I also have the belief that my teabags have been stored in a cupboard with my fresh mint leaves (even if they have not). As a result of this, when I go to drink my tea, it tastes like mint to me. Had I not had the belief about the tea's storage place, I would not have tasted mint. My prior belief has influenced my perceptual experience of the tea.⁶¹ How can the naïve realist explain that my belief about the storage of my tea bags has *influenced and thus altered* the perceptual relation between me and the tea? What could have happened to cause me to have a gustatory experience of mint when there was no mint for me to be in a relation with?

Compatibility Lens

When looking at these questions through the lens of compatibility, the naïve realist can say that the subject's belief about the storage of the tea has altered the relation between the subject and the object. The way that relation is, and the phenomenal character of the experience, has been affected by the mental state of the subject.

Yet, this is not a particularly satisfying answer, as it does not explain what kind of relation is involved that can be altered by mental states, nor what type of experience is occurring in the mint tasting tea example, that causes me to taste mint, where there is no mint.

Ways of Perceiving

One potential way to combat this problem is through using the idea of *ways of perceiving*.

We have seen, in the literature, multiple versions of incorporating a third relata into the character of experience (Campbell, 2009, Brewer, 2011, Johnston, 2014, Fish, 2009, Genone, 2014). These can often include environmental conditions, such as the lighting and the angle of perception.

⁶⁰ There are a few different versions of naïve realism that build in a perspectival aspect, for instance French and Phillips idea of 'Ways of Perceiving' (2020), or Campbell (2009) or Brewer (2013), as shown in chapter one.

⁶¹ As mentioned, this section has been influenced by the example provided by Stokes in his paper, 'Cognitive Penetrability of Perception' (2013), page 3.

French and Phillips (2020) introduced the idea of *ways of perceiving*. This will just be a quick recapitulation of this theory, as I have already explained this theory in chapter one of the thesis. The initial idea can be seen in Martin, as he asks, “Why cannot the ways in which things are presented in experience make a difference to what the experience is like, in addition to what is presented?” (1998, p.175). French and Phillips expand on this and argue for a theory that includes a two-place determinable relation. They dub their theory ‘Simple, Austere Naïve Realism’, and argue that there is not only one way of perceiving a scene or mind-independent objects. The very same elements of the experience can be presented to the subject in a multitude of ways because of there being differences in the perspectival aspects. Therefore, according to this account, the character of one’s experience is constituted by the object of perception but also by the *way* it was perceived.

How does this relate to cognitive penetration?

My argument is that cognitive penetration is able to follow the same framework. Cognitive penetration causes one to perceive in different ways: when a subject has a certain mental state, they perceive in a certain way. So, we can say that if one perceives with certain beliefs in play, that can cause one to perceive the object in a certain way, and without those beliefs, one will perceive (or be caused to perceive) in a different way. This allows us to account for the explanatory role of cognitive penetration by explaining how it has an influence on the character of experience, through the *way* one perceives.

A difference between this and French and Phillips’ account (2020), is that this example of the way one perceives is not environmental, like the lighting conditions and angle, but is internal to the subject.

The different types of cognitive penetration are different conditions of perception, for instance, a perception that occurs in a specific mood or one that occurs whilst holding a specific belief. Holding the account, we can offer a naïve realist account of what has occurred in the mint tasting tea example.

The example goes as follows: ‘I would like a cup of tea. I also have the belief that my teabags have been stored in a cupboard with my fresh mint leaves (even if they have not). As a result of this, when I go to drink my tea, it tastes like mint to me. Had I not had the belief about the tea’s storage place, I would not have tasted mint.’ In this case, the subject is in a relation with the tea (normal tasting tea), and it is the conditions of the perceptual experience that have had an effect on the character of the experience (the subject tasting mint), ergo the belief of the tea’s storage place. There is no mint that the subject is in a relation with, but, like the red/orange building case, the ‘way’ that the perception has occurred has made it so that it has erred in the presentation of the external world. I believe that this can be extrapolated to all other examples of cognitive penetration, as all of the mental states that are believed to be cognitively penetrated, can be presented as the conditions of the perception. We can expand on this by mirroring French and Phillips. In their explanation of *ways of perceiving*, they state “the psychological impact that the red car has on the subject in Car Case [their explanatory example] is similar to the psychological impact that the orange colour of a car has on a subject who sees it in natural daylight – a paradigmatic circumstance of perceiving orangeness.”

(2020, p.12). The *way of perceiving* has caused the object of that experience to have such a psychological impact.⁶²

To mirror this for cognitive penetration, let's revisit the tea example. The belief I have about the storage place of my tea alters my perceptual experience. This means that the psychological impact that drinking the black tea has on me is similar to the psychological impact that drinking peppermint tea has on me. The object, the tea, strikes me as having a minty taste because of the mental state that influenced my perceptual experience.

So, the way of perception is constitutive of the experience and is caused by the conditions. I am arguing that cognitive penetration is a *way of perceiving* because it is the *way* in which a subject perceives if they have certain mental states, like beliefs or desires.

All of One's Beliefs?

One may argue that presumably not *all* of one's beliefs figure in (causally influencing) the way one perceives the tea. Only certain beliefs do. What explains that? Why are certain background beliefs just phenomenologically irrelevant, and not relevant to the way of perceiving? What determines which beliefs are involved in the way you perceive the objects?

We can refer back to Pylyshyn (1999), where he argues that cognitive penetration has to be *sensitive* to the subject's existing mental states and must bear a logical relation to the subject's knowledge. For instance, my being scared led to an experience when I saw a bear running past me, when in fact it was a raccoon, which has an *intelligible* link. Perceiving with the state of knowing my own name or that one plus one equals two has no bearing on my perception. So, only certain beliefs figure in causally influencing the way we perceive.

It is all context dependent, the beliefs that figure in influencing the way in which one perceives are those that are related to the situation that the subject is in.

Return to Cavedon-Taylor

Having now argued that cognitive penetration can, in fact, be understood in the *way of perceiving* framework, I want to return to the issue of representation and the argument from Cavedon-Taylor.

The issue of explaining how a mental state influences a perceptual experience in a relational theory seems to have the capacity to be solved by referring to 'third relata' or the *way of perceiving*. If we adopt this view, that factors external to the perception, including cognitive penetration, can alter phenomenal character, then there is not a reliance on the idea of experience itself being representational in the explanation of why the experience is as it is. It is

⁶² It is important here to note that not all cases of cognitively penetrated experiences are illusory. There can be cases in which it is that the cognitive state has penetrated the perception but enhances it, like in the case of Siegel's Pine Tree (Siegel, 2012), in which the knowledge about types of trees meant that the subject was able to perceive the tree *as a pine tree*. Some cases of cognitive penetration, like the tea or Vivek example, are illusory but that is not a necessary element of cognitive penetration.

the perceiving of an object with certain beliefs in play (the cognitive penetration) that explains how the experience is. We do not need to appeal to non-fundamental representation if we accept this view.⁶³ The way of perceiving view is able to explain all of Cavedon-Taylor's scenarios and why the experiences are altered without an alteration in the presented objects.

However, whilst it is possible to argue cognitive penetration through ways of perceiving, Cavedon-Taylor also voices an objection to this. He argues against both Dyadic and Polyadic naïve realism, the first labelling a two-place relation view, the latter is a naïve realist view containing a third relata, or as Cavedon-Taylor puts it, "S's perceptual experience of the scene before them is exhaustively constituted by the particulars and property instances of which that scene is comprised, as well as further, relevant relata." (2018, p.22),

The first thing he argues is that dyadic naïve realism views are inconsistent with naïve realism, claiming that "perception's phenomenal character is exhaustively characterised by external objects and their properties." (2018, p.24). This is not necessarily the case, as French and Phillips argue for a dyadic view with their ways of perceiving view, arguing that perception is a "multiply determinable two-place relation holding between subjects and presented elements." (2020, p.9). As such, not all dyadic views are incompatible with cognitive penetration, in fact, as I have argued in this section, holding such a view can allow us to explain cognitive penetration in a naïve realist way.

He also argues that polyadic naïve realism, views where perception has a third relata, do not explain *how* representational states influence perceptual experiences. If naïve realism is fundamentally relational, then how do representations get to be explained via a way of perceiving?

This goes back to the response I gave regarding ways of perceiving. Cognitive penetration can be understood through this framework, and thus, we need not appeal to objects being perceptually represented in a certain way. In Dinner party, the subject is having a perceptual experience where they are in a relation with the meat they are eating, which forms the character of the experience. Additionally, the belief that the subject comes to hold, that the meat is pigeon, alters the character of the experience. The meat now tastes slimy and sour to the subject *due to* the belief that the subject held as they were perceiving the object. The change in taste comes in via the beliefs or views held at the time of the perception. Therefore, having the view that cognitive penetration is an example of a *way of perceiving*, avoids the issue of *how* that Cavedon-Taylor raises. The *how* is just the way of perceiving.

In the experience under the ways of perceiving approach, the conditions, such as the spatial perspective or cognition, *cause* the subject to perceive the object in a certain way. Ways of perceiving are a two-place determinable relation rather than the way being a third relata in the experience, so whilst the conditions do not have to be constitutive, they are phenomenologically consequential.

⁶³ That is, there is no reliance on any non-fundamental representation which is an intrinsic or essential property of the perceptual experience. There is of course, representation involved somewhere in the experience because of the cognitive penetration.

This is similar to how we explain illusory experiences, the cognitive penetration has altered how the subject is perceiving the object in the external world, even though they are in a relation with how the object actually is. Thus, in Dinner Party, the meat tastes slimy and sour to the subject because of the cognitive penetration, despite the subject being in a relation with the normal piece of meat, which is neither slimy nor sour.

So, whilst the content of the mental state may not be on the same ‘framework’ as it is in the representationalist explanation, the naïve realist is able to explain the cognitive penetration through *ways of perceiving*. Therefore, given this explanation, I can argue that Cavedon-Taylor’s argument regarding the inclusion of representational content within instances of cognitive penetration *does not* mean that it is incompatible with naïve realism.

Compatible?

So, I have argued that there is not a general incompatibility between naïve realism and cognitive penetration. I have tried to show some of the most significant worries about offering a naïve realist account of cognitive penetration, primarily from Cavedon-Taylor, such as the problem of representation and how the naïve realist can draw upon previously accepted ways of thinking to adapt to cognitive penetration. I have relied on the argument that cognitive penetration can be viewed through a *way of perceiving* framework to show that these worries about compatibility can be rectified if we apply the same ideas as we would to other external factors that are considered a *way of perception*, like lighting conditions and angles of perception.

Given this, and the lack of logical incompatibility, I have presented arguments to show that naïve realism *is*, in fact, compatible with cognitive penetration.

I believe that I have also provided ample arguments that the way of perceiving view is as plausible as representationalist ways of handling the phenomenon of cognitive penetration. My view utilises no additional perceptual relata, but rather an inclusion of beliefs into the elements that cause one to perceive in a certain way. This is just as plausible as the idea that representational content alters the phenomenal character of the perception.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the phenomenon of cognitive penetration and how it can relate to naïve realism. I explained exactly what cognitive penetration is and how it can be distinguished from similar but different experiences, such as shifting attention. I examined two different definitions of cognitive penetration, given by philosophers, Pylyshyn and Sigel and concluded that a mixture of both accounts are relevant for the discussions had in this chapter.

In the second part, I spent time looking at arguments both for and against the plausibility of cognitive penetration, a debate that was centred on the literature from Vetter and Newen. I also explored the scope of cognitive penetration, as to whether cognitive penetration is limited to one modality and what types of mental states can cognitively penetrate perceptions. Having argued in favour of cognitive penetration occurring and also having determined the scope of cognitive penetration, I then introduced naïve realism. I examined the compatibility between

naïve realism and cognitive penetration, in both a logical and a more general sense, addressing an intuition about their compatibility and then focusing on the more general issues that arise, like representation and timing. In this section, I have argued that cognitive penetration can be viewed under the framework of *ways of perceiving*. This, I argue, is what the naïve realist can use to explain cognitively penetrated experiences. The naïve realist can also use this argument to combat worries about representations within cognitive penetration, as it offers an alternative explanation as to *how* a mental state can influence a relation-centred perception.

I believe in presenting these arguments and offering my own explanation of cognitive penetration under a naïve realist framework, it is clear that I have shown that naïve realism *is* compatible with cognitive penetration.

Chapter Four

Rich Perception and Naïve Realism

This chapter is primarily focused on the idea of rich perception: what it is, whether it is defensible and whether it is compatible with the theory of naïve realism. To answer these questions, I will be exploring the relationship between rich and thin perception, and the visual and cognitive science that underpins the concept of rich perception. I will also be limiting my discussion to conscious perceptions, as others within the relevant literature do. This chapter will be split into three major parts. The first focuses on examining the concept of ‘rich perception’ and what the Rich view states. Within this part, there will be discussions on the two different views, the Rich view, and the Thin view. In this section, I defend arguments in favour of the rich view.

Part two addresses the question ‘Is the Rich View true?’ by examining some arguments both for and against the Rich View. In this section, I focus on PCAs (Phenomenal Contrast arguments) and how they can be used to support the Rich View. In fact, I argue that these arguments are the *most* convincing support for the Rich view. In doing so, I discuss some of the potential issues for previous supporting arguments, such as Scholl and Tremoulet’s perception of causality argument or the reliance on the rich view to explain everyday perceptions. The overarching aim of this section is to show that the rich view is true.

Part Three argues that the Rich view is compatible with naïve realism. I will be considering both logical compatibility: whether there are any logical contradictions derived by combining naïve realism and rich perception, and a broader issue of compatibility. This will cover questions such as whether it is plausible to combine naïve realism with rich perception, whether rich perception goes against the spirit of naïve realism or whether rich perception goes against motivational considerations for naïve realism. In this section, I develop a naïve realist account of rich perception, showing compatibility between the two and also building the theory of naïve realism to account for this phenomenon.

Part One – What is the Rich view?

The Thin view of perception claims that the properties that are presented to us in our conscious visual perceptual experiences are limited to the following list: colours, textures, shapes and motion, spatial relations, and luminance. In contrast to the Thin view, the Rich view of perception states that the properties that are presented to us in our conscious perceptual experience can include properties that are not on this list.⁶⁴ These properties include examples from the following categories, kinds, affordances, traits, appraisals and so on. Let’s look at these a bit more. The term *kinds* is a term used to refer to groupings of objects, such as when we refer to something as an ‘apple’ or a ‘book’, we have identified the object as a member of a group. This is similar to traits, as this is a term used to refer to the characteristics of entities that belong to those entities.

⁶⁴ These definitions are drawn from the discussion from Siegel and Byrne in “Rich or Thin”.

Affordances are opportunities for certain actions that are provided by the environment of the entity. This includes descriptions such as stretchability, edibility, flexibility and so on. It is how an object can act and how one can interact with the object. Gibson, when discussing surfaces, states that “If a terrestrial surface is nearly horizontal ..., nearly flat ..., and sufficiently extended, ...and if its substance is rigid..., then the surface *affords support*...It is stand-on-able, permitting an upright posture for quadrupeds and bipeds. It is therefore walk-on-able and run-over-able. It is not sink-into-able like a surface of water or a swamp, that is, not for heavy terrestrial animal.” (Gibson, 2014, Chapter 8).

The Rich view of perception, therefore, states that we are able to perceive rich properties.⁶⁵ Or, at least, that they are perceptually presented to us in conscious perceptual experience. These are the properties that do not appear on the list of thin properties, such as being an apple, a teacup, or the property a face has of looking happy. To offer an example to elucidate the difference, according to the Thin view, when one perceives an object, one does so by being perceptually presented with the thin properties of that object. Therefore, when one perceives an apple, the only properties of the apple presented are the thin ones, like being red and round, rather than the property of being an apple. Despite this, the thin view is consistent with the idea that one can appreciate the object *as an apple*, but they would have to say that its being an apple comes into one’s mind and one’s understanding at some other level, most plausibly at the level of post-perceptual cognition and not perception.

The Rich view of perception says that when one has a perceptual experience, they are perceptually presented with rich properties (the properties that do not make it onto the thin list). So, to flip the previous example, when one perceives an apple, they are being perceptually presented with the rich property of *being an apple*. This rich property comes in at the level of perception.

I think that it is important to note here, before we get any deeper, that the discussions in my chapter will focus on conscious perception and the experiences had in genuine cases of conscious perception only. That is not to say that there is not an interesting discussion to be had regarding rich perception and unconscious perception, for instance, cases of blindsight which suggest one can be unconsciously perceptually presented with emotional properties when unconsciously perceiving a face as happy or angry (De Gelder, Vroomen, Pourtois, Weiskrantz, 2001). Yet, despite it not being inherent to this debate that we examine one type of perception, unconscious or conscious, in the rich perception debate, I will be centring my chapter on conscious perceptions. This is because, first and foremost, the majority of the Rich perception literature and the debate around the rich view is played out in conscious perception, so I am going to stay within these parameters. Secondly, it will be an easier task to try and establish the rich view when looking through the lens of conscious perception, as the vast majority of perceptions are conscious. Once the Rich view has been established and its compatibility with naïve realism discovered, then it would be possible to do the same with unconscious perceptions, but that is not something I will be doing in this chapter.

⁶⁵ In this chapter, I will be using both rich properties and high-level properties to mean the same varieties of properties.

The distinction between rich and thin properties is somewhat arbitrary in terms of what exactly makes it onto the list, at least according to Siegel, but there are some motivations as to why certain properties are included on the list of thin properties. The first thing that separates them is that the thin properties are computed by early vision in all animals, including humans. For instance, in young animals and babies, colours and shapes are the features that they are presented with in their perception.

A further reason why these properties are on the thin list is that they are plausibly the mechanism for how we perceive the properties that are not on the list (assuming we do perceive rich properties).⁶⁶ To offer an example of this, if, whilst in the park, one sees a person throw a stick for a dog and thinks that the person threw the stick far, one would attribute causality to the person's throw. Suppose that a causal property is *perceptually* presented to one. This arguably cannot happen without perception of a prior range of properties. It is plausibly partly in virtue of seeing the colour and lighting contrast between the items, seeing the dark brown stick moving from the person's hand and through the air. We can say that the perception of the throw as *caused* is *dependent* on perceiving the colour, lighting, and movement of the scene. In other words, perceiving richly is dependent on perceiving thin properties.

This raises the point that although there can be the view that we *only* perceive objects and scenarios richly, holding the rich view and not the thin view does not mean that thin properties become redundant, but that they change from being the only properties we perceive to a mechanism for perceiving rich properties. An interesting point here is the asymmetry. If one holds the thin view, then rich properties do become redundant in perception, as there is no mechanism for them to be perceived. Thus, it is significant to determine which property is on and off the list in order to determine whether or not it has the possibility to be perceived under either view. So, according to the Rich view, the perception of a subset of properties, rich properties, requires the perception of thin properties. Perceiving rich properties can only happen when one is perceiving thin properties, in the same way that visual perception of colour requires visual perception of shape. This is not to say that we cannot imagine rich properties without thin ones, we just cannot *perceive* rich properties without thin properties. This is because it is the thin properties that make the rich ones perceptible.

A further motivation for having this debate through the lens of 'on and off' of the list is that it allows us to explore the relationship between perception and instantaneous impressions. Instantaneous impressions are immediate thoughts that a subject has upon perceiving certain qualities and properties. The impressions can be a vast array of things, from suddenly being on a ledge and sensing danger, to viewing the face of someone in the park and gaining the impression they are sad or even perceiving a certain creature and assigning it to a certain kind. They are the instant thoughts that occur after perception. The vast majority of properties that are involved in our instantaneous impressions are not on the list of thin properties, such as kinds, causal properties, appraisals, and so on. With this discussion focusing on why the properties that are on the list of properties are there and are separated from the others, there ought to be a little more explanation. If the properties that feature in instantaneous

⁶⁶ This is questioned by Nanay in his 2012, 'Perceptual Phenomenology', where he argues that you can perceive actions features without perceiving low level features. I will return to this in Section 2 when I look at the Rich view versus the Thin view.

impressions are not on the list of thin properties, then this raises many questions. Whether we can have instantaneous impressions if one supports the thin view? Whether these impressions are as instantaneous as we previously thought? Whether this already seems to endorse the rich view of perception? Given that these instantaneous impressions are a common occurrence for everyone, every day, it is important to determine how exactly they occur. Looking at this problem through the lens of *on* or *off* the list gives us a framework for this discussion.

Overall, both the Rich view and the Thin view are working on the assumptions that “there are conscious aspects of seeing, and when we see things, they look a certain way. The ways they look are most naturally characterised by talking about the properties that things look to have.” (Siegel and Byrne, Rich or Thin, 2017, p. 3). They differ in the fact that the theories take different approaches as to the *range* of properties that can be presented perceptually.

Part Two- Is the Rich View True?

With this chapter most significantly focusing on whether the Rich view of perception is compatible with naïve realism, I believe that it is important to examine whether there are any reasons to accept the Rich view at all. We ought to look at the arguments suggested in support of the Rich view to determine whether we should accept it over the Thin view.

To examine this, I would like to set up an example for extended use in this section. Imagine you are shopping in a bookshop and as you walk around a corner, you see your significant other. As they notice you, their temperament changes, they become relaxed, their shoulders drop, and their smile widens. They are happy to see you. As you return their smile, they step towards you as if to begin a conversation (this example will be referred to as ‘Bookshop’ henceforth).

All of these micro-interactions are present in one’s visual perception of the scene. When speaking about this experience, we would intuitively describe this experience as one in which the partner looks happy and relaxed. Typically, we invoke such descriptions when we explain the interactions. For instance, continuing the above example, you would approach your partner happily because they look happy to you. There is a link here between our experience leading to and explaining the subsequent action.

There are two things that need explaining here. First, why are we intuitively inclined to describe the visual experience in a rich way? And second, how are we to make sense of the visual experience-to-action link, since it seems most clearly something we can make sense of in terms of rich perception explaining action?

The Rich view, somewhat obviously, can explain both of these things. They can say that we are intuitively inclined to view the visual experience in a rich way *because* we perceive rich properties as we are perceptually presented with rich properties of objects. The experience-to-action link can also be explained by rich perception. We perceive the rich properties of the scenario and respond to those properties in our actions. For example, if person A had come across a scene where a person *appears* hurt to them, A is perceiving a rich property, and as such, A might move with urgency to get to the hurt person, a scenario in which A is reacting to the content of their rich perception.

The Thin View, on the other hand, cannot give such a straightforward explanation. The only properties perceptually presented to the reader are colour, shape, and other basic visual properties of the objects. The Thin view has to offer an explanation of how one's visual experience presenting only thin properties can somehow lead someone to say that the other looks happy or hurt and lead them to act based on this.

There are a few ways in which the proponent of the Thin view can attempt to bridge this gap. The first is to attempt to identify some set of thin properties that are typically aligned with *being happy*. They can then present those properties and attribute them to a person presenting in such a way, like being happy, and say that this is what is happening in that experience. This means the Thin view can explain why, in the subject's experiences, X (the person) looks happy.

The second option for the proponent of the Thin view is to state that *looking happy* does not and cannot occur entirely in visual experience. It is only the Thin properties that are presented in visual experience, the colours, shapes and so on. Yet, none of these solutions are very convincing to those who lean towards the rich view, as it is much easier to accept that people are perceiving rich properties, and that is why people look happy or angry or hurt to one another.

Response from Thin Theorist

The first argument from the rich theorist appeals to the idea that it's correct to characterise what it's like for the perceiver in terms of rich vocabulary. There is then a further argumentative move: That the simplest explanation of this is that rich properties simply are part of the content of experience. The proponent of the rich can argue that this second argumentative move is intuitive.

We must accept the rich view because it is our intuition that says all of these features are present in our perceptual experience, the micro-interactions are all presented at a perceptual level, and as such, it is simpler to state that the rich properties are part of the content of the experience.

Yet, the proponent of the thin view can very easily respond to this. First, they can say that we use rich vocabulary to characterise the subject's perceptual experience because our characterisation of the subject's perceptual experience is *de re*. As in, 'he thinks Bruce can fit into that cape without any help!' — an ascription which can be true even if the person to whom the belief is ascribed needs to have no idea that Bruce is Batman.

For the second argumentative move, the thin theorist can say that they simply do not share this intuition. They can argue that we perceive thin properties and then add the cognition and the rich properties into our perceptual judgements, those that occur after our perceptual experiences. Or as Crutchfield explains it 'low-level theorists believe representation of high-level properties occurs at the level of perceptual judgement and is the result of cognitive

interpretation of perceptually represented low-level properties” (2012, p.280).⁶⁷ Low-level properties come in perception, and high-level ones come in the cognitive interpretation or judgment of such properties.

If we return to Bookshop, the thin theorist will say that the information we gain from our perceptual experiences is in terms of thin properties, so the colours, shapes, motion, etc, of the scenario. Then, in our perceptual judgements, we bring in rich properties, so the fact that the significant other looks happy and appears to be relaxing upon seeing you. These are all still occurring to the subject; it is just that they are occurring separately, the thin properties in the perception and the rich ones in the post-perceptual judgement. The thin theorist argues that the rich properties come into the picture through cognition, and the Rich theorist argues that we *perceive* the rich properties.

The fact that this information comes into play after perception is only a problem for the Rich theorist. For the layperson, the understanding and recognition of the rich properties occurring immediately post perception would ‘feel’ and seem the very same as perceiving the rich properties. Therefore, beyond intuition, it is the case that we do not have a clear reason to defend the Rich view as true, especially when set against the thin view.

Here it seems that we are at a stalemate, in which neither the rich view nor the thin view is more intuitive than the other, nor do we have a clear view on how it is best to describe the experience.

Arguments in favour of Rich Perception.

In this section, I move past the stalemate we left at the end of the last one and look at some further arguments that are given in favour of rich perception. The arguments I have selected share the view that there exist properties that we would class as ‘rich’ that we are able to perceive. We can expand from these that we are able to perceive other rich properties, rather than only the ones mentioned in the arguments.

The first argument comes from Scholl and Tremoulet (2000). Their argument is that certain visual displays of 2-D shapes allow for subjects to perceive the objects as having high-level properties, such as causality and animacy. They draw on Michotte’s ‘launching effect’ studies in which subjects are shown shapes moving around a large square. There is a ‘launcher’ shape that moves, makes contact with a second shape, becomes stationary, and the second object begins to move. Subjects attribute causation to the experiment: that the movement of the second shape was caused by the first. Scholl and Tremoulet argue that the interpretations are perceptual in nature because they are fast, automatic, irresistible and highly stimulus driven. They contrast this with higher level cognitive processing. This is a crucial element of this view, as they are claiming that the interpretations are perceptual because they have these features. Yet, it is not universally accepted that it is these features which make something perceptual and not cognitive. What Scholl and Tremoulet are arguing is that these experiences seem to be perceptual in nature because they are fast, automatic, and stimulus driven, despite the fact

⁶⁷ Crutchfield uses low-level properties to mean the same as thin properties and high-level properties to mean that same as rich properties.

that the subsequent impressions are often associated with cognitive processing. If one can prove that the processes are, in fact, fast, automatic, and stimulus driven cognition, then we would have to reassess. For now, it seems safe enough to take these experiences as being perceptual.

They also make clear that infants perceive causality in simple motion displays, similar to the experiment explained above, thus showing that these attributions are not a response bias. A response bias is where subjects do not respond truthfully for a variety of reasons. In this case, a response bias would be deliberately stating they perceived causality when they did not.

There are even cases where chimpanzees attribute goals to the movement of shapes. Infants and chimps would not, at least in Scholl and Tremoulet's view, have the inclination to lie about the results they are seeing. They would be classed as a more primitive subject and will be, perhaps, under less social pressure to respond the way in which they think the researcher would prefer. So, they would not manifest response bias.

The conclusion that they draw is as follows, "Such phenomena reflect primarily perceptual and perhaps modular processing, and at a minimum are very different (and can be disassociated) from high-level cognitive judgements of causality and animacy." (Scholl, Tremoulet, 2000). The phrase high-level judgements, in this context, refers to a judgement that is at a different level from perception, as opposed to sophisticated. This, therefore, is the argument that we are able to *perceive* rich properties such as causality and animacy, rather than attributing them to cognitive judgement.

The second argument comes from Butterfill in his paper 'Seeing Causings and Hearing Gestures' (2009). The basis of his argument is that seeing causation is similar to speech perception. He, as in the above argument, refers to Michotte's launching effect experiments to show that it is possible to *perceive* causation. However, he links this to speech perception, explaining that when we encounter speech, we hear not *only* sounds but gestures (Motor theory of speech perception). We do not pick out specific sounds but rather the "intended phonic gesture of the speaker" (Butterfill, 2009). This pattern of heightened discrimination, of the phonic sounds, is a defining characteristic of categorical perception. In this paper, categorical perception is characterised as the ability to distinguish stimuli, which is contrasted with how stimuli appear to perceivers.

He goes on to state that causal perception also exhibits these key features of categorical perception. In causal perception, there are fine-grained discriminations of causal aspects and a sensitivity to features of stimuli which are characteristic of categorical perception. In addition to these similarities, shape and speech perception differ in regard to awareness and introspection in the same way that causal perception differs from shape perception in regard to awareness and introspection. Thus, Butterfill's argument is that *we can* perceive causation, a rich property, but that it differs from basic object perception and is more akin to speech perception. This is due to its differing from basic perceptions, like shape perception, with respect to how such perceptions relate to awareness and introspection. He argues that "introspection tells us nothing about what we perceive when we perceive speech; certainly, it has no bearing on conflicts about the objects of speech perception." (Butterfill, 2009, p.424). This is linked to causal perception, in that "discerning the objects of causal perception

depends on careful investigation of the conditions under which they occur and the reasons why they occur under these conditions. Introspection is inessential.” (Butterfill, 2009, p.424). So, causal perception is more akin to speech perception than it is to shape perception. But it is still a form of *perception*.

What can the thin theorist say in response to both of these arguments? They can say that what is happening in these experiments does not constitute perception of rich properties. They both require us to accept a certain characterisation of what perception is; in Scholl and Tremoulet’s account, it is ‘fast, automatic, and stimulus driven’, and for Butterfill, it is a ‘pattern of heightened discrimination’. As such, the thin theorist can simply argue that neither of the definitions constitutes perception. So, the rich properties are not coming in at the level of perception, rather, they could actually be occurring post perceptually. For both arguments and the reliance on Michotte’s launching effects, it is the case that the subjects are seeing the movement of the shapes and later attributing causality to them. It could be some sort of inference of the existence of causality in these inanimate objects.

Does this mean that we have no empirical evidence in support of the rich view? No. Whilst the thin theorist may disagree with the way that Scholl, Tremoulet and Butterfill have presented perception, the results of Michotte’s launching effects experiment are not to be understood as some high-level post perceptual processing. Scholl and Tremoulet, in their article, suggest that we ought to appeal to modularity to explain why the assessments of causality are perceptual. They explain that the phenomena of perceptual causality and animacy exhibit signs of modularity that is associated with perception. This is because they “are domain specific by definition, in that they result in specific causal and intentional interpretations (i.e. they give rise to only a few qualitatively separate types of percepts). They are also entirely visual phenomena (though it is an interesting question whether similar effects might be observable in other modalities).” (2000, p.306). This, combined with the immediacy or automaticity of recognising the causality, gives good reason to believe that the judgements of causality and animacy are perceptual. They are suggesting that modularity plus speed equals perception. As such, the thin theorist would need to explicitly explain why this process is cognitive rather than perceptual, which is not the case currently. As such, we can claim that the empirical cases above support the idea of rich perception.

So, both of these arguments support the view that the Rich view is true. Scholl and Tremoulet, and Butterfill show that we can perceive some rich properties. Hence, I agree with and support their arguments. However, I do not think that these arguments are powerful enough for the purpose of making Rich Perception a widely accepted perceptual phenomenon.

This is because when one thinks of Rich perception, we might imagine scenarios like the ones given, in which we see a loved one looking happy in a bookshop, or we perceive the object we are about to sit on as a ‘chair’. This kind of rich perception is not covered by the arguments given above on causation. So, whilst we have argued that the rich view is true, our intuitions about rich perception remain unexplained.

I believe that this means there is still more work to be done in broadening the arguments that are in favour of the rich view. We cannot just stop at arguing it to be true, but limited to certain

empirical cases, we ought to have a more generalised argument for rich perception, in which we show that there are many rich properties that could be perceived.

Phenomenal Contrast Arguments

So, we need to examine an argument that has a more general approach to Rich perception. An example of such an argument is the ‘Phenomenal Contrast Argument’ (PCA), which originated from Siegel in her 2010 work, ‘The Contents of Visual Experience’. In its most basic form, the argument states that certain cognitive features contribute to the phenomenal character of our experiences (Jorba, Vicente, 2019). In order to show this, PCAs typically use a thought experiment that goes as follows: Subjects are presented with two scenarios that are alike in all aspects except one. The experimenters will request that the subjects imagine being in the first scenario and then imagine being in the second one. The subjects are then “invited to acknowledge that there is a phenomenal contrast when they move from the first to the second scenario.” (Jorba, Vicente, 2019, p.1). The argument is then that since the two scenarios differ in only one element, then this phenomenal contrast is accounted for by this one element, and that specific element is contributing to the phenomenal character of the experience.

To relate PCA’s to the rich view, we need to focus on this phenomenal contrast. To prove the rich view true, we need to find *one example* of a phenomenal contrast that can be explained by the Rich view.⁶⁸ Siegel herself states, “Not every phenomenal contrast is best explained by the Rich View. Many will be explained by changes in thin properties. But to argue successfully for the Rich View, all it takes is one phenomenal contrast that the Rich View best explains.” (2016, p.13). Whilst this may seem similarly limited in scope for an argument for the rich view, as the previous one which I criticised, it is not quite the same. Siegel here is stating that some phenomenal contrast cases are best explained by the rich view, whilst some may not be. However, this does *not* limit the type of rich properties that can be perceived. Any rich property could be the focus of a case of phenomenal contrast and best explained by the rich view. So, whilst there are limitations to the PCA’s, is it not limited for the purposes of being a more generalised argument for the rich view.

Let us talk through an example of an experience with phenomenal contrast. We are to imagine two subjects looking at *exactly the same stimulus*. So, for instance, take a child who has not learned about emotions and an adult who knows all about emotions. They are looking at literally the same face displaying the same emotion, whether that is sadness, joy, fear or so on. The exact emotion is not significant for this scenario. There will be a phenomenal contrast in their experiences. The way the experience is for the child, who doesn’t comprehend emotions will differ from the adult’s experience, who can know and understand what emotion is being portrayed by the face. Why is that? Siegel argues that there is a difference in rich perception. One perceives the face as happy, the other cannot do that, as they are not equipped to engage in rich perception of the specific rich property of ‘looking happy’. If the child has not learned about emotions and how they are linked to certain facial expressions, then they cannot

⁶⁸ One might worry that if we are only looking for one example of a phenomenal contrast then PCAs would suffer with the same issue I presented for the previous Rich View arguments. However, a phenomenal contrast is not tied to one specific property, rather it indicates that any rich property can be the cause of a difference in phenomenal character. Thus, it does not pose the same issue.

perceive the face as happy, which is a rich property. Thus, it is the rich properties that are being perceived that are the constituents of the phenomenal contrast.

To put this in a different way, in this scenario, there is a phenomenal contrast. This is explained by a representational difference: the adult can represent emotions where the child cannot. This representational difference is in perception as the adult represents the emotion *perceptually*.⁶⁹ This, therefore, leaves us with the rich view that the adult has perceived richly. This is just one example of how Phenomenal Contrast Arguments can be used to support the Rich view of perception.

A second example of using this kind of thinking to support the perception of Rich properties can be seen in the paper “The Contents of Visual Experience” by Siegel.⁷⁰ This example also focuses on a person’s recognitional capacities, and it goes as follows “Suppose you have never seen a pine tree before and are hired to cut down all the pine trees in a grove containing trees of many different sorts. Someone points out to you which of the trees are pine trees. Some weeks pass, and your disposition to distinguish the pine trees from the others improves. Eventually, you can spot the pine trees immediately: they become visually salient to you. Like the recognitional disposition you gain, the salience of the trees emerges gradually. Gaining this recognitional disposition is reflected in a phenomenological difference between the visual experiences had before and those had after the recognitional disposition was fully developed.” (Siegel, 2011, p.100-101).

As one can see, Siegel’s example is of the same form as the one above, in which the gaining of the ‘recognitional disposition’ has an effect on one’s perceptual and the phenomenal character of said experience. Now, when the subject is perceiving the tree, they are being presented with the property of *being a pine tree* and perceive it as such. This changes the type of experience they are having and given that the only change is the subject learning to recognise a pine tree, it must be that recognition that changes the character of the experience. Dowty (1979), explains this type of cognition as ‘achievements’ which are “near-instantaneous events that are over as soon as they have begun” which include concepts such as spotting, noticing, finding, and so on (Jorba, Vicente, 2019). It is thought that there is some phenomenology associated with these achievements, and in particular, the mental achievements. It is, therefore, the gaining of these ‘achievements’ that explains the difference in character between the two experiences.⁷¹

There are, however, some counterarguments to PCAs, as not everyone believes that cases like these occur in the way that Siegel and others present. Let us take Brogaard in her paper ‘Do we perceive natural kind properties?’ (2013). In this paper, she characterises the argument from phenomenal contrast as follows,

⁶⁹ This is something that Siegel supports as an inference to the best explanation.

⁷⁰ In this book, Siegel uses the phrases ‘High-level properties’ and ‘Kind Perception’ and the ‘Rich Content view’ to denote the same kind of arguments as the Rich view.

⁷¹ I would say that recognition is an ‘achievement’ as it is similar to the examples listed and it is a near-instantaneous event.

“1) The overall phenomenology of which the phenomenology of E1 is a part differs from the overall phenomenology of which the phenomenology of E2 is a part.

(2) If the overall phenomenology of which the phenomenology of E1 is a part differs from the overall phenomenology of which the phenomenology of E2 is a part, then there is a phenomenological difference between E1 and E2.

(3) If there is a phenomenological difference between E1 and E2, then E1 and E2 differ in content.

(4) If there is a difference in content between E1 and E2, it is a difference with respect to K-properties represented in E1 and E2.” (Brogaard, 2013, p.36)⁷²

Brogaard argues that there are plausible ways that one can question the soundness of this argument. I will explore some of these now.

One objection that Brogaard gives is to deny that “familiarity effects make a difference to the experiential content of perceptual experience but grant that it makes a difference to states of seemings” (Brogaard, 2012, p.37). Familiarity effects are the observable effects, here specifically on perception, that come from the subject being familiar with the object. For instance, words that are familiar to people have a lower recognition threshold than those that are not (Solomon and Postman, 1952) and Gollin (1960) showed that “training and familiarization of object images can improve participants’ recognition of line drawings in which the line segments delineating the object are fragmented” (Yang et al, 2023).

Perceptual states are different kinds of mental states from seemings. For instance, my perceptual experience could show me one hundred seats in a lecture theatre even though it does not *seem* to me that the room could hold that many people.

Brogaard argues that in the case of the expert and novice (Siegel’s pine tree example), it is not a difference in experiential content but is actually a difference in how the content of the experience *seems* to the subject. As she explains it, “to the expert, the tree visually seems to be an Elm, it visually seems familiar, and it visually seems different from the nearly identical neighbouring tree, which is not an Elm. To the novice, the tree just seems to be a tree, it doesn’t seem familiar, and it seems exactly similar to the neighbouring tree.” (Brogaard, 2012, p.37). This is why there is a difference in the phenomenology of the experiences, because of the way they seem to each subject, when the perceptual experience is the exact same.

⁷² I have removed some of Brogaard’s additional terminology, as I do not utilise it and it is not necessary for the subsequent discussion.

This is in reference to Premise 2 of her argument, “(2) If the overall phenomenology of which the phenomenology of E1 is a part differs from the overall phenomenology of which the phenomenology of E2 is a part, then there is a phenomenological difference between E1 and E2.” The phenomenology of the novice’s experience and the expert’s experience is different because of how the object seems to each of them.

However, I am not sure that I am convinced that it is only a difference in seemings in these experiences. In the tree example, I can concede that if we accept Brogaard’s view, then it is correct to say that the experiences of the trees seem different to the subject. But I would argue that there is also a difference in the content of the experience. The expert perceives the tree as an Elm, with the distinct features of an elm (oval leaves and hairy twigs).⁷³ This is different from the novice perceiving the tree just *as a tree*, as they will not necessarily take note of these individual features. The content is different because the expert is familiar with what they are perceiving, not just the way that the tree seems to them. The content here is more significant than seemings.

Additionally, I want to question the contrast between perception and seemings. Are seemings not simply a perceptual judgement of the scene in front of the subject? Something *seeming* familiar strikes me as a recognitional capacity applied to a perception. In this paper, Brogaard does not expand on how states of seemings are different to perceptions, only arguing that they can explain the difference in phenomenology. Given this, I am not inclined to agree that there is any distinct element of a state of seeming that is not captured by perception. As such, I do not believe that this element of Brogaard’s response to PCAs disproves the view that rich properties explain the difference in phenomenology.

Overall, whilst this is an interesting counterargument to PCAs, it is not the case that they present PCAs to be unsound. The best way to explain the difference in phenomenal character is to show that there is a difference in content and the properties that are presented to the subject.

Given the arguments I have presented in support of Phenomenal Contrast Arguments, I say that it is, therefore, the strongest argument in favour of the rich view. This is not only because of these arguments, but also because they do not suggest the rich view is true of only one property. PCAs do not *explicitly* show that a full array of rich properties are perceptible, but states that any rich property could be the focus of a case of phenomenal contrast and best explained by the rich view.

Cognitive Penetration

Despite all of my argumentation in the above section, there is still a potential reason to reject the Rich view. This is because it may require cognitive penetration. As presented in the previous chapter, cognitive penetration is the idea that beliefs, memories, and other attitudes

⁷³ Siegel mentions Pine Trees and Brogaard uses Elm, but the essence of the argument remains the same.

are able to alter how things appear to a subject in perceptual experiences. They exert a constitutive influence over the content of experience. There are a few ways we can illustrate the intricacies of cognitive penetration within the debate on rich vs thin.

One way to illustrate cognitive penetration is to use empirical work. Take the following case, for instance, which comes from the work of Delk and Fillenbaum, in their paper, 'Differences in perceived color as a function of characteristic color.' (1965), where they discuss a case of cognitive penetration involving colour perception. The case is one in which the subject's beliefs regarding the typical colours of objects have an effect on how the subjects experience the colour of those objects. The experiment was thus, the subjects were given small paper shapes, all cut out from the same orange piece of paper. The shapes included those such as ovals, circles, and squares, *but* they also contained shapes that are characteristically red, like hearts and lips. The shapes were then placed in front of a coloured background, one that could be altered from yellow to red. The subjects were then told that they must tell the 'experimenter' to alter the colour of the background until it matched the colour of the paper shapes, and the shapes could not be distinguished from the background. When the paper shapes were those of typically red objects, the subjects changed the background colour to be redder than the colour they chose for the other shapes, which was more yellow than red. The experimenters stated that "One is led to the conclusion that past association of color and form does in some way influence perceived color, since that is the one respect in which the figures did clearly differ." (Delk and Fillenbaum, 1965, p.293).

In short, when the paper shapes were of objects that are characteristically red, the subjects made the background look redder than they did for the shapes that do not have a colour associated with them, like squares and circles. Macpherson argues that this is a case of cognitive penetration, as she says, "what is happening is that the subjects' beliefs, that certain of the cut-out shapes were shapes of objects that were characteristically red, penetrated their perceptual experience of those cut-out shapes, thereby altering the content and phenomenal character of those experiences." (Macpherson, 2012, p. 39). This is because the subjects' previous experiences of colours *only* seemed to interfere when the cut-outs were of objects that are characteristically red, and they were accurate when it came to matching the other paper shapes to the background colour. Macpherson focuses her argument on showing that this case cannot be explained away by indicating an error on behalf of the subject.

However, this case of cognitive penetration is one of a *thin* property, it showcases colour perception. So, whilst it is a good illustration of a real case of cognitive penetration, it does not present a clear link between cognitive penetration and rich perception. To do this, we need to find another case of cognitive penetration involving a rich property.

There can be cases of cognitive penetration that make reference to rich properties. I will give an example of these types of cases.

On Sunday, Sam woke up and realised he had forgotten to message Mitch back the night before. Due to this, Sam believes that Mitch will be angry at him when Mitch arrives at Sam's house that afternoon. A few hours later, Mitch arrives at Sam's house and in Sam's opinion, based on his perception, he looks angry. In fact, Mitch is not angry and does not wear an angry expression.

This constitutes an example of cognitive penetration of rich properties, as Sam's prior belief about Mitch's emotions have *penetrated* his perceptual experience, causing Mitch to look angry to him. This is despite Mitch not being angry at all, and him having a different facial expression than the one that Sam perceived. The rich property that we are referring to here is facial expression recognition. The rich property of 'an angry face' is being presented to Sam in his perceptual experience partly because of his beliefs about the situation. This shows that cognitive penetration can occur in the presentation of both rich and thin properties.

Not only can we have cases of cognitive penetration involving rich perception, but some would also argue that either the only way, or the most prominent way to perceive rich properties is to do so via cognitive penetration. The idea that elements of our cognition have penetrated our experience seems to naturally explain how we might perceive rich properties.

However, not everyone believes that cognitive penetration of perceptual experiences is possible, or at least possible in the way that is required in order for people to be able to perceive richly via cognitive penetration. This is a problem for the proponents of the Rich view that requires cognitive penetration.

Some argue that cognitive penetration does not occur at all. Let us take the following case. It goes as such: I want a cup of tea, and I believe that there is tea in the cupboard. This desire and belief motivate me to go to the cupboard and make a cup of tea, and as a result, I have a pleasant perceptual experience of tea. My beliefs and desires have influenced my perception, but they have not cognitively penetrated the perception. Most people accept these types of cases. However, those who do not accept cognitive penetration would resist a more direct link between cognition and perception. They would claim that in my perceptual experience, the way the tea tasted or looked, would be the same regardless of my beliefs about tea in general or that specific cup of tea. They would strongly resist a case that goes as such: I believe that my teabags have been stored with my chocolate (even if they have not), and as a result, when I go to drink my tea, it tastes like chocolate. Whereas, if I did not have the belief about the tea's storage place, I would not have tasted chocolate. This prior belief has influenced my perceptual experience of the tea.⁷⁴ Yet, some would disagree and have to offer an alternative explanation to this phenomenon and as to why my tea tastes of chocolate.

Those who reject cognitive penetration could argue that recognition of a concept sometimes can come with additional information. Take the empirical case above, for instance, regarding the various shapes and their colouring. Some suggest that it is not a case in which the subject's perception has been cognitively penetrated, but that the subjects had been "conditioned to respond to the recognition of certain shapes, and that such response occurred independently of the intervention of any cognitive feature about the object of perception" (Crutchfield, 2011, p.287). So, the subjects have learnt to link the shape of lips with the colour red, triggering an experience in which they recognise the shape as lips and thus experience them as red. There is no cognitive state that has caused this, and thus no cognitive penetration. This can be supported by empirical evidence and studies on the effects of

⁷⁴ This section has been influenced by the example provided by Stokes in his paper, 'Cognitive Penetrability of Perception' (2013), page 3 and was used to illustrate CP in chapter three of this thesis.

learning on perception. People who study and are able to notice patterns and intricacies that others cannot notice, such as birdwatchers, pathologists or expert video gamers, have not “learned a ‘way of seeing’, as such, but rather some combination of task relevant mnemonic skill with a knowledge of where to direct attention” (Pylyshyn, 1999, p.358-359). So, pathologists know where to look to detect injuries and are able to notice smaller details than a layperson would, by looking at the same body. These are not cases of cognitive penetration, the pathologist’s knowledge of the way a body looks, has not penetrated their experience and allowed them to see a cause of death. For instance, they have simply learnt to notice patterns and direct attention to those areas. Their perceptual experience is the same as that of the laypersons.

So, they argue that there are ways in which cognition can have an effect on perception, in ways that do not alter it. They may mimic experiences that we normally associate with cognitive penetration, but they are different. Yet, this explanation does not seem to address some of the cases we have discussed. In fact, the discussion of ‘noticing’ and ‘gaining recognition’ strikes me as things we would put on the list of cognitive influences that are not cognitive penetration, such as directing attention. If I know to direct my attention to the wings of certain birds in order to identify them, that is not cognition altering my perceptual experience, I am actively choosing where to direct my attention. Thus, even if we accept cognitive penetration, this will not count as an example. So, what does this mean for rich perception?

First, as can be seen in the ‘facial expression’ example, cognitive penetration is not limited to thin properties. We may primarily view it through thin properties, like colour and shape, mainly because they are the properties utilised in many empirical experiments, but we can have cases of cognitive penetration of rich properties. Second, it does seem to show that cognitive penetration is quite significant for rich perception. The perception of rich properties is tied to cognition, and most of the examples that I have given in this chapter, could be the result of cognitive penetration, be it perceiving your significant other as happy, or perceiving an object as an ‘apple’. It has not been determined that cognitive penetration is required for us to perceive richly, but that they are very significantly linked. Thirdly, the argument against cognitive penetration centres on recognitional capacity and concept linking, which do not disprove the occurrence of cognitive penetration, but just seem to present it in a different way. If some element of cognition is a direct constitutive influence on the experience itself, then it is cognitive penetration. This means that rich perception, if it does require some intervention from cognition, will occur via cognitive penetration.

So, from this discussion, we can understand the following idea. It seems to be the case that rich perception is significantly linked to cognitive penetration, so much so that cognitive penetration is the most natural way of explaining how rich perception is possible.

The people who do not accept that cognitive penetration occurs will also have difficulty accepting that rich perception occurs, due to this link.

They can, as can be seen, argue that what we believe is cognitive penetration is actually just our cognitive abilities ‘adjusting’ or ‘linking’ within our perceptions rather than altering them. Yet, I have attempted to show that this is not a convincing argument. Of course, if we can have an account of Rich perception that does not require cognitive penetration, then this opposition

to Rich perception does not work. This raises an important question: can we perceive richly without cognitive penetration?

Rich Perception without Cognitive Penetration

Given the dissenting opinions on cognitive penetration, whether it occurs, whether it occurs in the necessary ways for rich perception, or whether rich properties can be cognitively penetrated, it is important to examine whether there is another option for the proponent of the rich view.

This option is to propose that you can have rich perception without cognitive penetration. This is a difficult task, as in the prior section, I claimed that rich perception and cognitive penetration are significantly linked and that many of the examples of rich perception that we imagine require some form of cognitive penetration. The task here, then, is to offer an example of a subject perceiving a rich property without them having been penetrated by their cognitive states.

There are a few arguments which seem to present such cases. The first utilises the case of young children having the capacity for face perception, and how this capacity is hardwired into humans, rather than the result of cognitive penetration. A second argument in favour of rich perception without cognitive penetration comes from a known illusion. It utilised ventriloquism, which occurs when one misperceives where the sounds are coming from, you see the sounds as coming from the puppet's mouth rather than the ventriloquists. Yet, this effect occurs, of seeing the sounds come from the puppet, even when you are aware that puppets do not produce sounds. The argument is, therefore, that “the experience is not cognitively penetrated by your knowledge that the puppet isn’t producing speech, but relatively high-level properties (viz., semantic properties) could nonetheless be presented in the experience. (Brogaard, Chomanski, 2015, section 4). The audience member is perceiving high-level, or rich, properties in a scenario that is not cognitively penetrated.

If we accept this as a case in which we can have a perception of properties that do not feature on the thin list, occurring without cognitive penetration, then there is all the more reason to support the rich view. If cognitive penetration is not *necessary* for rich perception, then even those who reject cognitive penetration can accept the rich view.

Part Three- Compatibility between Rich Perception and Naïve Realism

In this section, I explore the compatibility between naïve realism and rich perception. I do this by looking at both logical compatibility and a more general sense of compatibility. The section ends with an exploration as to whether we are able to provide a naïve realist account of rich perception.

Metaphysical Compatibility

There are a few ways to examine the compatibility of the Rich view and naïve realism. The first is to do so in a strictly metaphysical sense. Do any of the key elements of naïve realism raise logical issues with the key aspects of the Rich view?

To recapitulate what was explained in the previous section, the three main ideas of naïve realism are, that perception is a relation, that it is of mind-independent ordinary objects and that these objects play a constitutive role in the character of the perceptual experience.

It is important to note that, despite there being variations in Rich perception, whether it involves cognitive penetration or not, I am going to be addressing them both together.⁷⁵

The Rich view argues that in our perceptual experiences, we perceive the rich properties rather than just the thin ones such as colour, shapes, and motion. In most versions of the view, this is due to the inclusion of some form of cognition.⁷⁶ An example of a case of rich perception that involves cognitive penetration is the one regarding tea and chocolate, which was mentioned earlier in the cognitive penetration section.

None of these aspects are incompatible with the three core commitments of naïve realism. We are still in a relation with the objects of our experience, the objects are still ordinary and mind-independent, *and* the objects play a constitutive role in the character of our experience. Even in the cases where the experience has been altered, it is still the object that is at the centre of the character of experience. For instance, returning to the tea example, it is still our perception of tea that makes our experience the way that it is.⁷⁷ So, there is nothing that is fundamental to the idea of rich perception that involves cognitive penetration that is logically incompatible with naïve realism. This is evidenced further by my arguments on cognitive penetration in the previous chapter, where I argued that a naïve realist can explain cognitive penetration by using the *way of perceiving* framework.

I want to go a little deeper in this logical compatibility examination and look at the *objects* of perception. By the phrase ‘objects of perception’, the naïve realist can mean a broad range of things, entities that we can perceive, or which can be presented, including properties. The compatibility issue lies in the idea of perceiving or being presented with rich properties. Does that pose a logical incompatibility? It does not seem so. As long as the rich property counts as a mind-independent, character-shaping object, which it does. When perceiving an apple, if we perceive its rich property of ‘being an apple’, then the apple is still a mind-independent object, and the rich property is shaping the character of the experience. It is the same as the perception of thin properties.

So, it would seem that we have our answer to this whole discussion. Rich perception *is* compatible with naïve realism. Yet, this is a little hasty of a conclusion.

Whilst there is nothing that is incompatible with the core tenets of naïve realism, meaning that there is compatibility in the strict logical sense, there are still concerns regarding the broader

⁷⁵ If it is framed in a way that separates the versions, there is a risk of my discussion becoming less about the compatibility between Rich perception and naïve realism, but rather more about the compatibility between cognitive penetration and naïve realism.

⁷⁶ This is questioned by Nanay in his defence of the Rich view, as was previously mentioned.

⁷⁷ Perception here referring to the gustatory experience rather than a visual one. This should be noted as so much of philosophy of perception only uses vision when examining perceptual experience, whereas in this discussion all sense perception is significant.

sense of compatibility. For instance, does the perception of something as having a rich property bring representation with it? If it does and brings with it a view that makes experience fundamentally representational, then this is a problem for naïve realists, whose theory is non-representationalist, at least in the fundamental sense. Much of the discussion of the rich view and defences of rich perception, including Siegel, are framed in terms of content and representation. The Phenomenal Contrast Argument, which I have argued is the best support for rich perception, focuses on the contents of the experiences.

Representation is the dominant framework for supporting the rich view. So, we find ourselves in the position of establishing whether rich perception, as understood in the dominant framework, can be compatible with naïve realism.

What does a naïve realist account of Rich Perception look like?

Before we get into the more general compatibility issues between naïve realism and the rich view, and look more deeply at the representation issue, I want to look at whether we can provide a naïve realist account of rich perception.

One potential account of naïve realism that accounts for Rich Perception is from Brewer, in his paper “Attention and Direct realism” (2013). In the penultimate paragraph of the paper, Brewer discusses the character of experience, where he states, “So there are multiple cross-cutting layers in the rich and nuanced ‘phenomenological character of experience’”. This suggests that the character of experience is not just the ‘thin’ layer but, in fact, has multiple layers to it, including the ‘thick’ layer. He also suggests that we move away from a “monolithic phenomenological character of experience”, indicating that perceptual experience has a broad phenomenological character, some of it being rich and some of it being thin.

Brewer explains that object, *O* ‘thinly’ look *F* when *O* is the “direct object of a visual experience from a point of view and in circumstances relative to which *O* has visually relevant similarities with paradigm exemplars of *F*” (Brewer, 2011, page 24). In other words, an object appears the way it does to the subject when that object is similar to a paradigm case of that object (or property of that object). For instance, an apple thinly looks red if it is visually similar to paradigm examples of objects which are ‘red’.

An object thickly looks *F*, if the subject recognises *O* as *F*, or “registers its visually relevant similarities with paradigm exemplars of *F* in an active application of that very concept” (Brewer, 2011, page 24). The key element here is the ‘active application of the concept’, as this is where it differs from thin looks. Thus, one can experience a property *thickly* when one recognises it as possessing that property or actively incorporates the particular object presented in one’s perceptual experience with the concept (of the property). This is due to its similarities to the paradigm cases that are entrenched in one’s understanding of the concept. For instance, I experience a red apple thickly if I recognise it as an apple or actively link it to exemplars of the concept of apple, on the basis of its thinly looking red and round. This is an example of rich perception under Brewer’s account.

Yet, I am not necessarily convinced by this. Brewer’s account, whilst stating that there are layers to the phenomenological character of experience, does not elaborate on whether these

are layers of perceptual experience. What does Brewer mean by multi-layered phenomenology? It is not wholly clear. He is using this phrase to show that there are a “variety of truths about the way things look” and that maybe a monolithic view of the phenomenological character ought to be abolished. (2013, p. 15). Brewer’s remarks here are ambiguous. It could be that he is rejecting the monolithic view because he thinks that *perceptual phenomenology* itself can spread across different layers (rich, thin, conceptual, nonconceptual). Or it could be that he is rejecting it because the overall phenomenology that is associated with perceptual experience has a pure *perceptual* side (thin) and a cognitive side (thick/rich). If it is the second option, then Brewer’s view is not one of rich perception but a cognitive view; that rich properties may enter entirely in the cognitive side, and not in perceptual phenomenology proper. As I have said, it’s ambiguous which way Brewer may fall.

So, it is not clear from Brewer’s thick view that the rich properties come into the equation at the level of perception. Given what he says on this, it could be that there are non-perceptual cognitive layers in the phenomenology, and the thick looks are post-perceptual layers of cognitive phenomenology. In other words, it could be that Brewer’s view is the thin view; that we perceive thin properties and then the rich properties come in at a cognitive level. So, this is not necessarily a naïve realist account of rich perception at all.

Is there a naïve realist account that brings in the rich properties at a perceptual level? We could have Brewer’s view if we can disambiguate it and specify that rich looks are, in fact, part of perceptual phenomenology. Yet, there is another option that does not require any disambiguation. My naïve realist account of rich perception.

I argue that when one perceives richly, i.e. they are perceiving a rich property, they do so because they are in an acquaintance relation with the rich property they are perceiving. The subject is acquainted with the rich properties. In object perception, they are acquainted with the object and its rich properties. In this kind of perception, the object and its properties are constitutive of the phenomenal character of that perceptual experience.

To offer an example, when one perceives an object ‘as an apple’ it is because they are in acquaintance with the apple-ness of the object, and it is that which is constitutive of the phenomenal character of the experience.

Some may object and state that there must be some phenomenological difference in the way that we perceive rich properties as opposed to thin properties, perhaps referencing the idea from Hume (1739–40/1978), that when we introspect, we find thin perceptual properties in all experiences. He states, “when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception” (T 1.4.6.1, SBN 251).

However, I disagree. My argument is that the naïve realist can use the same mechanism, acquaintance, to explain all types of perception. The rich properties behave in the same way that the thin properties do; they are what the subject is in an acquaintance relation with. Thin and rich properties both are constitutive of the character of the perceptual experience, *and* during introspection, the subject would find either or both of them. In my view, there is no

phenomenological difference between perceiving rich properties and perceiving thin properties.

However, there still may be some disagreement. One might think that all rich properties are transparent to thin properties, so there must be a difference in how we perceive them. It rests on the belief that thin properties are more foundational than rich ones. When we perceive a patch of grass as 'grass' that experience is reducible to its thin properties of greenness and rectangular shape.

Yet, that view does not seem to cover all that we refer to as rich properties. As the beginning of this chapter, I set out a list including all the things we may think are the rich properties of perception. This included *affordances*, which are opportunities for certain actions that are provided by the environment of the entity; descriptions such as stretchability, edibility, flexibility and so on. This is supported by Nanay (2011), "it is enough to note that some of the action-properties that are perceptually represented are properties like being edible, climbable or Q-able in general" (p.8), where q-able is indicative of this kind of affordance property.

It seems that this type of property is not obviously reducible to a thin property. My perception of an apple as edible does not obviously reduce to its thin properties of redness and roundness. During introspection, we would still 'see' the property of being edible. As such, when we introspect on a perceptual experience in which we perceived an affordance property, it is not transparent to its thin properties.

As such, if we can accept that there are some rich properties that are not transparent to thin properties, like in the case of affordances, *and* given that I argued that the very same mechanism is used to perceive both rich and thin properties, then it seems plausible to argue that all cases of perception are phenomenologically the same.

Better than Brewer?

But how is this more of a naïve realist account of rich perception than Brewer's?

My acquaintance account makes explicit that the rich properties in the experience are at the perceptual level. The subject is perceiving rich properties. There is no potential for it to be misconstrued as claiming that rich properties enter into experience at a non-perceptual cognitive level only, like in one interpretation of Brewer's thick looks view.

I would argue that my naïve realist view is preferable because it is the same account of perception that is given for thin perception. It is the same for all perceptions. The more general naïve realist view that I subscribe to is that during a perceptual experience, the subject is in a relation to a mind-independent object, and that object is, at least in part, constitutive of the phenomenal character of that experience. It seems to me that it is better to have a unified view of all types of perception. Therefore, because of the view that I hold for thin perception, it makes sense to hold that same view for rich perception.

Of course, at this point, one may have concerns about my ‘acquaintance’ account of the rich view, and how it seems to require cognitive penetration and, therefore, representation. This is what the next section will address, the more general compatibility issues.

Wider Compatibility Questions

Does holding this account mean that we have resolved the compatibility issues? Not quite, whilst we have determined that there can be naïve realist accounts of rich perception, so there is no strict logical incompatibility, there are still some more general questions to discuss. In the following section, I look at some of these more general questions whilst explaining and defending my naïve realist view of rich perception.

The first potential problem for compatibility between the two theories rests on the idea of instantaneous impressions. Can rich perceptions, given that they all involve some sort of cognition, be instantaneous, like we believe perception to be? In the standard naïve realist view, perception is an acquaintance with a mind-independent ordinary object. When looking at it alongside the Rich view, there is an additional component of the perceptual process, in which, some element of cognition is employed. So, in the prior example of perceiving an apple, in the first instance of the perception, the subject is consciously acquainted with a red, round object, but, in the same instance of perception, also perceives the object as an apple. This all has to happen in the split second of perception, rather than the perception occurring and then the recognition following, as is the case in thin perception. Yet, whilst, yes, we can say that in a Rich perception, there is an additional component in the perceptual process, this does not have to be a temporal step. It is just part of the process that results in a rich perception.

When examining this issue through the lens of naïve realism, it is not a theory that places time restrictions on a perceptual experience being caused, nor, as far as I am aware, do the other theories of perception. Instantaneous is somewhat of a vague term, especially when being applied to concepts such as perception. There is no set time that a perception must keep to, to be classed as instantaneous, and in rich perceptions, these cognitive abilities can also be varied. When subject A perceives an apple, it may only take 0.1 seconds for them to recognise the object as an apple, *whereas* for subject B, it could take 1.5 seconds. These could both be classed as instantaneous because they both happen in the same instance of perception, locking eyes on an apple, despite their recognitional capacities differing in how quickly they are applied. This still means that in examples where people have instantaneous impressions from their perceptual experience, they have done so through perception and not a separate cognitive experience.

As I have argued, rich perception is an acquaintance with the rich properties of an object. Being in this acquaintance relation is equally as instantaneous as being in an acquaintance relation with thin properties. As such, we can still maintain that both types of perceptions listed here are instantaneous.

Representation

A more significant problem for the compatibility of naïve realism and the rich view is that the introduction of cognition brings with it representation.

If we accept that the rich view is true, then during perception, we are acquainted with the rich properties of objects. Thus, when perceiving an object such as a bookcase, we perceive the rich property of ‘being a bookcase’. However, the perception of a rich property brings with it some form of representation, the representation of the bookcase, for instance. This representation must occur within the perception, as I have argued that the subject is perceptually acquainted with the rich properties of the object.

Naïve realism is a theory that *does not* involve representations, at least at a fundamental level, as we can see from the first chapter of this thesis. According to the naïve realist, in its most basic form, perception involves the subject and their relation to the object.⁷⁸ So, how can the rich view be compatible with naïve realism if it requires representation to be a part of perception? This is an issue across different fields of perception, some of which can be seen in Ivanov (2017), Byrne and Green (2023) and Pautz (2007).

This is not as significant a problem for us as we first thought, however. I have argued that the naïve realist view of rich perception is to say that the subject is in an acquaintance relation with the rich property. For instance, when I richly perceive an apple, I am acquainted with the *apple-ness* of the apple. As such, the richness in an experience comes from the *rich property* being in the perception. So, the naïve realist does not need to appeal to representation to account for the richness of the experience.

Why might people say that the naïve realist does need representation in rich perception? Perhaps one would claim that we cannot be acquainted with apple-ness without having a concept of an apple. We must be able to represent apples or recognise apples to be acquainted with apple-ness. Yet, this does not mean that this representation structures the experience or has to be an aspect of how one experiences. The representation here can simply be a background condition of the perception. This can be linked to a discussion in the literature on conceptual vs nonconceptual perceptions.

The epistemic conception of the distinction between conceptual and nonconceptual content, found in Crane (1992, p.140), is explained as “the guiding intuition is that even when the content of a given state is (or can only be) specified by means of concepts, this state would still count as nonconceptually contentful if it turned out that one need not possess these concepts in order to be in this state” (Laurier, 2005, p.7). The view seeks to address the question of whether concepts must be in the state of perception or is it *merely* that they must be possessed in order to have certain perceptions. Whilst my discussion does not look at this kind of discussion, it does mirror the idea that representations need not be *in* the perceptual experience but can still be included in that possession of them is a background condition of the perception.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ There are now many different versions of naïve realism that include additional elements in a perception, for instance, the way in which the object is perceived or the internal features of the subject. I have argued that the optimal version of naïve realism includes a form of a way of perceiving.

⁷⁹ This does not affect my view that we are acquainted with rich properties in the same way that we are with thin properties. Representation being a background condition here behaves in a similar fashion to noise levels being a background condition when looking at a predominantly visual perception; they play a part but only when necessary. This does not mean that the experiences are different at a fundamental level.

Thus, the naïve realist can and does allow for representation to be a part of perceptions, under the view that representations are a background condition, and we can explain the richness of the experience through the acquaintance with the rich properties. It is my acquaintance with the *apple-ness* that is fundamental to the explanation of the conscious character.

To conclude this section, I have argued that the naïve realist does not require representation to be ‘in’ the perception. When perceiving an apple, the subject is in relation to the *apple-ness* of the apple. It is this that can explain the conscious character of the perception. Therefore, there is no modification to the theory of naïve realism that requires us to include representation in order to account for rich perception.

A New difficulty for Compatibility?

If it is the case that we can perceive rich properties without the occurrence of cognitive penetration, as I have presented earlier in the chapter, then this creates a new issue for the compatibility between naïve realism and the rich view. As naïve realism is a theory that we are in a relation to mind-independent objects and properties, then it seems that it cannot explain some of the experiences that depend on cognitive activity, such that the categorisation, conceptualisation or other cognitive activity is relevant to the way the subject experiences the scenario. For instance, under naïve realism, we cannot be perceptually aware of a dictionary as a doorstopper just by being in a perceptual relation to the dictionary and its properties.

The naïve realist, however, can respond to this. They can say that in order to perceive rich properties, we need to have the requisite concepts. Mark Johnston holds a similar view, “conceptual sophistication helps us to use our senses to mine the scene, or more generally the scenario before the senses, for relevant exemplifications – his bluffing, her raising, your having a busted straight” (2006, p.283). Similarly, Fish argues in our capacity to ‘pick-up’ high-level properties, like being a horse or a desk, only if we have the corresponding concepts. His point is that “acquiring the relevant concepts alters the way we are perceptually related to the external environment, allowing us to perceive objects as being of a particular kind” (Brogaard, Chomanski, 2015, section 7). This holds because in any case of rich perception, at least according to my naïve realist account, the subject is in acquaintance with the rich property. To be in an acquaintance relation with something, one must either have the concept of it or pick up the concept.

So, there is not a big issue for compatibility here. If we have the relevant concepts, we can perceive rich properties. Naïve realism can still be compatible with the rich view.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has shown, through a detailed discussion, that rich perception is compatible with naïve realism. I have argued in favour of the rich view and shown that we can, and do, perceive rich properties. I then moved on to looking at both logical and general compatibility between naïve realism and rich perception. I have shown that despite some initial worries, they are in fact compatible theories and that one can perceive a rich property under a naïve realist framework. I have also utilised Brewer’s discussion to look at how we can

offer a naïve realist account of rich perception but ultimately gave my own account of acquaintance which was explicitly a naïve realist view of rich *perception*. Overall, through the various facets of this chapter, I have shown that there are convincing reasons to accept the Rich view as true *and* that this view can be compatible with the theory of naïve realism.

Chapter Five

The Rationality of Perception and Naïve Realism

This chapter of the thesis is a culmination of the previous ones, yet it differs from the other chapters. This chapter has a much stronger focus on the phenomenon of the rationality of perception than on the compatibility with naïve realism. This is due to the work that I have done in the previous chapters on Cognitive Penetration and Rich perception to argue for their compatibility with naïve realism. Because I have done so and shown that naïve realism is compatible with these phenomena (and others like unconscious perception), the naïve realist is a position they can embrace other interesting phenomena. The prior compatibility work puts naïve realism in an unexplored position: to look at the Rationality of Perception under a naïve realist framework.

This chapter serves two purposes due to this. First, to argue that the rationality of perception is true. Second, to show that RoP being true is an advantage for the naïve realist, as it allows for a naïve realist framework that covers multiple modern perceptual phenomena.

So, the chapter goes as follows, in Part One, I will explain what is meant by ‘The Rationality of Perception’, by setting out Siegel’s theory.⁸⁰ This will include some objections to the theory and how Siegel, either does or might, respond to them. This section will also include the exploration of another version of the idea of perception being rational or irrational, from Mehta (2005). It will explore any issues that this version may have and how to solve them. The intention of this is to critically analyse the theories and to see what elements of their arguments are the most persuasive, to determine whether they can be used in harmony *or* whether we ought to support one over the other in order to give the most convincing argument that the rationality of perception view is true.

The second part of the chapter is where I am also going to bring in my previous arguments regarding Unconscious perception, Rich perception, and Cognitive Penetration and indicate how these arguments can work with Siegel’s theory and potentially, Mehta’s version, to make RoP and naïve realism compatible. Having covered these compatibility issues, I then go on to explore any unique problems that arise from the RoP view, such as naïve realism not being propositional and whether that causes an issue for compatibility.

I conclude both that the rationality of perception is true *and* that it is compatible with naïve realism.

Part One - What is ‘The Rationality of Perception’?

The rationality of perception, at its core, is the idea that perception and perceptual experiences can be rational or irrational. This is insofar that our perceptions can be appraised on their rationality, in a similar way to how we can appraise beliefs for rationality. There are a couple of scholars who offer their versions of the Rationality of Perception, the first and

⁸⁰ In the remainder of this chapter, I will use either Rationality of Perception or RoP to denote the theory.

primary version from Siegel (2016), followed by some variations on the view, including one from Mehta (2021). Both versions work to offer an explanation for *how* our perceptions can be in a position to appraised as rational or irrational, as this is something that is not often thought to be the case. In this chapter, I am going to look at both of these versions in detail, as well as briefly considering the idea of compatibility with naïve realism.

As I stated in the introduction, this chapter, unlike the previous three, is not one that is primarily focused on the issue of compatibility with naïve realism. This is because the Rationality of Perception utilises the phenomena that I have already discussed, namely, cognitive penetration and rich perception. Given that I have already spent time examining the compatibility between these phenomena and naïve realism, I am not going to spend time discussing them. I will explore some of the distinct issues that may arise from a compatibility between naïve realism and the rationality of perception, although this section will not be as extensive as the previous chapters.

Siegel

In her book, ‘The Rationality of Perception’ (2016), Susanna Siegel argues that perception can be rational or irrational. This is somewhat controversial, as previously; perception was thought to be something that is beyond reproach. There are two basic ideas that make up her theory.

First, the processes to perception can be rational or irrational.

Second, perception itself can be rational or irrational.

She elaborates on these base ideas. Her view is comprised of some quite technical theses on what perception is and how our prior outlooks can influence it. She believes that perceptual experiences can be the result of an epistemically evaluable inference. She also presents her thesis on epistemic charge.⁸¹

The combination of these ideas forms the rationality of perception. This is the idea that perceptions themselves can manifest an epistemic status and thus be rational or irrational.

This is quite controversial, as the view that perceptions can be rationally evaluated creates a philosophical issue regarding strengthening certain mental states, such as beliefs or fears. Can we strengthen beliefs or fears based on experiences generated by those very same beliefs or fears? For instance, if C’s fear that J is angry with them causes C to perceive J as angry, can that perceptual experience be used to strengthen, in the sense of confirming or justifying, C’s belief that J is angry with them? This is where the controversial nature of Siegel’s view can be seen, as many hold the view that beliefs about the world *can be* strengthened by our sensory experiences of the world. The idea that perceptions can be irrational questions this.

This question allows some nuanced answers, but Siegel goes on to argue for her case that, if we base a belief on a perception where the perception is based on that belief, then this can be

⁸¹ All of these ideas (epistemic charge, inferences, and perceptual rationality) will be further explored and explained through the course of this chapter.

irrational (due to the circularity, which I will explain further). This works to support the first base idea: that the processes to perception can be rational or irrational.

In the sections that follow, I examine many of the finer details of Siegel's argument and draw out the core components of the theory. To begin, I want to look at the element of cognitive penetration that is included.

Hijacked Experience

Siegel's theory, as presented in her book, begins with the example of Vivek the Vain performer whose perception is hijacked. (Siegel, 2017, p.3). Rather than just relaying that example, I would like to give one of my own. Imagine a man who believes that all dogs are vicious, Daniel. He has this belief because he is biased towards cats, due to his upbringing. This means that whenever Daniel sees a dog, he perceives it as aggressive. This is despite the fact that the majority of the time, the dogs that Daniel sees are *not* aggressive but are friendly. It is Daniel's prior beliefs and outlooks on the world that cause him to see what he does.

Siegel argues that this type of example is a case of irrational perception. His mental states have influenced his perceptions in a way that seems negative.⁸² How does she get to this? By presenting her argument from hijacked experience.

She argues that when perceptual judgements or experiences come from processes that give the subject's prior outlooks too much weight and do not give the proper weight to the perceptual inputs, one can state that "the outlook hijacks the perceptual state" (2017, p.5). Hijacking is a negative process in which 'the subject's perception is being shaped by the subject's prior outlook of the world'. This prior outlook *outweighs* the perceptual inputs, which is problematic. The experience has been *taken over* by the prior outlook of the subject. It is a similar idea to cognitive penetration, but it is broader. One's outlook of the world is not solely cognitive; it can involve other aspects, like sensory inputs.

In addition, as we saw in the chapter on rich perception, there is a difference between perceptual experience and perceptual judgement, where the latter is believed to be some kind of post-perceptual state. Both can have an effect on perception, either affecting the perceptual experience from which ensuing judgements can be made *or*, as Siegel puts it, "influence only the interface between experience and subsequent judgement or behaviour.... [it] neutralises their role in guiding behaviour" (Siegel, 2017, p.4). However, it would seem that in the cases of irrational perceptions, the type of influence that is significant occurs at the level of perceptual experience. In Daniel's case, the faces of the dogs really do *look* aggressive, rather than him seeing their actual faces, making the post-perceptual judgement that the dogs are vicious.

Siegel goes on to argue that due to the epistemic complications associated with hijacking, it poses a philosophical problem, hence the creation of *the problem of hijacked experience*. This is composed of two oppositional pressures; to say that it is rational for Daniel to believe his eyes and the pressure to say that it isn't.

⁸² I will return to the idea of these influences being negative later in this section.

Why might it be intuitively plausible to believe *it is* rational for Daniel to believe his eyes? Well, if dogs really do look aggressive to Daniel, and he has no reason to think that his perceptual experience is misleading, then it makes total sense for Daniel to believe that the dogs are aggressive. As Siegel states, “isn’t [the subject] just doing her best with the evidence about [the scenario] that perception gives her? How could we fault her for that?” (2017, p.6, square brackets added). In my example, Daniel is just using his sensory experience as evidence, as most typically do.

On the other hand, how might we argue that it is irrational? Well, in cases of perceptual hijacking, due to the outlook of the perceiver, in this case, Daniel’s biased belief, perpetual inputs are not given the proper weight in determining perceptual experience, and thus perpetual belief. This creates a problematic circularity. Daniel’s hijacked experience is Daniel’s evidence for his belief, yet because it is a *hijacked* experience, it is his beliefs and prior outlooks that caused his perceptual experience to be the way that it is. To put this in simpler terms, Daniel’s prior outlook and his biased belief cause his perceptual experience (to see all dogs as vicious), and it is this perceptual experience that reinforces his belief. It is epistemically problematic for Daniel to use his perceptual experience to support his belief that all dogs are vicious because of this circularity. There is nothing outside of that experience and belief that is justifying his view. So, we can say that it is not rational for those with hijacked perceptions to believe their eyes, as the experience detracts from the subject’s rational standing, because it came about from an irrational process.

Siegel’s Solution

Despite the idea of hijacked experience being quite epistemically problematic, Siegel does work to offer a solution, her theory of The Rationality of Perception. A perception can be rational or irrational because it can strengthen a subject’s outlook on the world. If Daniel already has his biased outlook that the dogs are aggressive, then a perceptual experience in which he sees the dogs are vicious will only strengthen his belief and whole outlook that all dogs are aggressive and vicious. This, as one might imagine, can be epistemically problematic. If our outlook is strengthened by an experience generated by that very same outlook, a self-made illusion, then that outlook has been strengthened irrationally.⁸³ Thus, in the case of Daniel, it is unreasonable for him to believe his eyes that the dogs are vicious toward him *because* his experience is irrational.

When using the terms rational and irrational, Siegel states that “They help describe ways in which people, mental states, actions, social arrangements, or combinations or patterns of these things can be appropriate or inappropriate, relative to certain types of norms—norms of rationality.” (Siegel, 2017, p.15). If something is to be determined as rational or irrational, it is epistemically appraisable. This is a term which often used when discussing mental states such as beliefs. Typically, beliefs about something are epistemically appraisable as we can examine whether they are well-founded or justified. Is it that the subject ought to believe what

⁸³ As an aside, if one has an experience that we can ascribe as ‘perceptually hijacked’ and is thus irrational, this does not mean that all aspects of that perception are wrong or illusory. For instance, in the Daniel example, the expressions of the dogs appear different to Daniel than that actually are, due to his outlook, yet he may well have perceived the colour of the fur, or their breed, as they actually are. The whole perception is not illusory.

they do? There is much epistemological literature on rationality and its tie to truth, most famously in Gettier (1963) and his discussion on knowledge and justified true beliefs. Rationality takes into account the epistemic status of the subject.

We do not often see perception and perceptual experiences as something that *can be* epistemically appraised. Nolfi even argued that they are *paradigmatically arational*. She argues that for a mental state to be rationally evaluable depends on whether “our mental states of type M generally or paradigmatically admit of reasons-for-which explanation.” (2015, p.60). Perceptual experiences do not typically have this type of explanation. There are not reasons-for a perceptual experience, there are not facts that “constitute rationalising or justifying reasons for being” (Nolfi, 2015) in a perception in the way that there are for being in the state of having a belief. Thus, they are not typically viewed as something that can be rational or irrational.

Yet, to solve the problem of hijacked perception, we need, at least according to Siegel, to invoke the idea of perception being rational or irrational.

She argues, “it is not rational in these cases for the subjects of hijacked experiences to believe their eyes. It is not rational because in each case, the subject’s having the perceptual experiences detracts from his or her rational standing, and it does that because the experience came about through an irrational process. These subjects are not in a position to know, on their own, what the reasonable reaction to their experiences is.” (Siegel, 2017, p. 14). She claims that it is the subject’s rational standing that is affected when having the perceptual experiences in the hijacked perceptions.⁸⁴

To sum up Siegel’s argumentation here, she is rejecting the claim that it is always rational to believe what one’s senses attest — that one’s perceptual experience as of p always provides one with some reason to believe that p. This is because of hijacked perceptions. She explains why this claim is false by appeal to the idea that perceptual states themselves are evaluable as rational or irrational.

Processes

The view that Siegel argues for in her version of the rationality of perception is that, in many cases of hijacked experience, the process by which people come to have the experiences they do is inference. This is quite the radical claim that Siegel has to argue for, as it is not a typical view to hold.

She states that subjects are drawing inferences from the other mental states that they hold, be it beliefs, desires, fears and so on. Siegel’s use of inference is very significant for her argument on the rationality of perception.

To continue utilising the Daniel example, he infers, silently and unreflectively, that the dogs are vicious, from his other beliefs. It is possible that people can reason this way, inferring unreflectively, to create perceptual experiences. It is this reasoning that will *adjust*, or as

⁸⁴ It is important to note here that this is not a discussion of all perceptions. Whilst all perceptions have the capacity to be hijacked, not all of them are. The rationality of perception is explaining these hijacked experiences.

Siegel puts it, *modulate* the epistemic status of the conclusions drawn from the perceptual experiences.

We can see how this can make a perception rational or irrational. If the elements of the reasoning that lead to the perception are rational, then so is that experience, and it is the same in the case of irrational elements of reasoning and experiences. As the perceptions had in these cases are often the results of inferential reasoning, then we can examine the inputs to those inferences, and their rationality, when examining the rationality of a perception.

Inference

Siegel presents her argument for the rationality of perception as the culmination of a couple of theses. The first being,

Inferential Modulation thesis: Experiences can be formed by inferences that can modulate their epistemic charge.” (Siegel, 2017, p.21).

So, what is an inference? Why is this the first question? It is because we need to settle what is meant by inference in this context.

Inferring is a distinctive kind of response to an informational state, or to a combination of such states, that produces a conclusion. Siegel refers to this as the Response hypothesis. (2017, p.77). Inferences can be drawn covertly and unreflectively, as the subject is unaware that they are drawing an inference at that moment. We can take the case of Daniel to illustrate this. Daniel is reasoning in a covert, silent and unreflective way that the dogs are vicious because he has some different beliefs, constitutive of his biased belief. Daniel has *inferred* that dogs are vicious and aggressive.

Siegel’s theory claims that perceptual experience can be the result of an often unreflective and silent inference. It mirrors the way in which people reason in this way, via inferences, to form beliefs or to strengthen ones that they already have.

It is the inclusion of inference in the theory that can explain how perception can be rational or irrational. If the elements and processes of the reasoning, so the inference, were good, then we can say that the experience is rational, and if they are bad, then it is irrational. In the case of Daniel, we can say that his perceptual experience is irrational, as the inference that was drawn was bad, as it came from Daniel’s bias.

As such, Siegel’s argument is as follows: “When one arrives at a conclusion by inference, the conclusion’s epistemic power to support subsequent beliefs, as well as its own epistemic standing, can be modulated by the inputs to the inference. Inference is an example—perhaps it is the prime example—of a process that can issue in beliefs, and that can be rational or irrational. If perceptual experiences can arise from inference, then the Rationality of Perception is true.” (Siegel, 2017, p.19).

In other words, if a subject concludes something based on an inference, the power that that conclusion has to strengthen beliefs, and its own epistemic status, is moderated by the inputs

of the inference. For instance, if my belief that A is unhappy to see me is strengthened by the perceptual experience that I had of A's face, whilst inferring that A is upset with me based on my worry, then the epistemic standing of the conclusion and belief is modulated by the inputs to the inference that led to the perceptual experience. This allows for a rationality assessment *because of* the inference.

Not everyone is so accepting of Siegel's inferential view. We should now take the time to critically analyse how she used inferences, in order to have a more robust understanding and critical assessment of Siegel's version of the rationality of perception.⁸⁵

One issue is specifically raised against Siegel's use of inferences. Some disagree with her idea of 'inference without reckoning' and dispute some of the cases given as examples by Siegel. One of the cases is 'Puddle', which goes as follows, "... while walking along a rainy street, Lucy might come to a puddle and think that it is too big to hop across, so she will have to go around it. She need not think to herself that she has to walk around the puddle if she wants to keep her feet dry." (Siegel, 2017, p.5).⁸⁶

It is the last sentence of the case, which is significant, as it indicates the 'reckoning state', a state which is representative of the relation between Lucy's aims, that is getting home with dry feet and the means she takes to reach them, ergo walking around the puddle. The crux of Siegel's argument is that Lucy, in this example, does not formulate such a state. Lucy's understanding of the situation makes it so that walking around the puddle, instead of hopping over it, reflects an inference, as it is a rational response without a reckoning state.

This is not to be taken as a given, however, as there exists a response to this from a Behaviourist point of view, who dispute that Lucy's behaviours are inferential. Railton suggests the following as an example of this, "Sin-Yee has encountered puddles in the past and hopped. Because she likes having dry feet, she was negatively reinforced for jumping when the puddles were too large to clear—i.e., three or more feet in width, as it happened. It took her a while, but she learned from foot-soaking hops to be averse to jumping whenever she encounters a puddle wider than three feet. This does not require her to mentally imagine some remoter goal 'in light of which' trying to jump a puddle of this size is a poor idea—the aversion to jumping is conditioned directly to the stimulus condition of encountering a puddle of this size... So now Sin-Yee has acquired a well-calibrated stimulus-response disposition...All this suffices to establish in Sin-Yee the behaviour of walking around puddles larger than three feet."⁸⁷

So, rather than the subject in *Puddle* making an inference, they have been conditioned to respond in a certain way when presented with puddles of various sizes. It is a *conditioned association*, so when she sees a puddle that seems more than three feet, she has an aversion to jumping over it because of previous experiences and thus adjusts her behaviour as such.

⁸⁵ There have been many rebuttals and comments on Siegel's Rationality of Perception, a few of which have garnered a response from Siegel (see her 2018 and 2020 papers, 'The Rationality of Perception: Reply to...') Given the space I have in this chapter, I will be unable to cover them all, so have chosen a significant one to examine.

⁸⁶ I have altered the case slightly, in that I have substituted the pronoun 'you' for a proper name, 'Lucy'.

⁸⁷ Railton has replaced the 'you' in the puddle example with the proper name 'Sin-Yee' and has given the case a narrative, that Sin-Yee is a young girl walking home from school. This helps to explain the behaviourist's point of view.

Siegel's paradigm cases of 'offline' inference are just as easily interpretable as manifestations of mere behavioural dispositions. Yet, it seems to be a mistake to conflate inferential reasoning and *conditioned association* (which also can be referred to as reinforcement learning), as there are examples of them coming apart.

As discussed by both Railton and Siegel, experiments with rats show that they use more than just conditioned association to get to their goal; they can also *infer*, leading to new behaviour. For instance, "if a rat got to the end of the maze by reinforcement learning by association, it is disposed to move to the cheese-spot, and the disposition is well-calibrated only as long as cheese is placed in the same spot. Moving the cheese or changing the maze would not lead the rat to move its path, absent another bout of reinforcement learning. But as it happens, rats who escape the maze can get to the cheese by scurrying across the top, where it has never been before, is using a spatial map to infer that it can reach the cheese using a path that it did not previously use, and so was not part of its associative learning." (Siegel, 2020. p.6). This shows that it is possible for the dispositions of cognitive association to be separate from inference. The rat has acted out of what it has been taught, and yet somehow still got to the cheese. Of course, from a philosopher's view, it may seem a bit silly to outright argue that what the rats did was inferring, but it does show that the two concepts can and ought to be separated.

Thus, we can say that in the case of *Puddle*, Lucy (or Sin-Yee) does not necessarily have a 'well-calibrated stimulus-response disposition' for jumping over puddles. She could just as easily, as Siegel argued, have inferred that accidentally landing in the puddle would get her feet wet and thus walked around it. On a different day, she may have a different response and jump over the puddle despite the risk of wet feet. Trying to simplify behaviours down to whether one is averse or attracted to the outcome is a little reductive and certainly will not be able to cover all of the cases of inferring that Siegel gives.

As a result, Siegel can still utilise her idea of 'inference without reckoning' within her framework of explaining how perceptions can be rational or irrational. Her take on inference is still on the table, so to speak.

Part Two - Initial Arguments Against Siegel

There have, as for much philosophical theory, been objections to the idea that perceptions can be rational or irrational. Peacocke (2018) offers his rival 'Factive Theory', and Miller (2018), in his review piece, questions some of the empirical cases used by Siegel. Yet, in what follows, I would like to focus on some of the objections that Siegel references in her own book.

One of these objections that I examine here is based on 'upper-echelon rational capacities', which are a person's capabilities of deliberation, the formulation of reasons for holding beliefs and reflection and revision of beliefs. These are some of the smaller objections to Siegel's argument and are being utilised to further explain her theory. There will be a further section later in the chapter that addresses some more significant issues with Siegel's version of the Rationality of Perception.

The first objection addresses the idea that a subject could not articulate their reasoning for the experiences they had that led to their beliefs. We can illustrate this using another example of a hijacked experience. In part one of this chapter, I asked the following brief question, if C's fear that J is angry with them causes C to perceive J as angry, can that perceptual experience be used to strengthen C's belief that J is angry with them? Let's expand on the example given in it. Before seeing J, C has a fear that J is angry with her. When she does actually see him, her fear of J's anger causes her to perceive J as angry, and this perception of J being angry strengthens her fear.⁸⁸ Siegel explains that C might be able to articulate a reason for her belief that J is angry with her, perhaps by claiming that she saw J 'looking' angry, which is referring back to her experience and that C may even have the capacity to give the reasons for her belief that he looks angry, perhaps the facial expression that J is wearing. Yet, this does not give "reasons for the experience in which Jack looks to her the way he does." (Siegel, 2017, p.17). Thus, the argument is that if subjects are unable to present reasons for their experience, then this experience cannot be related to the subject's rational standing.

The second objection observes that the subject of a hijacked experience cannot *rationally control* their perceptual experience. One is able to, at least in principle, modify one's beliefs, potentially in response to new information or a change in circumstances. However, the subject is unable to modify or change their experience in the same way. So, in the example above, C cannot change her experience of seeing J as angry. The only way her subsequent belief may change is if she learned that he is not actually angry, *but* a change in belief would typically come from a post-perceptual state and would only come from experience if she had a new experience.

However, these objections may not be as damaging as we first think. There are ways in which people can practice their rational capacities and form beliefs that are not a part of the group of 'upper-echelon capacities'. This means that modulation is not occurring, yet the subjects are still employing their rational capacities. As Siegel mentions, "The flip side of this observation is that since there are ways to exercise rational capacities in forming beliefs that are not upper-echelon capacities, we can ask whether those more relaxed capacities could produce perceptual experiences." I believe that Siegel is referring to inferences in her discussion here. Therefore, if these ways of employing their rational capacities can produce perceptual experience, then the subject can have a rational perception, even though they cannot modify or change their experience, nor explicitly give reasons for their experience.

Siegel explains this as follows: "If a perceptual experience could be the conclusion of an inference, the inference would modulate its epistemic status—just as an inference modulates the epistemic status of a belief that is a conclusion of the inference." (Siegel, 2017, p.21). So, if perception can come from an inference, then that can explain how a perception can have an epistemic status.

Inferences can be rational or irrational and do not require the subject to be able to modify their experience, nor give fine-tuned reasoning for their experiences. If, as Siegel argues,

⁸⁸ This example utilises the framework of one of Siegel's examples given in the book, in which it is Jack that is perceived as angry by Jill. I utilised different names in the initial version of this example.

perceptions can be the result of a subject making an inference, then the epistemic status of the inference can explain the epistemic status of the perception.

This line of argument leads to some very significant theses about Siegel's version of RoP, including the Epistemic Charge thesis, which states.

"The Epistemic Charge thesis: Experiences can be epistemically charged."

Epistemic Charge

What is epistemic charge? It is a concept that assigns a label to the epistemic status of things such as perceptual experiences. It is drawn from an electricity metaphor, as it is the idea that perceptual experiences have a 'charge' that can be changed. The starting point of the concept is that our perceptual experiences have a rational standing, and their epistemic status can be modulated by the subjects' mental states, like fears, desires, prior knowledge, and beliefs. As Siegel puts it, "A property of experience that can be modulated by psychological precursors of the experience and transmitted to subsequent beliefs, and in virtue of which a subject's experience manifests an epistemic status." (Siegel, 2017, p.41).

So, in the case of Daniel, his biased belief has poor epistemic status. This status is then inherited by his perceptual experience *and then* transmitted to his strengthened belief. Thus, in this case, Daniel's perceptual experience has an epistemic charge. Siegel goes on to explain that experience can be positively or negatively charged based upon the rational standing of that which it inherits the charge from. In her theory, this is the inference from which the perception was made.⁸⁹ Thus, in the case of Daniel, his perceptual experience would have a negative charge due to the poor epistemic status of his mental state that is transmitted through to his belief.

One can, of course, question this metaphor. Say that charge is not inherited but rather facilitated. In other words, the experience is the facilitator for the negative epistemic charge from the irrational outlook to be passed to the belief. This is similar to electricity. The wire acts as the conductor for electricity to pass from the grid into the device. The wire itself is not electrified.

However, I am not sure I am convinced by this objection. I do believe that the charge needs to be inherited by the experience in order to pass it to the belief. Inheritance has an explanatory role that a facilitator does not. The transmission of the epistemic status to the experience serves to explain how the experience makes a contribution to the rational standing of the subject. The experience itself is tantamount to the rationality of the subject. Had the experience just been a facilitator, then it would not be clear why the experience contributed to the rational standing of the subject, as it just passed on the epistemic status from the inference to the belief. The inference and the subsequent belief would be epistemically analysed, and the experience would be just a stop on the way.

⁸⁹ Siegel also discusses how epistemic charge can be upgraded and downgraded, depending on the circumstances of the experience. For more on this idea, see chapters six and seven on 'The Rationality of Perception, 2017.

To conclude, it is this epistemic charge analysis that *explains why* we would take perceptual experiences to be rational or irrational, and thus they contribute to the rational standing of the subject.

Solution?

Siegel, therefore, is providing a solution to the problem of hijacked perception, in that it is unreasonable for those having hijacked experiences to utilise their experience to strengthen their beliefs. The perceptions and the inferences that they are the outputs of, are irrational, making it irrational for the subjects of hijacked experiences to strengthen their beliefs from these irrational perceptions. She is explaining an intuition that the subjects in hijacked experience are irrational by using the idea of epistemic charge.

A further problem with Siegel's Version

Whilst Siegel does offer a convincing argument for the rationality of perception, there are aspects of her framing that raise questions. Siegel argues that there is no metaphysical barrier to the idea that some perceptual experiences are the outputs of inferences.⁹⁰ This means that there is nothing about the nature of inference or experience that precludes perceptual experiences from being the output of an inference. Yet, despite her perusal of various empirical evidence, she only seems to argue that there is a lack of a metaphysical barrier. This does not constitute evidence *in support* of the claim that some perceptual experiences are the outputs of inferences. She needs to go further in her argumentation.

What Siegel shows is that it is metaphysically possible for experiences to be the outputs of inferences, that is all. Take the following analogy from Mehta, “there is nothing in the nature of pigs or in the nature of wings to preclude the possibility of pigs with wings. This claim is true. But that claim is, by itself, very poor evidence for the claim that some pigs *really do* have wings. It is only good evidence for the claim that *it is metaphysically possible* for pigs to have wings” (Mehta, 2021, p.396).

For some to accept that some experiences are *actually* the outputs of inferences, rather than just metaphysically possible, there needs to be more argumentation. She does argue that the only way to solve the problem of circularity of perception is to treat perceptual states as evaluable, yes, but this does not necessarily entail that these perceptual are the output of *inferences*, which is what her argument rests on.

Whilst this does not mean we ought to disregard her argument, it opens an avenue into looking for alternative support for the idea of perceptual experiences being rational.

⁹⁰ This framing of this premises of Siegel's argument comes from Mehta's paper 'A New Argument for the Rationality of Perception' (2021, p.396)

Part Three – Mehta’s version of the Rationality of Perception

Siegel’s is not the only version of the Rationality of Perception that is worth considering. Mehta, in his paper, offers a different argument in favour of the view that perception can be rational or irrational. Rather than a reliance on inference, Mehta (2021) utilises the idea of categorisation. His argument, entitled the *argument from categorization*, goes as follows.⁹¹

“C1. If a perceptual experience *contains a categorization*, then that experience is rational or irrational.

C2. Some perceptual experiences *contain categorizations*.

C3. Some perceptual experiences are rational or irrational” (Mehta, 2021, p.398).

So, Mehta’s argument is that when people perceive things, they apply various concepts to the objects of perception and thus categorise them. In this argument, he states that it is controversial as to whether these categorisations occur within perception or at a post-perceptual level. Yet, for the rest of his argument on the rationality of perception, he seems to take it that these categorisations *are* occurring within perception. For the sake of examining the plausibility of his argument, I am choosing to follow his lead.

The concept application and thus categorisation occur as a part of the perceptual experience itself. For instance, say that the subject perceives a fruit bowl and in it, bananas, apples, and oranges. They will conceptualise these objects as bananas, apples, and oranges. This is the process that is being referred to when Mehta uses the term ‘categorisation’.⁹² So, if a perceptual experience does contain a categorisation, then it is either rational or irrational.

Mehta argues that it is C1 that shows his argument is more plausible than Siegel’s and her premise that ‘If a perceptual experience is the output of an inference, then that perceptual experience is rational or irrational’ (Mehta, 2021, p. 398). He does this utilising the recognitional model of categorisation. This is the view that perception makes us *aware* of the external world and objects in it. The subjects of these perceptions have the capacity to identify these objects under specific perceptual conditions. So, “A categorization occurs whenever we exercise those capacities—whether successfully or unsuccessfully. When we exercise those capacities successfully, we recognize those worldly entities as falling under the concept. However, when we exercise those capacities unsuccessfully, we merely *seem* to recognize those worldly entities as falling under the concept.” (Mehta, 2021, p.399). This can explain the element of rationality. For instance, it would be irrational of subject, K, upon perceiving a glass on the table, under standard conditions, to categorise it as an apple.⁹³ Yet, it would be rational of K, upon seeing an apple with a painted green stalk, to categorise it as a tomato. K has been

⁹¹ I would like to make clear that Mehta is working, not to show his argument as sound, but rather that it is equally good as Siegel’s and in certain aspects is an improvement, as Mehta argues that he offers empirical evidence for his argument.

⁹² It is also possible to have wider categorisation, such as ‘fruit’ or ‘food’. This is also conceptualising the objects of perception.

⁹³ By standard conditions, we are referring to the lighting and angle of the perception. This is representative of a perception in which the subject *ought* to be perceiving the glass as a glass.

sensitive to their perceptual inputs in the second case, and is thus rational, even if the categorisation has been unsuccessful. In a similar vein, if K saw an apple on the table and categorised it as an apple, then that would be a successful categorisation.⁹⁴

There is an objection to this view, which is that there is a special feature of perceptual experiences (or the categorisations within them), that prevents them from being assessable as either rational or irrational. This could be that they are formed passively, sub-personally or that they are not able to be revised by deliberation. This objection is very similar to one given in response to Siegel's argument for the rationality of perception. The responses to these objections from the proponent of the rationality of perception would be very similar, insofar that if they work to support Siegel's inference argument, they will also work in favour of Mehta's categorisation argument.⁹⁵ This leaves Mehta's argument in the position of 'at least as plausible' as Siegel's. The next challenge is to show how and why it is *more* plausible.

Metaphysical Impossibility

Mehta's strategy for this comes in two parts. The first mirrors Siegel in that there is no metaphysical obstacle to the idea that some perceptual experiences contain categorisations. He argues that it is *metaphysically possible* for categorisations to occur in perceptions, even if it does not actually occur that way for people in the real world.⁹⁶

The first potential issue may come from Phenomenal conservatives, who believe that in cases such as the 'arborist perceiving a pine tree', there is nothing over and above the phenomenal character associated with perceiving the colours, shapes, and textures of the tree.⁹⁷ This would cause them to believe that it is metaphysically impossible for a perception to contain this kind of application of concepts. There is a way to respond to this; to support the rich view. The Rich view says that we can perceive rich properties, and not only the thin ones like colour, shape, size and so on. Mehta could appeal to this rich view in support of his idea of categorisations. He does not claim this but rather argues that categorisations can occur within perception regardless of whether there is any phenomenal character associated with the categorisations. So, this is not an issue for Mehta.

Another objection comes from the naïve realist, as a central commitment of naïve realism is that perception is fundamentally non-representational. The awareness subjects have of the external world is *non-representational*. Given that categorisations are, in fact, representational, this may mean that it is not metaphysically possible for them to occur with perception, at least according to the naïve realist. However, one of my arguments on this subject is that just because perceptions in the naïve realist view are fundamentally non-representational, that does not mean that perceptions cannot *also*, involve some kind of representation. As I argued in my previous chapter on rich perception, it could be that

⁹⁴ I wish to make clear here that I am not conflating rationality with correctness, as conveyed by the apple/tomato case.

⁹⁵ I am not going to repeat these responses for the sake of space, but they include arguments such as, the ability to disown mental states and that potentially having the features listed does not automatically block a perceptual experience from being assessed as rational or irrational.

⁹⁶ By perceptions, Mehta is referring to the idea of perception proper.

⁹⁷ This is a reference to Siegel's discussion of rich properties in her 2006 and 2010 papers.

representations are a background condition in perception, without them being fundamental to how we explain the perception. Thus, categorisations involving representations are not an issue for the naïve realist, as long as they accept the rich view. As Mehta states, “it is perfectly consistent for the naïve realist to say that it is metaphysically possible for a perception to involve both a primitive form of non-representational awareness and a sophisticated form of conceptual, representational awareness.” (Mehta, 2021, p.403). This is a view that is shared by multiple naïve realists.

Alternatively, one can take on my view of rich perception, which need not be representational. My naïve realist rich view is that during perception of rich properties, the subject is a relation with those rich properties, and it is those rich properties that shape the character of the experience. So, whilst this may not explicitly support Mehta’s categorisation view, as it centres rich properties, rather than concept application, it does push back on the idea that there is nothing over and above the phenomenal character associated with perceiving the colours, shapes, and textures of the tree.

These both show that whilst there may be some pushback, it is perfectly plausible to argue that there is nothing in the nature of perception or in categorisations, that makes it metaphysically impossible for those categorisations to occur within perception.

Positive Empirical Evidence

The second element of Mehta’s argument, that the categorisation view is more plausible than the inference view, rests on some empirical evidence. This empirical evidence comes from Mandelbaum (2018). He cites an experiment in which subjects were primed with a word, in this case, ‘flower’ and presented with images for a very brief period, with the intention that the subject’s visual system only had 13ms to process the image they saw. In this experiment, “for each image presented in this way, subjects had to say whether or not it contained flowers. If the image did contain flowers and if subjects correctly noted this fact, then they were presented with two more images, both of which contained flowers, and they had to identify which of these images they had already seen. Astonishingly, despite these remarkable brief presentation times, subjects were able to perform this task at well above chance.”⁹⁸ (Mehta, 2021, p.404).

It seems that in this experiment, the subjects involved were *categorising*, as they were applying the concept of ‘flowers’ to images and then acting upon that by indicating to the experimenter whether or not the image contained flowers. The *categorisation* can be seen by the usage of the same representation, that of the flowers, across various mental systems. The question that arises here is whether they were doing this categorisation at the level of perceptual experience itself.

Where we can show that this categorisation was perceptual rather than cognitive is through some visual science. The Mandelbaum paper supposes that feedback processing within the visual system, takes around 50ms to occur, and to involve ‘cognition proper’ would take much longer than that. Given that, in the experiment, the subjects were only presented with the

⁹⁸ As noted by Mehta, the results of this experiment are from Potter et al (2014), but the summary of the experiment and results are drawn from Mandelbaum (2018, p.267).

images for 13ms, there is not enough time for the categorisation to have been cognitive. So, this experiment shows that there is empirical evidence that show perceptual categorisation. This combined with Mehta's earlier argument regarding metaphysical possibility indicates that C2 'Some perceptual experiences contain categorisations' ought to be a view that is more than just plausible and should be taken seriously. This is more so than Siegel's premise that 'some perceptual experiences are outputs of inferences' as whilst she did show metaphysical possibility, she did not offer any empirical support.

However, I am not necessarily convinced by this argument. The first reason being that this empirical case does not provide a reason nor evidence that 'cognition proper' takes longer than 50ms to occur. Yet, even if it had, it is not clear to me that we ought to be using time as a criterion of what is cognitive or non-cognitive. The idea that perceptions can be rational or irrational relying on the speed of the processing seems unrelated to me. I would say that determining whether a categorisation was perceptual or not rests on the mental states that led to it or which perceptual theory one applies to the experience. Take my view of rich perception under a naïve realist framework, when in a perceptual experience, the subject is in a relation with the rich properties. In this case they are perceiving richly, similar to Mehta's categorisation, in the perception itself. There is no need to discussing the processing speed of the perception, it just is inbuilt into that theory of perception. Perhaps Mehta would be better off utilising a theory like this to emphasise his point.

Problems?

The above issue regarding a reliance on timings and unclear parameters is not the only issue that Mehta's account of the rationality of perception might face. In this next section, I want to critically examine Mehta's categorisation view in more detail.

One problem is actually mentioned by Mehta in his paper, and that is that the inferential picture given by Siegel captures why certain cases are irrational when the so-called 'perceptual error' occurs prior to any kind of categorisation. Let's take the example given earlier in the chapter, 'Before seeing J, C has a fear that J is angry with her. When she does actually see him, her fear of J's anger causes her to perceive J as angry, and this perception, of J being angry strengthens her fear'. In this case, C's fear causes her to perceive the low-level, or thin, properties of anger on J's face, say she sees the shape of his face: that his jaw is clenched, or his eyes are narrowed, which then strengthens her belief that J is angry. Siegel's inferential view is able to capture this, that C's irrational inference has caused her perception to be irrational. The categorisation picture cannot, as the error occurred prior to C categorising anything in her perceptual experience.

Mehta believes that this is not really a problem for him. This is because he thinks that it is implausible that C is irrational in believing that Jack is angry with her.⁹⁹ He thinks that it is an epistemic flaw, as her belief does not account to knowledge because of her mistaken perception of the situation, but that it is still a rational belief to hold. He claims that Siegel is equating an epistemic flaw with a rational flaw. What is the difference? An epistemic flaw is a failure in knowledge acquisition or justification. A rational flaw, in contrast, is a failure in

⁹⁹ In Mehta's paper, he speaks to the example of the same framework with the names given by Siegel, 'Jack and Jill' but the viewpoint is the same.

reasoning. One can *rationally* believe something that is *epistemically* false.¹⁰⁰ Mehta argues conflation because her belief falls short of knowledge due to it being based upon a mistaken perception, but that it is not irrational.

Siegel does have an answer to this, as she says responses like this “allow that it is rational to strengthen the outlook behind the influence on experience, such as Daniel’s biased belief or Jill’s fear. It therefore does little to explain away the sense that strengthening fear in response to fear-generated experience is epistemically problematic. It leaves that aspect of the problem unaddressed.” (2017, p.69). It is not clear that Siegel is in fact conflating rational and epistemic flaws. In downgraded experiences, the beliefs are both ill-founded and thus irrational *and* do not amount to knowledge so are epistemically flawed. Perhaps it a contrast of intuitions as to what counts as a rational flaw? I will return to this conflict a little further on in this section.

Returning to Mehta’s argument, he goes on to explain that what Siegel is working with is that the way in which C formed her belief is similar to circular methods of forming beliefs. Insofar that, C starts with a certain view, this view causes a perceptual experience, and that perceptual experience strengthens the view. Mehta, argues, however, that this method is not always circular. He gives the following example, “imagine a subject, Andrew, who has an unusual fear of red lights: the brighter they are, the more frightened Andrew becomes. Andrew sees a red light, which triggers his fear and thereby causes his pupils to dilate. This lets in more red light, which strengthens his fear, even though the brightness of the light remains constant.” (Mehta, 2021, p. 406). The way in which Andrew has strengthened his fear is the same as C, yet it does not seem irrational for Andrew. This is due to the fact that the process, the dilation of his pupils, that increased the brightness of the red light, is causal and thus not appraisable to be rational or irrational. Therefore, in the case of C and J, C’s belief can only be classed as irrational *if* it rationally impacts her perceptual experience, rather than causally, as in Andrew’s case. This information is lacking in the example, so one cannot take a firm stance.¹⁰¹ Thus, on this objection, Mehta cannot see an advantage in holding the inferential view over the categorisation view.

I can see Mehta’s point of view, as if we put the case in other words, it does not seem like circular reasoning. So, C holds the belief that J is angry with her and when asked why, they would say because J looks angry. This does not seem circular at first glance, in the same way that we would not say that someone saying they believe that the sky is blue because they looked at it and it was blue, has circular reasoning. Yet, whilst it may be true that not all cases that utilise the kind of method shown by the two cases can be appraised for their rationality, that does not mean that none of them can.

In the example, C has the perception that she does because of the inference that she made. This does make a difference to the situation, as had she not had that inference, she would not have had the perception that she did. Thus, there is the element of circularity. C had the perception she did due to her inference, and she inferred in that way because of her belief. It is

¹⁰⁰ For more on epistemology and rationality, see Eder (2020).

¹⁰¹ This is quite a controversial stance to take, as the case that he is arguing against being an irrational error and rather an epistemic error, is almost the textbook case given for irrational perception.

the inferential nature that makes this type of reasoning circular and thus the consequent perception rationally appraisable. Thus, we can say that C is irrational in her belief because her reasoning for that belief is circular.

I also wish to return to conflicting intuitions between Siegel and Mehta. To reiterate, he thinks that the C and J case involves an epistemic flaw, as her belief does not account to knowledge because of her mistaken perception of the situation, but that it is still a rational belief to hold. He claims that Siegel is equating an epistemic flaw with a rational flaw. I disagree with Mehta and hold the same intuition that Siegel does. C had a flawed perception, in that J was not angry with her, and only looked that way due to the inference that she had made previously. This *is* as Mehta claims an epistemic error. However, I do believe that C has also made a rational error and is thus irrational. C knew that she had made the inference that J was angry with her prior to seeing him. Upon seeing J, C if she were engaging rationally, ought to have viewed her perception with some doubt. She should have taken a second look perhaps. This would have prevented the strengthening of the belief that J is angry with her, as she would have double-checked her perception, rather than simply accepting it as matching her prior inference. This kind of double-checking does occur in other everyday beliefs.

For instance, if I were walking past a field that I knew was hosting a dog convention, I would be expecting to see many dogs. Let's say that as I do walk past the field, I see a very large animal and think to myself 'Oh, that is a giant dog'. However, because of the sheer size of the animal, I look again and see that the animal is actually a horse. Thus, rather than utilising my perception to strengthen my belief that there was a giant dog in the field, I double checked my perception and discovered that I was mistaken and that there was a horse in the field instead. Similar examples will include, checking the identity of the person you just walked past, the time on a clock, and so on. In these cases, if a subject relied on their initial perceptions to form or strengthen beliefs, then they would hold irrational beliefs.

Therefore, I would argue that C has made both an epistemic flaw and an irrational flaw when strengthening her belief about J's anger based on her perception, as there were actions that she could have taken to avoid the irrationality. This is, therefore, an area in which I agree with Siegel's intuition regarding rationality.

Problems with Premise 1

Over and above the previous objections to Mehta's view, there is an overarching issue with Mehta's version of rationality of perception. There are instances of categorisation that we do not appraise for rationality, so premise one of his argument falls into doubt.

Let's take the following example: Road Signs. An object which categorises things. To refamiliarize ourselves with what that means, Mehta states "A categorization occurs whenever we exercise those capacities—whether successfully or unsuccessfully. When we exercise those capacities successfully, we recognize those worldly entities as falling under the concept." (2021, p.399). The capacity he is referring to here is applying concepts to the things we perceive.

If we look at road signs, they are a form of categorisation that is out there in the world, insofar that it is a *road sign* which represents x.¹⁰² Yet, this type of categorisation is not rationally appraised. At least not in the way that Mehta is arguing. We cannot analyse the processes, foundations, evidence or response when it comes to the type of categorisation that applies to the road sign.

So, it could be that Mehta has cast his net a little too wide in stating that if a perceptual experience involves a categorisation, then it is rational or irrational. It is believable that some perceptual experiences containing categorisations can be rationally appraised, yet not all of them. Therefore, Mehta's argument does rely on a very broad premise one, of which there are counterexamples. This does seem to collapse his categorisation argument, at least in the form in which he has presented it, as premise one just is not true. Perhaps it ought to be updated to something like the following.

P1. If a perceptual experience *contains a certain type of categorization*, then that experience is rational or irrational.

P2. Some perceptual experiences *contain these types of categorizations*.

C1. Some perceptual experiences are rational or irrational"

It seems to me that the thread of Mehta's version of the perceptual rationality thesis is plausible, just that it needs more work on defining the type of categorisation that Mehta intends to avoid counterexamples of non-appraisable categorisations.¹⁰³ Additionally, he would need to sharply distinguish this sub-type of categorisation from the inference-to-inference output, otherwise his view will not be substantively different to Siegel's view.

So, where do we stand? The claims of both accounts of the rationality of perception are consistent, so this is not a clear case where I must be in favour of one over the other. I disagree with some of the intuitions that Mehta has, and I also have questions about the structure of his argument, but I do also think that his theory has merit. However, given that Siegel's version has a wider explanatory net for cases which are believed to be irrational perceptions, I am inclined to believe that rationality of perception ought to be modelled in terms of a perception being precipitated by an inference.

So What?

This section, whilst serving as an examination of two of the theories that support the idea of the rationality of perception, also serves to show that the rationality of perception is indeed a *thing*.

¹⁰² X could be the speed limit, a directional instruction or any other information that a road sign represents.

¹⁰³ This is not something I am going to explore in this chapter any further. It is an important objection to flag, however.

Both Siegel and Mehta differ in the specific manner in which they believe it occurs, inference or categorisation, but they do both give plausible arguments for the idea that it *does* occur. Perceptions can be rational or irrational. This is quite an interesting revelation and potentially a controversial one, as typically perception is thought to be not appraisable in terms of rationality. I believe that this discussion has shown that *it is possible* for perceptions to be rationality appraisable or at least that there is plausible argumentation for the rationality of perception.

This section can also be viewed as a defence of Siegel and her version of the rationality of perception. Having critically engaged with the general criticisms faced by Siegel and the issues Mehta raises, it is clear to me that Siegel's ideas cover more explanatorily and have a more solid grounding.

It could be said that Siegel and Mehta's theories can be viewed harmoniously. They both have the same basic idea of what the rationality of perception is, they differ in the process that enables it. So, they do not need to pit against each other. However, whilst there are some convincing elements of Mehta's view of the rationality of perception, there are many questionable elements which do let it down. His reliance on categorisations without clarity on the types of categorisations, along with the responses I have given to objections to Siegel, leads me to acceptance of Siegel's inferential view.

Part Four – Is Naïve Realism Compatible with the Rationality of Perception?

The first thing to do in this section is to state that the Rationality of Perception involves both rich perception and cognitive penetration. From the reasons I have given in the previous chapters, neither of these will introduce any incompatibility with naïve realism, and as such I will not reiterate these arguments here.

Whilst this compatibility section is not as extensive as previous chapters, there are still some elements of the rationality of perception that are distinct and could raise issues for the naïve realist.

Epistemic Status

One of these problems is that the naïve realist needs to account for a perceptual experience having epistemic status. Let's revisit Siegel's view of epistemic charge. To make it clear, we can look at this through the lens of Daniel. In the case of Daniel, his biased belief has poor epistemic status. This status is then inherited by his perceptual experience *and then* transmitted to his strengthened belief. Thus, in this case, Daniel's perceptual experience has an epistemic charge. Siegel goes on to explain that experience can be positively or negatively charged based upon the rational standing which it inherits from, which in her theory is the inference from which the perception was made. Now, this view of experience having epistemic charge is difficult to explain from a naïve realist point of view.

As I have explained in previous chapters, naïve realism is the view that perceptual experience is a relation between the subject and the object of perception, in which the character of that experience is constitutive of the character of the experience. Additionally, the version of the

theory that I have argued in favour of includes that the *way of perceiving* is also significant when it comes to the character of the experience. Given that, it seems difficult to explain where the epistemic charge comes into play. If perception is a relation, then how can it be that the experience inherits this epistemic charge?

There is a potential response to this. It could be that the epistemic charge exists within the relation between the subject and the object. This is because the relation causally depends upon the mental states that occur prior to it. So, in cases of hijacked perceptions, the inference that occurred before the perception impacts the perceptual relations that the subject has. The inference causes the subject to perceive the objects that they do, and in the manner of which they perceive them, hence the hijacking. It would make sense for the epistemic charge of that inference to be passed on to the experience within this relation because of this causal link.

To make this clear, one example of the type of relation that naïve realists accept is acquaintance. The subject is in an acquaintance relation with the object of perception. If the inference that led to the perception is irrational, then that irrationality is passed on through the acquaintance relation between the subject and the object, so the perceptual experience has negative epistemic charge, and is thus irrational.

Character of Experience

An additional point to raise here is that naïve realism is primarily a theory about the character of experience. The question that arises here is, what is the relation between rationality and the character of experience? Is there one? Should an account of epistemic charge interfere or even interact with a naïve realist account of character? They seem to be two different dimensions to experience, an epistemic and a phenomenological dimension. They are surely related. But the question is whether an account of one has implications for an account of the other?

What do I mean by the epistemic charge and the character of experience being different dimensions of experience? The epistemic charge is an epistemic dimension of experience, insofar as it relates to knowledge, justification and rationality. The character of experience is in the phenomenological dimension, in that it relates to how the experience is for the subject. As such, the dimensions are different. Yet, they are both fundamental to the experience.

My account of having the epistemic charge in the acquaintance relation is relevant to the phenomenal character of experience. The character of the experience is constituted by the acquaintance relation with an object, and I am arguing that it is *this* acquaintance relation that enables the epistemic charge to exist in the experience. What does this mean for the constitutive elements of perception?

Given what I have argued above, we can expand the constitutive elements to include the epistemic status, that which is transmitted by the epistemic charge. It cannot be separated from the acquaintance relation, and as such, will be a significant element in the character of experience.

What does that mean for naïve realism? My naïve realist account is now updated and argues that a perception is a relation between a subject and an object, which is constitutive of the character of experience. Also, the *way of perceiving* is constitutive of the character, and now the epistemic charge is also significant for the character. Both of which are tied to the relation, which means that it still maintains the key elements of a naïve realist theory and allows the naïve realist to account for a perception being rationally evaluable.

It also allows for further work to be done on the epistemic power of perception, as it gives a framework for how the epistemic charge gets to be in the perception, why it is so important, and how perceptions are able to rationalise beliefs.¹⁰⁴

Rationally Evaluable Acquaintance relations?

A further objection to the compatibility between naïve realism and the rationality of perception is as follows. Since I have argued that the acquaintance relation between a subject and the object of perception needn't be conscious, then acquaintance relations needn't be evaluable as rational or irrational. When they are so evaluable, as is argued by the rationality of perception, it needs to be explained what feature the experience has come to have which makes that the case. If, as I am arguing, the epistemic status is passed through the acquaintance relation, and that unconscious perceptions can involve these same acquaintance relations, then how are we able to explain the relations being evaluable.

The first thing I want to note is that I have argued that there *can be* unconscious perceptual relations and conscious perceptual relations, and that those unconscious relations are only brought about in certain circumstances. Due to this, I am quite happy to concede that the acquaintance relations that occur during these unconscious perceptions are not rationally evaluable. This is primarily down to them not arising from a rationally evaluable process. In chapter two, I argued for unconscious perceptions through cases of CFS (Continual Flash Suppression), which is brought about in a trial setting. This means the perception involved is not the result of inference, categorisation or any other independent process. They occur within an experiment.

One way to counter these objections is to state that the rationality of perception thesis *only applies* to cases of conscious perception.¹⁰⁵ This is because the vast majority of acquaintance relations in perception are conscious, and the ones we are interested in, and are thus quite easily rationally evaluable, as the subjects are arriving at these conscious perceptual relations via rationally evaluable processes. The naïve realist is able to maintain the argument that the epistemic status comes in through the acquaintance relation.

There is, however, an easier response to this objection. Consciousness is not a condition of rational evaluability. For Siegel, there are rationally evaluable unconscious beliefs and inferences. In her solution to the problem of hijacked perception, she makes reference to an “an ill-founded unconscious presumption” (2017, p.24). If, as she states, the unconscious

¹⁰⁴ For more on naïve realism and rationalising perceptions, see French (2020).

¹⁰⁵ Unless, of course, there is plausible argument for unconscious perception outside of the experimental environment. The argument for the compatibility would thereby need to be developed to include unconscious perceptions.

presumption is ill-founded, then it means it was rationally evaluated. As such, we can take it that not all things that are rational or irrational are conscious. Therefore, we can maintain that the acquaintance relation is rationally evaluable, even in cases of unconscious perception.¹⁰⁶

Propositional Attitude

There is a final issue for the naïve realist. Under naïve realism, perceptual experience is not a propositional attitude, which makes it difficult to explain how perceptual experiences can be rational or irrational. However, it is not only propositional attitudes that have epistemic charges. Pain is an example of this. If one gets a paper cut, we will likely say it is irrational for them to start screaming and rolling around on the floor. That is reserved for situations that are deemed more painful, like breaking a bone for instance. Similarly, if one is showing no pain response to something deemed painful, that would be seen as irrational and further investigated. Thus, pain has an epistemic status despite not being a propositional attitude. So, we can say that same for naïve realism. A perceptual experience can have an epistemic charge (and thus be rational or irrational) even under a naïve realist framework.

If necessary, we can also revisit my point here, that experience can involve representation (which could in fact be propositional) even under a naïve realist view. Thus, there is no compatibility issue for the naïve realist, either they can accept propositional representation, or they can show that experiences need not be propositional to have epistemic charge.

Conclusion

The narrative of this chapter, as I stated in the introduction, is different from all of the previous chapters in the thesis. This chapter has been the result of the previous ones, and the compatibility arguments in the previous chapters have allowed me to examine such a phenomenon from a naïve realist point of view.

The chapter has predominantly been an exploration of the Rationality of Perception. I have explored a couple of versions of the theory, one from Siegel and the other given by Mehta. Both of which I have given detailed explanations of and examined some of the objections to the theory and potential responses that the philosophers may give. I did not set out to argue in favour of one version over another, yet it has occurred that I have argued more in favour of Siegel's account, given its larger scope and explanatory work. Her account shows that some cases which seem to be irrational are in fact irrational, rather than just empirically mistaken.

Having argued that RoP is true, I then turned to how we might view the theory from a naïve realist viewpoint. In doing so, I demonstrated the significance of the work done in some of my previous chapters on the compatibility between naïve realism and cognitive penetration and rich perception. I also explored some additional compatibility worries distinct to Siegel's version of the rationality of perception. These, combined with my arguments for RoP, Siegel's view in particular, have allowed me to argue that the naïve realist can embrace RoP.

¹⁰⁶ This also explains the lack of tension between unconscious perceptions and the idea of the epistemic charge being constitutive of the character of experience, as unconscious acquaintance relations can be rationally evaluable.

This work proves to show the wider purpose of the thesis as a whole. Predominantly, this was to show that naïve realism remains a significant theory within the philosophy of mind, despite the issues raised by the problem of perception.¹⁰⁷ When one moves to examine newer and more contemporary issues for naïve realism, it is possible to look at naïve realism from another angle. I have shown that naïve realism can be used to examine a variety of theories in the future and continue to be a significant theory.

¹⁰⁷ It is important to note that I was *not* arguing in favour of naïve realism over other theories of mind, just that we ought to not write off naïve realism. In order to argue in favour of naïve realism, I would need an additional thesis.

Thesis Conclusion

The thesis had a central aim, which was to show that naïve realism is still a significant theory of perception. I wanted to move past examining the typical problems of perception and explore whether naïve realism has something interesting to say about more modern phenomena. Having reached the end of the thesis, I can say that yes, naïve realism is still relevant, and we can look at all of these phenomena through a naïve realist lens.

In chapter one, I examined the theory of naïve realism in great detail, spending a long time looking at the core commitments of the theory. I explored a couple of versions of naïve realism and decided which was the most useful and convincing version to move forward with.

Chapters two, three and four all introduce perceptual phenomena: unconscious perception, cognitive penetration and rich perception. In all of these chapters, I argue that the phenomena are true and that they can occur within the external world. Having done so, I strived to show that these phenomena are all compatible with naïve realism, insofar as we can examine and accept them under a naïve realist framework. In doing so, I developed my own arguments to support this, drawing on the work done on third relata and ways of perceiving within the literature.

I presented the idea that the relations that occur within conscious perception also occur within unconscious perception, allowing naïve realists to maintain their core commitments whilst accepting unconscious perception. I argued that cases of cognitive penetration were instances of ways of perceiving, where the subject's prior mental states manifested as a certain way. I also argued that in instances of rich perception, the subject is acquainted with the rich properties in the same way that they are when perceiving thin properties. All of which allows naïve realism to maintain compatibility with these perceptual phenomena.

My final chapter is the result of the previous ones. In showing naïve realism's compatibility with cognitive penetration and rich perception, I opened the door to discussions about the rationality of perception. My previous work allowed this. I presented my case for why Siegel offers the best explanation of the rationality of perception *and* that it is true. I drew on the previous instances of compatibility to show that naïve realism is also able to account for the rationality of perception, as there is very little distinct about the theory that precludes this. This compatibility is an advantage for the naïve realist, as it means that their approach can be expanded, and that the naïve realism has the means to weigh in on possible future perceptual phenomena.

So, whilst many people have written off the theory of naïve realism because the problems raised against it, I have defended the view that there is still significant work that can be done with the theory. I have argued that all of these modern perceptual phenomena are true, *and* that naïve realism is compatible with them. This is significant as it offers future avenues for the naïve realist to explore.

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