**Hallucination Without Sensible Qualities**

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The chapter motivates and defends a simple yet controversial thesis about a class of hallucinations. These are visual hallucinations that are both subjectively indiscriminable from ordinary perceptions—dead ringers from a subject’s point of view—and effects of the same kind of proximate causes as those indiscriminable perceptions. The ‘ordinary’ perceptions in question are those which seem to exclusively present ordinary objects and their qualities; my thesis thus does not apply to hallucinations which are subjectively indiscriminable from perceptions that involve, for example, afterimages or other esoteric perceptual phenomena. I focus on this relatively narrow class of ‘causally matching’ hallucinations because even those who deny that hallucinations and perceptions belong to a single fundamental kind (i.e. ‘disjunctivists’ like Martin 2004) admit that what we say about causally matching hallucinations puts direct pressure on what we say about genuine perception. My simple thesis about this narrow class of causally matching hallucinations—what we might dub ‘standard causally matching hallucinations’—is the Null View, which I state here in its intuitive non-canonical form:

Null View (Intuitive Version): Standard causally matching hallucinations fail to place any object or sensible quality before the mind.

The Null View is not a theory of hallucination. It does not tell us what hallucinations are, or why they occur, or all the ways in which they might differ (or not) from perceptions, illusions, dreams, or experiences of afterimages. It merely tells us what a certain sub-class of hallucinations *fail* to do, namely ‘present’ particulars or sensible qualities (I say more about this relation of ‘sensory presentation’ in §1).[[1]](#footnote-2) The Null View is also distinct from familiar ‘negative epistemic’ accounts favoured by those naïve realists who follow Martin (2004).

Almost everyone agrees that a subject who undergoes a standard causally matching hallucination as of (for instance) a red chair does not actually see a chair, or any other mind-independent object.[[2]](#footnote-3) Most also agree that the subject fails to be presented with mind-dependent particulars (i.e. sense data). More radical—yet I shall argue plausible—is the claim that, in addition to the particulars just mentioned, the subject fails to be presented with any sensible qualities (e.g. redness or the shape of a chair). Motivation for this last claim, and thus the Null View, comes in part from a suitably refined and qualified version of the common-sense position that sensory experience places a sensible quality before the mind only if it presents an instance of that quality; the seemingly bizarre alternative is that experience regularly presents uninstantiated qualities. Sense datum theorists accommodate the presentation of property instances in hallucination, but only at a metaphysical cost that few will accept, namely their posit of sense data as objects of awareness. The other (and better) option is to embrace the Null View and deny that standard causally matching hallucinations present ordinary objects, sense data, or sensible qualities. Unlike standard naïve realist treatments of hallucination, then, motivation for the Null View does not presuppose commitment to naïve realism.

Apart from introducing and motivating the Null View in Sections 1 and 2, my main aim is defensive. Opposition to the Null View comes from those convinced on phenomenological or epistemic grounds that hallucinations simply *must* place sensible qualities before the mind. These phenomenological and epistemic arguments—originally developed as arguments against the aforementioned ‘negative epistemic’ accounts—are critiqued, refined, and finally undermined in Sections 3 to 5. The upshot of these sections is neither wholly negative nor restricted to the viability of the Null View. For what emerges is a novel positive account of how hallucination can provide knowledge of what sensible qualities are like, even when hallucination does not place these sensible qualities before the mind. This account explains hallucination’s capacity to provide the relevant knowledge by appeal to hallucination’s ability to provide a specific kind of modal knowledge: namely, knowledge of what sensible qualities *could* be like. And that modal knowledge is in turn explained by the introspective indiscriminability of standard causally matching hallucinations from potential perception.

**§1 The Null View**

The Null View is mostly silent about the nature of sensory presentation. Theorists of sensory experience typically explain what it is like to undergo such an experience partly in terms of the entities that experience presents to the subject who undergoes it. Understood schematically, then, ‘sensory presentation’ (hereafter ‘presentation’) is just a placeholder for whatever relationship of sensory awareness between an entity and a perceiving subject is such that it is necessary for that entity to figure in an explanation of what it is like for the subject to undergo the experience. While schematic, this understanding of presentation is not maximally liberal. It does not allow that just any determinant of what it is like to undergo a sensory experience counts as presented by that experience. Qualia theorists, for example, hold that monadic non-representational intrinsic properties of an experience—‘qualia’—help determine what it is like for a subject to undergo that experience. Yet even if qualia theorists were right, it would not follow that sensory experience presents qualia, for these properties (as standardly understood) are not objects of sensory awareness.

Specific accounts of sensory experience exploit relationships that are more determinate than this placeholder notion of sensory presentation. Sense datum theorists and naïve realists, for example, often insist that presentation of a quality (say a colour or shape) requires that the quality is instantiated in the perceived scene or by some mind-dependent sense datum. By contrast, standard representationalists reject this requirement. They argue that what it is like to undergo a sensory experience wholly depends upon how that experience represents things as standing in the world (i.e. the experience’s ‘representational content’).[[3]](#footnote-4) An entity then counts as presented by an experience only if representing that specific entity is part of what determines what it is like to undergo the experience. A visual experience as of a white cup, for example, might be understood by a standard representationalist as representing, *inter alia*, that there is something white and cup-shaped a few feet away. This experience would then count as presenting whiteness and cup-shapedness, even though these qualities might actually fail to be instantiated (e.g. if the experience is misleading). Would the experience count as presenting the cup itself? In some sense, at least, the experience represents the cup itself, since it is the cup which is the something white and cup-shaped. However, a representationalist could (and usually will) deny that, in a more important sense, the cup is represented by the experience. The experience represents the world as including some object or other that is red and cup-shaped; it does not represent any specific object as that object with those features. Standard representationalists treat this result as a virtue, since they deny that representing that specific cup makes a difference to what it is like to undergo the experience: switching out the cup for another need make no difference to what it is like to undergo the experience.[[4]](#footnote-5)

With this background in place, I am now in a position to provide a canonical statement of the Null View:

Null View (Canonical Version): Standard causally matching hallucinations do not present particulars (including ordinary objects and sense data) or sensible qualities.

While the Null View might seem like a modest claim, since it concerns only a relatively esoteric sub-class of hallucinations, it has major implications for debates about sensory experience. Standard versions of both sense datum theory and representationalism are inconsistent with the Null View. Sense datum theorists accept some version of the Phenomenal Principle:

Phenomenal Principle: Whenever a subject undergoes a sensory experience as of something with a sensible quality (e.g. a colour, shape, etc.), that quality has an instance of which the subject is sensorily aware.[[5]](#footnote-6)

The Phenomenal Principle is straightforwardly inconsistent with the Null View. Moreover, sense datum theorists usually hold that at least in hallucination cases, the sensible quality instances are mind-dependent particulars.[[6]](#footnote-7) Their view is thus profligate where the Null View is austere: hallucinations present not only sensible qualities, but mind-dependent particulars (i.e. actual instances of the qualities). By contrast, standard representationalists offer a third option that splits the difference between the Null View and a sense datum view. Standard representationalism holds that whenever a subject undergoes a sensory experience as of something with a sensible quality (e.g. a colour, shape, etc.), the experience has this character because it represents that something has that quality. Such theorists reject the Phenomenal Principle in part because they deny that hallucinations make us aware of particulars (whether traditional sense data or bare property instances); instead, these experiences merely represent that something has a given quality. At the same time, standard representationalists preserve the sense datum theorist’s rejection of the Null View, since for them an experience represents that something has a given quality just if it ‘presents’ the quality (given our liberal working understanding of ‘presentation’).

There are ways to uphold something like the sense datum theory or representationalism while accommodating the Null View.[[7]](#footnote-8) Yet the standard versions of these views—those that enjoy widespread support—presuppose the falsity of the Null View. And the presupposition extends beyond these positions; many theorists of sensory experience will, upon a little reflection, find themselves in the same camp. But their shared presupposition becomes a serious liability if the Null View is defensible. They not only lose what might have seemed like a virtuous consequence of their view, but acquire a new burden. They must explain why and how we ought to abandon the Null View, despite arguments in its favour.

Beyond its consequences for views inconsistent with the Null View, my argument will have implications for versions of naïve realism that entail the Null View. Martin (2004) has forcefully argued that naïve realism entails disjunctivism—the view that perception and hallucination involve experiences that belong to distinct fundamental kinds—and that this disjunctivism must take a specific form. He argues that naïve realist disjunctivists must hold that no positive account of the conscious character of causally matching hallucinations is possible, and instead rest with only the austere claim that these hallucinations are indiscriminable by reflection from their causally matching perceptions. While worries have been raised about the details of this ‘negative epistemic disjunctivism’—in particular about how to understand the indiscriminability involved—other influential attacks concern the role (or lack thereof) that the view assigns sensible qualities in hallucination. I consider these arguments in section 3, since each can be repurposed into an important objection to the Null View.[[8]](#footnote-9) Yet the Null View is importantly weaker than negative epistemic disjunctivism, though it is entailed by that view. Unlike negative epistemic disjunctivism, the Null View is compatible with the position that a complete account of a causally matching hallucination’s conscious character must involve appeal to features beyond the hallucination’s indiscriminability from a causally matching perception. For instance, a proponent of the Null View could appeal to so-called ‘structural features’ of visual experience that even hallucinations arguably share with perception.[[9]](#footnote-10) However, the connection between the Null View and negative epistemic disjunctivism places the latter in a new light. Negative epistemic disjunctivism is usually understood as a position forced upon naïve realists, one which does not necessarily enjoy support independent of the pressures that push naïve realists to accept it. But if the Null View has independent motivation, then negative epistemic disjunctivism becomes an austere answer to a question that suddenly arises independently of naïve realism: what explains the phenomenal character of causally matching hallucinations if not the presentation of particulars and sensible qualities?

**§2 Motivating the Null View**

My task in this section is modest. I offer neither a comprehensive argument for the Null View, nor a positive account of the conscious character of standard causally matching hallucinations. I instead trace a line of thought that motivates the Null View.

While some effort will be required to unpack it, the line of thought has an intuitive foundation. I cannot see my desk, or a colleague’s roaming dog, unless the desk and dog are present and my perceptual apparatus brings them into view. If my perceptual apparatus really malfunctions, I will see neither desk nor dog: at best, I will hallucinate a desk or a dog. Yet just as the objects we see are out there in the world, so too are their sensible qualities. And plausibly I am aware of brown, say, when I see the desk, or curliness when I see the dog, because I see the desk’s brown paint and the dog’s curly hair. But when I hallucinate a desk or a dog, I see no brown paint or curly hair, so plausibly I see neither brownness nor curliness. Hence, in cutting off our access to the external world, standard causally matching hallucinations fail to put us in perceptual contact with either ordinary objects or sensible qualities. And so unless we have reason to hold that these hallucinations instead place us in some other (less demanding) relation of sensory presentation to sensible qualities (or some other entity, for that matter)—a response I revisit in the latter part of the chapter—the Null View follows.

Building out from this intuitive foundation requires making the case for the following claim:

Sensory Presentation is Occasion-Sensitive: where it seems that some mind-independent particular (e.g. an ordinary object) has a sensible quality, sensory presentation of a sensible quality demands an occasion-specific relation (e.g., the one that occurs in ordinary veridical perception) to that sensible quality, and sensory presentation of a particular likewise demands an occasion-specific relation to that particular.[[10]](#footnote-11)

This thesis allows (but does not entail) that when an object appears to have a property it in fact lacks—as in paradigmatic cases of perceptual illusion—the object’s merely apparent property is also sensorily presented. Perhaps in such cases a subject’s sensory experience sensorily presents the object’s merely apparent property in part because of an occasion-specific relation to the object’s actual properties (e.g. an experience might present orangeness in part because it presents, albeit misleadingly, an instance of red). Yet plausibly no such occasion-specific relation to a mind-independent particular or sensible quality obtains in standard causally matching hallucinations. So if sensory presentation is occasion-sensitive, then these hallucinations present neither mind-independent particulars nor sensible qualities. While this result falls just short of the Null View—since it concerns only sensible qualities and mind-independent particulars—closing the gap requires only the (already widely held) view that causally matching hallucinations also do not present mind-dependent particulars. In order to consolidate this argument for the Null View, then, my main task in the remainder of this section is to defend the occasion-sensitivity of sensory presentation.

My starting point is not a phenomenological or metaphysical datum, but an oft-neglected symmetry between the conditions for perception-based thought about ordinary objects and sensible qualities. It is a familiar observation that perception can enable a subject to think about an object while at the same time misleading her as to what the object is like. Less familiar, but equally compelling, is the parallel observation that perception of a sensible quality (e.g. a colour, a shape, a size) can enable thought about the quality, while at the same time misleading the subject as to what the quality is like.[[11]](#footnote-12) Misleading lighting or other visual cues might, for example, lead you to mistake an oval portrait for a round one, but this error does not entail that you cannot think about the portrait’s shape. If your perceptual situation were to improve, you would not say ‘Ah, now I finally see the portrait’s shape, where before it was hidden from view!’, but instead: ‘I mistook that shape for round, but now I see it is oval). In both the object and the property case, the perception-based thoughts involve a way of thinking about the object or property that is made available only by a perceptual link with the object or property they pick out; call this way of thinking ‘perceptual demonstration’.[[12]](#footnote-13) The thoughts themselves we standardly express with sentences like ‘That object is red’ or ‘That is round’, or (in the sensible quality case) sentences like ‘The ball is that colour’, ‘It’s that shape’, or simply ‘It’s like this’. The core symmetry, then, is that perception may both permit and entitle a subject to believe <that is F> of some ordinary object or sensible quality, despite <that> picking out an object or quality which is not in fact F. Call this the ‘tolerance’ of perception-based thought about ordinary objects and sensible qualities (hereafter ‘Tolerance’).

There are limits to Tolerance. Whereas perception can mislead us about almost any feature of an object without undermining our ability to perceptually demonstrate that object, the same is not true for the perceptual demonstration of sensible qualities.[[13]](#footnote-14) For example, and special stage setting aside (e.g. certain spectrum inversion cases), while a red may look orange without undermining our capacity to perceptually demonstrate the red, that same red would become unavailable as an object of perceptual demonstration if it were to seem to us that we see green. Similar restrictions are plausible for size, shape, and other sensible qualities. Importantly, these limits concern the degree of perceptual error that is compatible with perceptual demonstration; they do not concern which pairs of indiscriminable experiences might permit perceptual demonstration of distinct qualities.

Tolerance entails a further symmetry at the level of perception. Perception permits a subject to think about an entity via perceptual demonstration only if that entity is perceived; or, put another way, a subject maintains a perceptual link with an object or quality only if that object or quality is perceived.[[14]](#footnote-15) Consequently, Tolerance entails that we can perceive ordinary objects and sensible qualities even when perception misleads us about what these entities are like. Perception of both objects and sensible qualities thus admits the possibility of error.[[15]](#footnote-16)

Tolerance is best explained by sensory presentation being occasion-sensitive, and thus Tolerance provides reason to accept the occasion-sensitivity of sensory presentation (and so, I have argued, the Null View). If we type experiences independently of which ordinary objects or sensible qualities they present, then a token experience can mislead about what a presented quality is like only if a token of the very same type of experience might present a distinct and contrary quality. As yet this is not yet a problem for those that deny that sensory presentation of sensible qualities is occasion-specific. They can allow that a token experience presents a specific quality in virtue of its belonging to one mental state type, and misleads a subject in virtue of its belonging to a second mental state type. However, for these theorists the type that explains why a token experience presents the quality that it does must not place a requirement on membership which entails that every token involve an occasion-specific relation to the presented quality. But now the problem is that there is no non-*ad-hoc* way for these theorists to specify a type such that there cannot be two tokens of the same type that present contrary qualities. And this is because Tolerance does not support such a type restriction. Tolerance allows that a subject on one occasion may, for example, see a red and mistake it for orange, and yet on an immediately subsequent occasion undergo a seemingly identical experience that constitutes a case of seeing orange. No principled restriction of type according to species, subject, or anything less specific than features specific to a given occasion can permit a theorist to capture this aspect of Tolerance.

The line of thought traced in this section from Tolerance to the Null View is not irresistible. No deep argument was given for Tolerance (though I say more in its defence in Alford-Duguid 2020), and there are other points at which a determined opponent might find room to resist. Yet it has not been my aim to provide a knockdown argument for the Null View, or a watertight argument against specific alternatives. I have sought instead to show that the Null View has claim to being an independently plausible view of causally matching hallucinations.

**§3 The Asymmetric View**

If the Null View is really true, why does it strike so many philosophers as plainly false? Sense datum theorists reject the Null View because they accept the Phenomenal Principle. A committed adherent to the Phenomenal Principle can resist my case for the Null View. They might accept Tolerance, and yet deny that we can be misled about those sensible quality instances that explain how things seem to us. According to them, these instances are not mind-independent denizens of the external world, but depend upon perception.

The Phenomenal Principle combines a pair of theses: (i) if it seems to us that something has a sensible quality, that quality must be an object of awareness; and (ii) a sensible quality is an object of awareness only if an instance of it is. Philosophers of perception now standardly reject the Phenomenal Principle on the grounds that sense data are ontologically suspect (or at the very least ontologically profligate), and so abandon (i) or (ii), or both. Yet most choose to retain (i). While these opponents are eager to jettison the sense datum theorist’s commitment to sensory experience always providing us with awareness of particulars, they remain convinced that sensory experience always provides awareness of sensible qualities. Call this the ‘asymmetric view’:

*Asymmetric View*: sensible qualities—but not particulars—are presented in sensory experience whenever it seems that something has a sensible quality.[[16]](#footnote-17)

Widespread commitment to the asymmetric view continues to be the greatest threat to the Null View, not least because (if true) it carves out room for a variety of sensory presentation which does not require an occasion-specific relation to an aspect of the outside world (and thereby blocks the motivation for the Null View sketched in the first part of this chapter).

I shall argue that the asymmetric view has its roots in illicit phenomenological reflection as well as a better (but still ultimately unsuccessful) epistemological argument. The remainder of the chapter brings out and then responds to these two pressures in favour of the asymmetric view's treatment of ordinary objects and properties in perception. Left untouched, this treatment pushes leaves open only the question of whether sensible qualities alone are presented in hallucination, or whether they are presented along with some (non-ordinary-object, i.e. sense datum) bearers.

**§4 A Limits to Introspection**

Sensory experience as of something with a sensible quality always *seems* to present a sensible quality. A first question for the asymmetric view is whether introspective reflection can ever support the claim that some sensory experience presents *only* sensible qualities, rather that both sensible qualities and the ordinary objects that appear to bear them. Hallucination is the only case where everyone already agrees that sensory experience fails to present an object. A persuasive introspection-based defence of the asymmetric view must therefore rely on judgements about hallucination.

No such defence is available. In standard visual hallucination cases, you falsely believe that you are still seeing. If your belief is rational, it will be because you cannot tell that you are not seeing. But when you cannot tell that you are not seeing, introspective reflection upon your experience will make it seem that you are *equally aware* of a particular and some of its sensible qualities.[[17]](#footnote-18) A proponent of the asymmetric view may try to take the apparent presentation of sensible qualities at face value, and conclude that there is actual presentation of these qualities. To avoid the Phenomenal Principle, they must reject a parallel move from the apparent presentation of a particular to actual presentation of one. A proponent’s only ground for blocking the parallel move is thus the fact that in hallucination a subject is not presented with an object. Yet a sense datum theorist can accept that fact while insisting that the sensory experience provides presentation of a particular: they simply deny that the relevant particular is an object. Hence, introspective reflection upon standard hallucination cases supports the Phenomenal Principle no less than it supports the asymmetric view. Moreover, proponents of the Phenomenal Principle convincingly argue that their position is less phenomenologically revisionary than the asymmetric view. While both deny that the subject is right about *which* particular he is presented with, only the Phenomenal Principle allows that the subject is right about whether he sees an *instance* of a sensible quality.[[18]](#footnote-19) A proponent of the asymmetric view who relies purely on introspective evidence from standard hallucination cases therefore occupies an untenable position. By rejecting the Phenomenal Principle, proponents of the asymmetric view undercut the introspective evidence for the principle, and so cannot use that very same evidence in support of their own view.

A natural suggestion at this stage is that the asymmetric view follows not from standard hallucination cases, but from reflecting upon those which involve sensory experience that a subject knows to be hallucinatory. Adapting a famous example from Price (1932), suppose you knowingly hallucinate a tomato. Given that you know your sensory experience is hallucinatory, you ought to deny that you are actually presented with a tomato. What about your belief that you are presented with a shade of red, or a tomato-shape? Many insist these beliefs are not similarly undermined by your knowledge that you are hallucinating.[[19]](#footnote-20) If introspection licences this doxastic recalcitrance, then a right account of sensory phenomenology would need to explain why the recalcitrance is reasonable. And one explanation is that sensory experience encodes the fact that awareness of a sensible quality does not depend on awareness of an instance of that quality.

Introspection alone just does not seem sufficient to permit a subject in a known hallucination case to reasonably believe that her experience presents a sensible quality. Introspection cannot alone explain why it would be unreasonable for a subject in these cases to classify an object’s sensible qualities with its material parts. If you knowingly had a vivid hallucination of a tomato, you would not still find it undeniable that you are perceiving a tomato’s stem, or surface. What then makes sensible qualities special? In ordinary sensory experience, sensible qualities seem attached to their bearers in no less an intimate a fashion than these bearers’ parts. Hence it seems perfectly coherent (from the point of view of introspection) to regard sensible qualities as akin to these material parts, such that in hallucination they disappear from view along with the objects that would otherwise instantiate them. Why not then believe that in hallucination cases, one merely *seems* to perceive sensible qualities, much as one merely seems to see the parts of an object? Known hallucination cases furnish no purely introspection-based grounds to reject this suggestion. What other grounds are available? This is a *problem of* *justification*. At the same time, the doxastic recalcitrance described in the previous paragraph requires explanation (if not justification): why does this recalcitrance strike so many as compelling? This is a *problem of* *explanation*.

In the next section I develop the strongest ‘epistemic’ argument for the asymmetric view. It offers the best chance for proponents of the asymmetric view to solve the problems of justification and explanation. For if sound, the argument justifies a subject’s asymmetric treatment of objects (and their parts) and sensible qualities in known hallucination cases. It also explains why doxastic recalcitrance in known hallucination cases can seem so compelling. In both respects the argument constitutes an advance upon other epistemic arguments developed in the mould of Johnston’s (2004) original. Because mine is the best such argument, it will be enlightening to see why it fails. Though the argument turns out to be unsound, leaving us without an answer to the problem of justification (and so without a reason to accept the asymmetric view), the argument’s mere existence explains why doxastic recalcitrance in known hallucination cases can seem so compelling. The argument thus becomes a Trojan Horse: what at first looks like a strong argument for the asymmetric view ultimately serves only to explain away the doxastic recalcitrance that otherwise would stand in the way of abandoning the asymmetric view in favour of the Null View.

**§5 Appeals to Hallucination’s Epistemic Significance**

Sensory presentation plays at least two explanatory roles. On the one hand, that a sensory experience presents a given entity can help explain the experience’s conscious character. Appeals to introspection of the sort canvassed in the previous section exploit this explanatory role. On the other hand, that same presentation can help explain a subject’s ability to think and know about the world. For instance, it is because my visual experience presents the cerulean mug on my desk that I can form perceptual demonstrative beliefs about the mug, and thereby come to know what it is like. ‘Perceptual demonstrative beliefs’ are beliefs made available only by a perceptual link with the item they are about, and standardly expressed with sentences like ‘that is blue’. The formation of new perceptual demonstrative beliefs about an entity plausibly requires sensory presentation of that entity (where, for all we have said so far, this sensory presentation may not demand an occasion-specific relation to the presented entity).[[20]](#footnote-21) As a result, one way to establish that a sensory experience presents a specific entity is to argue that the experience permits a subject to form perceptual demonstrative beliefs about that entity.

**§5.1 Johnston’s Epistemic Argument**

Johnston (2004: 130-131) exploits sensory presentation’s second explanatory role to develop an original and influential ‘epistemic’ argument for the asymmetric view (and eventually against negative epistemic disjunctivism). Suppose you hallucinate a yellow chair. Most agree that this permits you to acquire ‘general’ knowledge, for instance that there is *some* colour brighter than red. Johnston’s innovation is to insist upon the stronger claim that you also acquire *de re* knowledge of a specific sensible quality: on the basis of hallucinating a yellow chair you can know that *that colour* is brighter than red (or, put another way, you can know of yellow that it is brighter than red).

I can secure my *first* singular reference to the quality cherry red or to the structural property C major by way of hallucinating a scene or a tune. Frank Jackson’s Mary could come to know what red is like by hallucinating a red thing or by having a red afterimage. (Johnston 2004: 130)

Perception-based *de re* knowledge plausibly requires sensory awareness. So Johnston’s stronger claim arguably entails that even in hallucination a subject’s sensory experience provides awareness of specific sensible qualities. By contrast, the same sensory experience does not provide *de re* knowledge of an object.[[21]](#footnote-22)

My main objection is that Johnston’s initial premiss is not sufficiently distant from his conclusion. Johnston’s attributions of *de re* knowledge are not plausible unless one already accepts that hallucinations permit perceptual demonstrative belief (or some similar species of *de re* thought) about specific sensible qualities. But the latter claim adds nothing to the bare plausibility of Johnston’s conclusion that the relevant cases involve sensory presentation of sensible qualities, given the presumed tight link between sensory presentation and perceptual demonstrative belief (and perception-based *de re* thought more generally). So the real challenge for Johnston is to defend the following thesis without tacitly exploiting a prior commitment to hallucination presenting sensible qualities:

Properties Before The Mind: In cases of hallucination, sensory experience as of an object permits a subject to form perceptual demonstrative beliefs about those sensible qualities which seem to belong to the object (i.e. it places those qualities ‘before the mind’).

It is far from clear that Johnston has the resources to answer this challenge. Later attempts to refine his argument make the problem only more acute. For instance, Pautz (2007) develops a variant of Johnston’s argument that dispenses with any role for knowledge, and instead begins from a version of Properties Before the Mind. Again, if Johnston’s argument really bottoms out in intuitions about the scope of perceptual demonstrative belief, these intuitions’ closeness to intuitions about sensory presentation make them unable to serve as justification for the asymmetric view.[[22]](#footnote-23) They also cannot explain why the doxastic recalcitrance described earlier remains so hard to shake, and so fail to solve the problem of explanation.

A successful epistemic argument for the asymmetric view must therefore identify an independently compelling commitment about perceptual demonstrative belief, and leverage it into a commitment to Properties Before the Mind. And this is what my new epistemic argument seeks to do (and we will see just how close it comes, only to ultimately fail as an argument for the asymmetric view). Unlike Pautz, but following Johnston, I construct my argument around a claim concerning what hallucination permits us to know (rather than merely what it permits us to think about). However, whereas Johnston begins from a strong (and arguably non-suasive) attribution of *de re* knowledge, my argument begins from the weaker claim that hallucination permits the acquisition of general knowledge about sensible qualities. My independently compelling commitment about perceptual demonstrative belief is a general thesis connecting justification for perceptual demonstrative belief to perception-based justification for general belief.

**§5.2 A New Epistemic Argument**

Even in known hallucination cases a sensory experience plausibly provides general knowledge about a sensible quality.[[23]](#footnote-24) If Jackson’s (1982) Mary hallucinates a red cup, and knows that she is hallucinating, she is in a position to know (or at least justifiably believe) that there is a colour darker than orange.[[24]](#footnote-25) Focussing on general knowledge already generates an asymmetry between sensible qualities and objects in known hallucination: if Mary is hallucinating and knows it, she cannot justifiably form general beliefs about objects based on how the hallucinated object looks (e.g. she cannot justifiably believe that some object is red on the basis of hallucinating a red cup). If this asymmetry could be leveraged to support Properties Before the Mind, the resulting argument would avoid the problems which afflict Johnston (and Pautz by extension). And that is because acquiring general knowledge about properties from perception does not always require perception to place those properties before the mind.

I develop a novel epistemic argument along exactly these lines. The easiest way to make my argument vivid is through a concrete example:

**Hallucinating Hannah:** Hannah has never seen red before. She then undergoes a sensory experience as of a red chair. She forms perceptual demonstrative beliefs about what the chair and its colour are like, beliefs she would express with sentences like ‘That’s a chair’, as well as ‘That colour’s darker than yellow’. She also forms some corresponding general beliefs which she would express with sentences like ‘Something is a chair’, or ‘There’s some colour darker than yellow’. Hannah later learns that she was a victim of hallucination. Which of her earlier beliefs ought she to retract? Since she is victim of a hallucination, there is no object within view that she can actually think about, so she must withdraw her perceptual demonstrative beliefs about the apparent chair. And withdrawing those beliefs ought to force her to withdraw the corresponding general beliefs (e.g. that something is a chair). By contrast, it seems fine for Hannah to retain her general belief that there is some colour darker than yellow. But if that belief remains justified, it owes that status to the justification for her perceptual demonstrative beliefs about the hallucinated colour. So she must accept that her perceptual demonstrative beliefs about the hallucinated colour remain justified, and hence that these beliefs are genuinely about a colour.

The argument exploits a parallel to an unexceptional line of reasoning in the object case, one that connects the failure of aboutness for perceptual demonstrative beliefs to a failure of justification for corresponding general beliefs. At its core is the compelling thought that when a subject forms a general belief on the basis of a perceptual demonstrative belief—for instance believing *something is a chair* on the basis of believing *that is a chair*—then withdrawal of the latter belief requires withdrawal of the former. Here is the line of reasoning in the object case:

1. Special stage setting aside, a perceptual demonstrative belief of the form <thata is F> counts as justified (and thus undefeated) only if the subject does not possess a defeater for the belief that <thata> picks out something.[[25]](#footnote-26)
2. If a belief of the form <something is F> is justified solely by the source that justifies <thata is F>, then the former belief would be defeated if the latter were defeated. [Epistemic Dependence of General Belief on Perceptual Demonstrative Belief]
3. In hallucination cases, if the subject knows that she is hallucinating, she has a defeater for the belief that the relevant <thata is F> beliefs are genuinely about objects (i.e. she has a defeater for the belief that <thata> picks out an object). [Intuition about Perceptual Demonstrative Belief in Hallucination Cases]
4. In these hallucination cases, a subject’s relevant <something is F> beliefs are justified solely by the source that justifies her relevant <thata is F> beliefs.

So:

1. In these cases, the relevant object-directed general beliefs of the form <something is F> (i.e. those that owe their justification solely to the same source as the <thata is F> beliefs) are defeated, and thus the subject is not justified in forming or retaining them.[[26]](#footnote-27)

As the example of Hannah made vivid, the best argument for Properties Before the Mind—and thus the asymmetric view—exploits parallel reasoning to argue in the other direction. It moves from the claim that in known hallucinatory cases a subject is justified in forming general beliefs about sensible qualities, to the claim that in those cases a subject’s sensory experience permits her to form perceptual demonstrative beliefs about specific sensible qualities. The first two premisses are parallel to 1 and 2:

1. A belief of the form <thatf is F> counts as justified (and thus undefeated) only if the subject has no defeater for the belief that <thatf> picks out a sensible quality.
2. If a belief of the form <some property is F> is justified solely by the source that justifies <thatf is F>, then the former belief would be defeated if the latter were defeated.

The argument’s third premiss is a widely—though not universally—endorsed intuition about the epistemic position of subjects in hallucination cases.

1. In hallucinatory cases, if a subject knows that she is hallucinating, her perception-based property-directed beliefs of the form <some property is F> remain justified, and thus undefeated. [Justified General Belief Intuition]

We now need only an analogue of premiss 4:

1. In these hallucination cases, a subject’s relevant <some property is F> beliefs are justified solely by the source that justifies her relevant <thatf is F> beliefs.

Properties Before the Mind follows from **2**-**4** given the added assumption that <thatf is F> cannot be justified unless <thatf> picks out a property. Some may regard this assumption as uncontroversial.[[27]](#footnote-28) However, my argument does not need it. For **1**-**4** on their own entail:

1. A belief that <thatf> in the relevant <thatf is F> beliefs actually picks out a sensible quality remains undefeated by the subject’s knowledge that she is hallucinating.

It might seem that we have not advanced very far with the conclusion that a subject in a known hallucination case has not, in virtue of her knowledge of her perceptual situation, acquired a defeater for the belief that her <thatf is F> beliefs actually pick out sensible qualities. After all, the undefeated belief could turn out to be false. At this stage it is important to remember the dialectical situation. Begin with a case where a subject does not know that she is undergoing a hallucinatory sensory experience. It seems perfectly legitimate for that subject to believe that her experience permits her to think about ordinary objects and their sensible qualities. If she comes to discover that her experience is hallucinatory, she loses any entitlement to treat herself as thinking about objects. And the central task for those who seek to justify treating Properties Before the Mind as a starting point for theorising—including as a foundation for the asymmetric view—has been to argue that such a subject does not also lose her entitlement to treat herself as thinking about actual sensible qualities. By entailing **5**, **1**-**4** provide just such an argument. The resulting argument thus provides a potential solution to the problem of justification, given that perceptual demonstrative belief about an entity plausibly requires sensory presentation of that entity.

The argument also solves the problem of explanation. This was the problem of explaining why in known hallucination cases the belief that you are still presented with sensible qualities remains so hard to shake. That doxastic recalcitrance involved a commitment to a heretofore mysterious perceptual asymmetry between two categories of distal objects of perception: objects and their sensible qualities. Now we get an explanation of this commitment’s apparent plausibility. The explanation rests upon two pillars: (a) the compelling thought that hallucinatory sensory experience permits us to learn general truths about sensible qualities; and (b) a seemingly uncontroversial parallel between the object and property cases with respect to how perception-based justification for general beliefs depends upon perception-based justification for perceptual demonstrative beliefs.

Now let’s take a closer look at the argument’s premisses; duals of the first two are shared between the object and property cases.

**1** is surely uncontroversial.[[28]](#footnote-29) And **2** should appear equally uncontroversial. A standard route to knowing that something is F is by way of knowing that *that* is F. One way to know that *that* is F is via perception. So, for example, if perception entitles you to believe that *that* is F, and in virtue of doing so counts as the sole ground for believing that some property is F, then surely whatever defeats the former belief will defeat the latter.

**3** is the intuition that even in known hallucination cases perception justifies general beliefs concerning sensible qualities. Its role parallels that of the third premiss in the original line of reasoning. That premiss captured a robust intuition about perceptual demonstrative aboutness in the object case. There is disagreement over exactly what sort of general beliefs about properties hallucinatory sensory experiences justify, assuming they justify any at all. Those who accept that perception is ‘diaphanous’ hold that sensory experience’s conscious character wholly derives from the objects of awareness.[[29]](#footnote-30) They may therefore insist that distinct sensible qualities cannot share a look, and so argue that the general beliefs formed in response to hallucination will concern specific sensible qualities (if they concern any at all). By contrast, those that reject the diaphaneity of perception allow that distinct sensible qualities can share a look, and so argue that the general beliefs formed in response to hallucination may not concern a specific sensible quality. It is an advantage of my argument that it takes no stand on the diaphaneity of sensory experience.

This leaves **4**. Its analogue is particularly plausible in the object case, and that is why it has been easy to extend to the property case. Looking ahead, I shall argue the premiss by showing that while its analogue holds for the object case, **4** does not hold for the case of sensible qualities.

I shall close by revisiting how the argument improves on those offered by others. My argumentanchors a commitment to Properties Before the Mind in the claim that known hallucinations can justify general beliefs about sensible qualities. Unlike the intuitions claimed by Pautz and Johnston, my argument’s starting point is consistent with a denial of Properties Before the Mind. And the argument’s other premisses also do not pre-judge issues in the neighbourhood of Properties Before the Mind. They are claims about the structure of justification, the relationship between particular and general thought, and the relationship between justification, truth, and aboutness. As a result, the argument does not turn upon potentially contentious commitments about perception, and this helps to explain why Properties Before the Mind (and thus the asymmetric view) remains so compelling to philosophers with otherwise disparate views about perception.

**§5.3 Weightless Thought**

My new epistemic argument fails because **4** is false. I accept the analogue of **4** for thought about objects—namely 4—so my rejection of **4** reflects acceptance of a deep asymmetry between thought about objects and thought about properties. I elaborate and motivate the asymmetry in this section, and then use it in the next section to undermine **4**.

The asymmetry concerns the requirements on justification for general beliefs about objects and properties. When is a subject justified in believing <something is F> or <some property is F>? For the property case, the belief will be true just in case there is some property which is actually F. Justification for such general beliefs is non-trivial. Yet I contend that one way for someone to justifiably believe <some property is F> is for them to have justification for the ‘modal’ belief that something *could* have a property which is F:[[30]](#footnote-31)

1. Justification to believe that something *could* have a property which is F can justify a subject in believing <some property is F>.

Justification for general beliefs about properties does not always work this way; I will discuss (and explain) some exceptions below. However, from (I) it follows that:

1. Justification to believe <some property is F> does not always require justification to believe that something has a property which is F.

Yet an analogue of (I) is obviously false for general thought about ordinary objects. Instead:

1. Justification to believe <something is F> requires more than justification to believe that an (ordinary) object could be F.[[31]](#footnote-32)

(I)-(III) together generate an asymmetry between property-directed and object-directed thought.[[32]](#footnote-33) In the next section I show how this asymmetry applies to perception-based thought in a way that undermines **2**. But first, why accept (I)-(III)? Why hold that in the property case, but not the object case, justification for a modal belief can suffice for justification for a non-modal general belief?

An initially tempting move is an appeal to the metaphysical thesis that properties exist necessarily whereas objects do not. Yet that will not do. Why should this modal difference show up at the level of thought? And why accept the modal difference to begin with? What we need is a consideration pitched not at the level of ‘deep’ metaphysics, but at the level of thought. We must anchor (I)-(III) in some difference in the roles that ordinary objects and properties play in thought.

The relevant difference is that we standardly treat objects as *specific* and properties as *non-specific*. While there may be aspects of a state of affairs which suffice to permit a maximally specific identification of a property instance it involves, our thought about these properties does not generally rest upon the possibility of such identification; the opposite plausibly holds true for objects. For the purposes of thought, sameness of property standardly matters only insofar as an object’s possession of a property makes a difference to that object. Since properties are the grounds of sameness and difference between things, we are standardly concerned not with those features that tie a property instance to a particular state of affairs, but with those aspects of a property which do not discriminate between instances of it. This is why we can learn about some properties by learning about what merely potential instances would be like.

My anchoring of (I)-(III) also explains when (and why) it is *not* the case that for a given feature F, justification for believing that something could have a property with F suffices to justify believing that some property is F. It is only when a feature ties a property instance to a particular state of affairs that the feature potentially discriminates between instances of that property. And it is this discrimination that blocks learning about what the property is like from what merely potential instances of it would be like. For instance, *Dawn’s favourite colour* is a feature that applies to a colour only because of particular facts about Dawn’s preferences. We therefore cannot believe that there is a colour which is Dawn’s favourite simply on the basis of believing that there could be a colour which is Dawn’s favourite. Justification for the former belief also requires grounds for taking Dawn to have particular colour preferences.

**§5.4 The Application to Hallucination and Austere Modal Empiricism**

My target is **4**:

1. In hallucination cases, a subject’s relevant <some property is F> beliefs are justified solely by the source that justifies her relevant <thatf is F> beliefs.

The asymmetry framed by (I)-(III) undermines **4** because it applies to the relevant general beliefs formed in response to hallucinatory sensory experience. Justification to believe that some sensible quality is F can be secured by justification for the ‘modal’ belief that something *could* have a sensible quality which is F (e.g. a property which is brighter than red). And so if hallucinatory sensory experience can underwrite justification for the relevant modal belief without relying on its presenting a sensible quality—as I shall argue it can—then **4** is false. For if sensory experience can justify <some property is F> without exploiting presentation of a sensible quality, and justification for <thatf is F> cannot survive discovering the absence of such presentation, then justification for <some property is F> beliefs does not proceed solely via justification for <thatf is F> beliefs (i.e. **4** is false).

If I am right, then when Hannah believes that some colour is darker than yellow, her experience justifies this belief because it justifies the modal belief that there could be something with a colour darker than yellow. I shall now provide an account of this justification for the modal belief that preserves a robust epistemic role for perception. This will be an account of how Hannah’s experience provides grounds for her belief, rather than how Hannah manages to appropriately exploit these in forming a justified belief (i.e. an account of how Hannah’s belief is ‘propositionally’ rather than ‘doxastically’ justified).[[33]](#footnote-34)

A plausible condition on justification for Hannah’s modal belief counting as perception-based is that the justification depend on what Hannah’s hallucinatory sensory experience is like. And a minimal—though not necessarily complete or fundamental—characterisation of what Hannah’s experience is like appeals to introspective reflection. Hannah’s sensory experience is such that she is unable (through reflection alone) to discriminate her perceptual situation from that of someone who actually sees a colour darker than yellow.[[34]](#footnote-35)

I propose to explain the justification for Hannah’s modal belief in terms of the indiscriminability of her situation from a potential case of perception, and then explain this indiscriminability’s justificatory significance by appeal to the fact that the potential perception involves presentation of a colour that in the perceptual case would permit experience to justify the belief that *that colour* is darker than yellow. Put simply: Hannah can learn that something could have a colour that is darker than yellow because her experience cannot be discriminated through reflection from a possible perception of a colour that would justify a belief that *that* colour is darker than yellow. Motivation for my proposal comes from considerations of defeat. Hannah’s discovery that she is a victim of hallucination does not undercut her modal belief. By contrast, the discovery that her sensory experience is discriminable from potential perception would undercut the belief. This pattern of defeat suggests (but does not entail) that Hannah’s experience justifies her modal belief because her experience (or at least that aspect in response to which Hannah forms her belief) is indiscriminable from potential perception.

Justification for general beliefs like Hannah’s, on my proposal, is then ordinarily overdetermined in a way that permits it to survive defeat of the relevant perceptual demonstrative beliefs.[[35]](#footnote-36) Her general belief *there is* *some colour darker than yellow* might have been justified both by justification for the perceptual demonstrative belief *that colour is darker than yellow* and by justification for the modal belief *there could be something with a colour darker than yellow*. Were her sensory experience an instance of perception—and so non-hallucinatory—justification for the second belief would amount to justification for the third: the two would not be separable. But it is precisely in hallucinatory cases like Hannah’s that justification for the modal belief plausibly persists even without justification for the perceptual demonstrative belief. The result is an asymmetry between Hannah’s perception-based general beliefs about properties and any perception-based general beliefs about objects. For (III) brings out why Hannah’s perception-based general beliefs about objects cannot survive the discovery that she is a victim of hallucination.

My proposal does not presuppose that Hannah’s sensory experience fails to present a colour darker than yellow; it is therefore compatible with acceptance of Properties Before the Mind. It also preserves an essential explanatory role for sensory presentation of a sensible quality, namely a quality upon which the truth or falsity of Hannah’s general belief depends. Perception provides a base case for perceptual justification, and the base case becomes the foundation for other types of sensory experience due to the indiscriminability of these other cases from the base case.

It is important to emphasise how little weight indiscriminability carries on my proposal (especially when compared to its role in negative epistemic disjunctivism). The indiscriminability need not suffice for presentation of any sensible quality, let alone a specific property, since it does not have to underwrite perceptual demonstrative beliefs about a sensible quality. And it need not exhaust the resources available for an account of the conscious character of hallucinatory experience (unlike on negative epistemic disjunctivism). Instead, it serves only to anchor Hannah’s modal belief by connecting her hallucinatory sensory experience to a potential experience which actually presents a sensible quality. The indiscriminability is thus primitive only with respect to the justification of Hannah’s modal belief, not necessarily with respect to an account of her experience. In effect, indiscriminability acts as a channel along which certain justification can flow from potential cases of perception to hallucinatory experience, much as how on some views testimony acts as a channel along which warrant can transmit from speaker to hearer.

My proposal concerning Hannah’s modal belief is a specific application of a more general view about how experience can permit us to learn about mere metaphysical possibilities. I will state rather than defend the general view here. Given an experience in response to which a subject believes <something could be F>, there will be a class of experiences indiscriminable by reflection from that experience; my general view is that the belief <something could be F> is justified when (and then because) an experience in the specified class is a perception which would justify believing <that is F>.

Austere Modal Empiricism: sensory experience justifies a belief of the form <something could be F> when (and then because) it is reflectively indiscriminable from a case of perception which would justify a belief of the form <that is F>.

Indeed, it is tempting to generalise the view further:

Austere Modal Empiricism (Fully General): sensory experience justifies a belief of the form <possibly p> when (and then because) it is reflectively indiscriminable from a case of perception which would justify a belief of the form <p>.

Austere Modal Empiricism is *empiricist* because it affords perception (and thus sensory presentation) a central and ineliminable explanatory role in a right account of how experience can justify modal beliefs. And the view is *austere* because it does not make justification for the relevant modal beliefs depend on anything beyond a fact about what it is like to undergo an experience, namely its being indiscriminable from a suitable perception. This austerity sets it apart from other broadly empiricist accounts (e.g. Gregory 2020).

**§6 Conclusion**

This has been a chapter of many parts: a brief review is in order. I began with the Null View in §1:

Null View: Standard causally matching hallucinations do not present particulars (including ordinary objects and sense data) or sensible qualities.

I then sketched an argument for the Null View in §2 that jumps off from a neglected observation about perception-based thought:

Tolerance: perception may both permit and entitle a subject to believe <that is F> of some ordinary object or sensible quality, despite <that> picking out an object or quality which is not in fact F.

More must be done to consolidate the path from Tolerance to the Null View. I took a first major step in §§3-5: I first refined, and then undercut, arguments for insisting that causally matching hallucinations sensorily present sensible qualities. These I framed as arguments for the ‘Asymmetric View’ that sensible qualities—but not particulars—are presented in sensory experience whenever it seems that something has a sensible quality. The most influential have been broadly epistemological arguments descended from Johnston (2004), and I developed a new and improved argument of this sort in §5. Bringing out why even my improved argument fails required a novel account of how hallucination can provide knowledge of what sensible qualities are like even when hallucination does not place these sensible qualities before the mind. On my Strawson-inspired account, hallucination’s capacity to provide the relevant knowledge rests on its ability to provide a specific kind of modal knowledge, namely knowledge of what sensible qualities *could* be like. What explains this modal knowledge, according to my Austere Modal Empiricism, is the introspective indiscriminability of the relevant hallucinations from potential perception.[[36]](#footnote-37)

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1. For this reason, the Null View is not a straightforward contribution to the fascinating ongoing debate about what hallucinations are, what kinds there can be, and how (if at all) they differ from perception and imagination. Recent work in this debate includes Byrne and Manzotti (2022), Beck (2021), Masrour (2020), and Allen (2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. This remains true even of those, like Byrne and Manzotti (2022), who insist that ordinary hallucinations involve perception of an object. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Representative representationalists include Anscombe (1965), Dretske (1995), Tye (1995), and Chalmers (2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. For a recent defence of this view, see Hill (2019), though it has been held in one form or another by most representationalists. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. The principle owes its name to Robinson (1994: 32). Recent sense datum theorists include Price (1932), Jackson (1977), Robinson (1994), and Sethi (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Standardly sense datum theorists hold that these property instances consist in the inherence of a quality in mind-dependent substance. By contrast, Sethi (2020) argues that the quality instances instead directly depend upon a mind for their instantiation, rather than some mind-dependent substance. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. An obvious option is to endorse a form of disjunctivism and so restrict these views to veridical perception and illusion, and allow a heterodox treatment for (at least) causally matching hallucinations. There are nice and hard questions about how much of the original motivation for representationalism or a sense datum theory could extend to such disjunctivist variants. Another option available to representationalists is to deny that sensible qualities are ever presented by sensory experience (as Chalmers 2004 effectively does), but this move becomes hard to square with transparency arguments for representationalism (as Chalmers 2006 acknowledges). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. For the relevant arguments against negative epistemic disjunctivism that focus on the role assigned by that view to sensible qualities in hallucination, see Johnston (2004), Pautz (2007), and Sethi (2020). And see Alford-Duguid and Arsenault (2017) for an extended discussion of the complicated dialectic between Pautz and Johnston, on the one hand, and negative epistemic disjunctivists, on the other. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Martin (1992) framed and launched the contemporary discussion of sensory experience’s structural features (see also Martin 1995). That ongoing discussion includes Richardson (2010), Soteriou (2013), Mac Cumhaill (2015), and Alford-Duguid (2024). See also Lande (2021) for a different—though related—notion of perceptual structure. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Note that this is substantially weaker than the claim that we never perceive a quality without perceiving an instance of it (for commitment to the stronger claim, see Schellenberg 2018). It does however share a common intuitive core with that stronger thesis, since the base case of an occasion-specific relation to a quality will be a relation to an instance of that quality. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. For elaboration and defence of this observation, as well as discussion of its implications for a right account of how perception justifies belief, see Alford-Duguid (2020) (and also a later response by Millar 2023). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. I am relatively agnostic at this stage about a variety of features of perceptual links: these links may be more or less fundamental than sensory experience of a scene; and a perceptual link with a property F may not require that anything in the perceived scene look F. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. For this point, see Alford-Duguid (2020). It is inspired by an observation in Brewer (2011) about the perception of objects. See also Sethi (forthcoming), who presses a related point against those naïve realists tempted to endorse a radical form of diaphaneity about perception. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Note that at this stage I do not take it to follow from a quality being perceived that an instance of that quality in present in the surrounding scene; it might be that some less demanding relation of sensory presentation suffices for a quality to be perceived, and thus made available for perceptual demonstration. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Importantly, this result is consistent with forms of both sense datum theory and representationalism (see Alford-Duguid 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. The asymmetric view is directly defended by Johnston (2004), but many explicitly or implicitly endorse it, including Dretske (1999), Chalmers (2006), Pautz (2007), and Ivanov (2019). One reason for its general popularity is that the view is entailed by standard representationalist accounts of sensory experience. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Note that I do not want to make the stronger claim that introspection provides as much evidence, in this case, for hallucinations presenting objects and their qualities as it provides for perceptions presenting objects and their qualities. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. For this phenomenological point, see Sethi (2020: 589). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Compare: ‘If I knowingly had a vivid hallucination of elephants, I would of course deny that I am aware of elephants. But I would, I think, find it undeniable that there are certain shades of grey of which I am aware.’ (Pautz 2007: 505) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Cf. Russell (1913/1984); Campbell (2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Johnston (2004: 129). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. For a developed version of this line of criticism, see Alford-Duguid & Arsenault (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Cf. Johnston (2004), Pautz (2007), Matthen (2010), Ivanov (2019). I do not claim that this intuition is beyond question, but it is at least wholly distinct from Properties Before the Mind. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Note that what is known here is not tacitly modal: it is not simply the claim that such a colour could be instantiated, but that there *exists* such a property (instantiated or not). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. I’m allowing <F> to range over predicates expressing both properties of objects and properties of properties; when necessary, I also use subscripts to distinguish demonstrative representations of objects and properties. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Nothing in this premiss, or 1 for that matter, pre-judges whether perceptual demonstrative beliefs about objects can be justified in hallucinatory cases. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Though Dickie (2015) argues against the analogous assumption for perceptual demonstrative belief about ordinary objects. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. If the premiss were false, a subject could remain justified in believing <thatf is F> even if she could not accept that <thatf> picks out anything. And that seems wrong. Your belief counts as justified only if it is rationally coherent. At minimum, it is rationally coherent to believe something only if you can take it to be true. Yet <thatf is F> cannot be true if <thatf> fails to be about anything, so you can take <thatf is F> to be true only if you can still take <thatf> to pick out something. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Martin (2015: 175) attributes the thesis to G. E. Moore. See French (2018) for discussion, as well as Sethi (forthcoming). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. I remain reasonably neutral—though perhaps not perfectly neutral—with respect to the metaphysics of properties. I could even accept a view on which there are in fact only property instances, and so (strictly speaking) no uninstantiated properties. Such a view would still need an account of how there might be F-involving truths in worlds with no instances of F (e.g. the truth that nothing is F, or that something could be F). And an obvious option is to take the class of potential instances of F: if none of those instances are present, it is true that nothing is F; if the class is non-empty, it is true that something could be F; and so on. See Armstrong (1989: 80-81) for scepticism about inferences from the possibility of an instance of a property to the existence of that property. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. I restrict the claim to ordinary objects in order to avoid potential complications involving necessary objects. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. In characterising an asymmetry at the level of thought in terms of (I)-(III), I draw inspiration from oft-neglected remarks in the second half of Strawson’s *Individuals* (1959: 186) about predicates not generally carrying the same ‘weight of fact’ as singular terms. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. I do not take a stand on exactly how to understand this now familiar epistemological distinction. For a recent book-length treatment of how perception might provide propositional justification, see Smithies (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Cf. Martin (2004) for an elaboration of the relevant notion of indiscriminability. While objections have been raised to Martin’s use of this notion of indiscriminability in stating and defending negative epistemic disjunctivism (e.g. by Siegel 2004, 2008), the use to which I propose to put the notion is different enough from Martin’s that I neatly avoid the criticisms levelled against his. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. This overdetermination does not settle whether Hannah’s general belief is *more* justified when she perceives than when she merely hallucinates, or whether the strength of the justification is the same. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. I would like to thank the editors of this volume, Farid Masrour and Ori Beck, for their extraordinary patience and thoughtful feedback, all of which led to major improvements. The chapter also benefited enormously from conversations with (and often written feedback from) Fatema Amijee, Imogen Dickie, Umrao Sethi, Peter Epistein, Mike Martin, Adam Pautz, Alex Moran, John Campbell, Matt Soteriou, Bill Brewer, Murat Aydede, Paul Audi, Ivan Ivanov, and Anil Gomes. Thanks also to audiences at the University of British Columbia, Brandeis University, the University of Oxford, the University of Rochester, and the New Waves in Relationalism Conference. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)