

PHILOSOPHY OF PERCEPTION AND LIBERAL NATURALISM

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1. INTRODUCTION

Perceptual experience is the moment where a subject's conscious mind 'makes contact' with her mind-independent world. The central, traditional problems for philosophers of perception have been to give an account of this conscious perceptual 'contact' – that is, to say both what its metaphysical nature or structure is, but also how it manages to perform the epistemic role of providing the subject with information about her surroundings, allowing her to form accurate beliefs, to become knowledgeable about her environment.

This chapter will explore the connections between these traditional problems of perception and the recent opposition between “Strictly Scientific”, reductive forms of Naturalism vs. “Liberal”, non-reductive forms of Naturalism. It is a striking fact about the recent history of philosophy that two of the most prominent figures associated with Liberal Naturalism – John McDowell and Hilary Putnam – were also both extremely influential on the philosophy of perception and in particular on the rise of relational and disjunctivist theories of perceptual experience. It is therefore worth considering what exactly the relationship is between Liberal Naturalism and theories of perceptual experience. In particular, we will consider whether holding a specific theory about the nature of perceptual experience should incline one towards or away from Liberal Naturalism. And conversely whether a commitment to some form of Liberal Naturalism should incline one towards or away from one or more of the standard views about perceptual experience.

Liberal Naturalism is not a precisely defined philosophical thesis. Rather, the label 'Liberal Naturalism' refers to a cluster or family of views about what it takes for something to count as a real, genuine part of the natural world¹. Liberal Naturalism is standardly characterized in opposition to *Strictly Scientific Naturalism*, which seeks to limit what counts as a real or genuine part of the natural world to whatever entities and features appear in our best/(final/completed?) scientific theories – or which can be explained by or reduced to the entities and features admitted by science². In contrast, Liberal Naturalists insists that there is some range of phenomena that cannot be reduced to scientific entities/features (nor can be properly investigated and theorized using scientific methods) but which are nonetheless perfectly real and genuine features of the natural world and so which need not be thought of as somehow supernatural or 'spooky'³. In order to get a more precise grip on the commitments of a distinctively Liberal Naturalist take on some topic/phenomenon, one would want to say whether and how it differs from some kind of non-reductive materialism⁴ and also

¹ Some prominent advocates of Liberal Naturalism include: P.F. Strawson, Hilary Putnam, John McDowell, Huw Price, Richard Rorty, Jennifer Hornsby, Barry Stroud. Some would also interpret Wittgenstein as espousing a form of Liberal Naturalism – see Cahill & Raleigh (2018) for a collection of essays focused on Wittgenstein's Naturalism.

² Some prominent advocates of Strictly Scientific Naturalism include: W V O Quine, David Armstrong, David Lewis, Frank Jackson, David Papineau, Alex Rosenberg.

³ Two particularly important and influential collections of essays devoted to the topic of Liberal Naturalism are: De Caro & Macarthur (2004), De Caro & Macarthur (2010).

⁴ It is plausible that at least *most* Liberal Naturalists would accept a weak supervenience thesis to the effect that everything somehow or other supervenes on the total, universe-wide state of the fundamental particles and forces that are investigated by physics. This sort of supervenience is widely accepted to be necessary, though not sufficient, for some form of materialism or physicalism, since some non-naturalist or dualist positions could also accept such supervenience.

how exactly it differs from non-naturalism. However, given that these sorts of questions are addressed extensively by other chapters in this volume, I will not attempt to say anything further here to pin down the notion of Liberal Naturalism more precisely.

The plan for this chapter then is as follows: section 2, below, briefly outlines the traditional problems of perception and the main standard views in current philosophy of perception. Section 3 considers how Liberal Naturalism interacts with the philosophy of perception. Section 4 focuses on the work of McDowell and Putnam. Section 5 discusses the topic of colour. Finally, section 6 provides a very brief conclusion.

2. THE TRADITIONAL PROBLEMS OF PERCEPTION

The traditional philosophical problem of perception can be stated briefly as follows: our ordinary (intuitive, pre-theoretical, 'naïve') conception of perceptual experience is that we are simply and directly conscious of the external, mind-independent features in our immediate vicinity. This is sometimes put in terms of our minds being 'open' to the external world, or that we are simply 'presented' with or 'acquainted' with external objects in our surroundings. But then reflection on the possibility of perceptual illusions and hallucinations – and perhaps also phenomena of perceptual relativity and also time-lag between light reflecting from a distal stimulus and our experience of it – can seem to undermine this ordinary intuitive conception of experience and to suggest that our perception of our external surroundings is importantly *indirect*, involving conscious awareness of some kind of mental intermediary or representation. This general dialectic can be pursued with an emphasis on the metaphysics of experience – i.e. as a question about the metaphysical relation between certain kinds of conscious experience and the external environment that these experiences are experiences *of*. And it can also be pursued with a more epistemological emphasis via the question of whether/how perceptual experiences can provide us with knowledge and justified beliefs about our surroundings. Perhaps the simplest form of argument that is meant to undermine our ordinary conception of perceptual experience is the argument from hallucination (similar, though somewhat more complicated, arguments for the same conclusion can be mounted based on the possibility of illusions, or on the relativity of perceptual appearances to facts about the perceiving subject).

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- (1) In a (totally) hallucinatory experience we are not in direct conscious contact with our external surroundings.
- (2) **Common Kind Assumption:** Hallucinations and normal perceptual experiences are fundamentally the same kind of conscious state.
- (3) SO: in normal perceptual experiences we are not in direct conscious contact with our external surroundings.

The first premise here is rarely contested – perhaps it is thought to simply fall out of the meaning of 'hallucination'⁵. So the main philosophical action has concerned the 2nd premise – the Common Kind assumption. There are two main lines of thought that are standardly offered in support of this Common Kind Assumption:

- (i) For any normal perceptual experience there could be a hallucinatory experience that is subjectively indistinguishable. And if two experiences are subjectively indistinguishable then they are fundamentally the same kind of conscious state.
- (ii) For any normal perceptual experience there could be a hallucinatory experience that involves exactly the same neural processes in the brain. And if two experiences involve

⁵ However, see Raleigh (2014), Ali (2016), Masrour (forthcoming) for papers which explore denying the first premise. See also Stoneham (forthcoming) for similar exploration of this sort of move in the context of dreams.

exactly the same neural processes then they are fundamentally the same kind of conscious state.

Metaphysical Disjunctivism⁶ is the denial of the Common Kind Assumption – even if the perceptual experience and the hallucinatory experience may be subjectively indistinguishable and neurally identical, they are fundamentally different kinds of conscious states. (What constitutes the phenomenal character in the good, perceptual case is fundamentally different from what constitutes the phenomenal character in the bad, hallucinatory case.) Disjunctivists have thus argued against both (i) and (ii), denying that either subjective indistinguishability or neural similarity would entail that there is the same fundamental kind of conscious state in both cases. If metaphysical disjunctivism can be made plausible then it would allow us to endorse both the intuitive, ‘naïve realist’ idea that in normal successful perception we are directly conscious of our external surroundings and also the intuitive idea that there can be hallucinatory situations where we merely seem to be perceiving our surroundings though we are not in fact in conscious contact with the external environment.

The conclusion of the argument from Hallucination is explicitly about the metaphysics of experience: it denies the claim that normal ‘veridical’ experiences can consist in a direct relation of conscious acquaintance with the external environment. But if we are thinking about the epistemology of perception, the idea that what we are directly *given* in experience, as a basis for forming perceptual beliefs, is just a *subjective appearance* of the external environment – something that is *epistemically* in common to both normal perceptions and hallucinations (or other sceptical scenarios involving demons, Brains-in-Vats, etc.) – raises the following, traditional sceptical line of thought:

- (1) All that we are directly given in any perceptual experience as a basis to form perceptual beliefs about the external world are mere perceptual *appearances* of the external world – something which may or may not turn out to be genuine perceptions.
 - (2) Such a perceptual appearance that p cannot justify a belief that p (where p is some claim about the external world) unless we have some basis for supposing that the perceptual appearance really is a genuine perception – i.e. that experiences are mostly accurate/reliable.
 - (3) There is no non-question-begging basis for supposing that perceptual appearances are (mostly) accurate/reliable.
- SO: (4) Perceptual experiences cannot justify beliefs about the external world.

Notice that the first premise here is plausibly consistent with accepting some form of Naïve Realist or ‘Relational’ view concerning the *metaphysics* of experience. For even if we are sometimes directly acquainted with external items and features, one might still hold that we cannot tell just by introspecting such an external-world-involving experience whether it really is a genuine, world-involving perception or whether it is a hallucination (or dream). And so epistemically speaking all one is ‘given’ to work with is the perceptual appearance of the external world (even if in fact that appearance is partially constituted by the external world.)⁷ Epistemological disjunctivism denies the first premise: in good cases we are presented with more than just a mere appearance that p, we can be presented with the very fact that p. Even if we can be deceived by hallucinations/illusions into thinking that we are in the good case when we are actually in the bad case, still the epistemic position of the subject who is actually in the good, perceptual case is fundamentally different to the subject who has a mere, illusory perceptual appearance that p⁸. See e.g. McDowell (1994, 2008) Pritchard (2008, 2012) for

⁶ Metaphysical disjunctivism is standardly credited first to Hinton (1967, 1973). It was then developed by Snowdon (1981) and McDowell (1982). Metaphysical disjunctivism is expounded and defended most extensively in the work of M. G. F. Martin (2004, 2006).

⁷ Many thanks to Craig French for helpful correspondence.

⁸ The precise relationship between epistemological disjunctivism and metaphysical disjunctivism is a substantive question. But *prima facie* it seems that the two theses are independent – one could endorse

influential statements of the view. In contrast, Macarthur (2003) and Wright (2008) are both dubious of the supposed anti-sceptical power of epistemological disjunctivism.

Jim Pryor (2000) influentially argued against premise (2), insisting that a perceptual experience as of *p* can justify a belief that *p* even in the absence of any positive belief or evidence that one's experience is generally reliable – so long as there is no positive belief or evidence that one's experience is *unreliable*. This position has come to be known, following Pryor, as 'Dogmatism' about perceptual justification.

Some traditional foundationalists accept the first two premises but deny the 3rd, arguing that we can have a legitimate basis for supposing that our perceptual appearances are generally a reliable guide to the external world. E.g. Russell (1912) and Bonjour (2003) claim that we have a good *abductive* basis for taking our experiences to be mostly reliable. Whereas Descartes (in)famously appealed to the perfection of God as an a priori basis for supposing that perceptual appearances are generally an accurate guide to our surroundings.

Some traditional coherentists can be understood to simply accept this whole argument, but without thereby embracing scepticism concerning knowledge of the external world, since they deny that perceptual experiences play the role of justifying beliefs in the first place, insisting that 'only a belief can justify another belief' (Davidson, 2001[1983]). Instead, a coherentist claims that our beliefs about the external world can be justified on the basis of their coherence with all the other beliefs in our total set of beliefs⁹.

The traditional problem of perception has given rise to a range of standard positions. A now somewhat old-fashioned kind of taxonomy divided theories of perception into 3 groups:

- DIRECT REALIST theories – which claim that we are (at least sometimes) directly conscious of our mind-independent surroundings (in some sense of 'direct').
- INDIRECT REALIST theories – which accept that we perceive the mind-independent world via a 'veil of appearances'.
- PHENOMENALIST/IDEALIST theories – which deny that there is a mind-independent world distinct from all conscious appearances in the first place.

These days, a standard sort of taxonomy would identify the following 4 major positions:

- **Sense-Data** views – in perceiving our environments we are directly conscious of non-environmental particulars – 'Sense-Data' – whose properties constitute the phenomenal character of our experiences. We are thus only indirectly conscious of the physical objects in our environment¹⁰. See e.g. Russell (1912, 1927), Moore

either one without endorsing the other. Thus an epistemological disjunctivist could allow that, or at least be agnostic whether, there is a common kind of conscious phenomenal character in both good and bad cases. And conversely, as mentioned in the main text, above, it seems that a metaphysical disjunctivist could accept that we are in a common epistemic position in both good and bad cases. See French (2016, 2019) for further discussion.

⁹ However, some coherentists do allow that experiences play *some* kind of important epistemic role – see e.g. Rescher 1973, Bonjour 1985.

¹⁰ Note: whilst more recent sense-data theorists such as Robinson (1994) and Foster (2000) take Sense-Data to be *mental* particulars, Russell (1912) and Moore (1910) insisted that are not mental or mind-dependent, though they are supposed distinct from anything in our physical environments. A further complication: Bermudez (2003) and Jackson (1977) both take sense-data to be located out in normal physical space, though they are still mind-dependent. Note also: as Russell and Moore originally introduce the term, 'sense-data' is just meant to refer to *whatever* it is that we are directly conscious of – so it is not part of the definition of 'sense-data' that they are non-environmental or non-physical entities, though this is something we may discover by reflection, introspection and philosophical argument.

(1910) Price (1932), Broad (1925), Jackson (1977), Foster (2000), Robinson (1994), Bermudez (2003).

- **Adverbial** views – perceptual experiences are conscious mental states which do *not* have a binary, act-object structure. Instead, the perceiving subject is understood to be conscious in a specific *way*. So, for example, rather than standing in a relation of (direct) conscious awareness to an external instance of redness, or to a red sense-datum, the subject is said to experience ‘redly’ – i.e. in a specific phenomenally red manner. See e.g. Ducasse (1942), Chisholm (1957), Cornman (1971), Sellars (1975), Tye (1975, 1984). More recently, the pure qualia or ‘pure mental paint’ view of Papineau (2021) could also be classified here.
- **Representational/Intentionalist** views – perceptual experiences are conscious mental states with a representational content, which content at least partially determines the phenomenal character of perception. The perceptual experience, like a belief or a desire, is intentionally directed towards some object or objects, but this object need not actually exist. The general idea that perceptual experiences are representational is these days the orthodoxy in philosophy. There is then a huge variety of views within the broad representational framework, which disagree over the precise nature of the content of the representational state and its relation to phenomenal character. See e.g. Harman (1990), Tye (2000), Byrne (2001), Dretske (2003), Chalmers (2004), Siegel (2010).
- **Naïve-Realist/Relational** views – in perceiving our environments we have direct conscious awareness of physical objects and features in our environment, which at least partially constitute the phenomenal character of the experience¹¹. See e.g. Campbell (2002), Brewer (2011) Martin (1998, 2002, 2004, 2006) Travis (2004) Johnston (2006).

Sense-Data and Adverbial views would both naturally be counted as avowedly indirect¹². Whereas, Naïve-Realism aims to capture notion of ‘direct contact’ between mind and world as literally as possible with its claim that external features can partially constitute a perceptual experience. Representational views are these days generally presented as being a direct view (we are directly aware of external features themselves by being in a conscious state which accurately represents them). However, most Representational views typically accept the Common Kind assumption and so it not entirely clear whether they really capture the intuitive notion of direct open-ness to the world. On the other hand, there are some representational theorists who are happy to accept that perceptual experience is metaphysically indirect (involves awareness of intermediaries). And of course, there are also various possible ‘hybrid’ positions which combine elements from two or more of the above positions¹³.

¹¹ However, see Beck (2019) for a version of the Relational view which denies that phenomenal character is constituted by external items/features.

¹² Though it is typically denied that we *perceive* Sense-Data, perceptual contact with the external world is indirect insofar as we perceive our physical objects and features in virtue of being directly conscious of something else, the Sense-Data, distinct from those physical features. In contrast, Adverbial theorists deny that experience has an ‘act-object’ structure and so they are not obviously committed to the idea of a *mental intermediary*. Nevertheless, they would deny that in perceptual experience we are ‘open to the world’ and would accept that in both the metaphysical and epistemic senses, what we are ‘given’ is fundamentally the same in both perceptual and hallucinatory cases. Thanks once more to Craig French for helpful discussion.

¹³ For example, ‘weak intentionalist’ positions combine representational content with non-representational qualia, effectively blending representational with adverbial elements – see e.g. Peacocke (1983) or Block (2003). Whereas, McDowell, at least at the time of *Mind & World* (1994), espoused a hybrid position combining elements of Naïve Realism and Representationalism.

To be clear, there is much more to the philosophy of perception than just the traditional problems outlined above! Just to give a few examples of some much-discussed questions: how to differentiate the different senses, what the causal conditions on perception are, whether and to what extent perceptual experience can be ‘cognitively penetrated’ by our beliefs and biases. One topic that is especially relevant to Liberal Naturalism is the opposition between ‘Thick’ vs. ‘Thin’ accounts of which properties we can (directly, genuinely) perceive. According to Thin views, the phenomenal character of perceptual experience is exhausted by the experiential presentation of ‘low-level’ properties such as shapes and colours and textures¹⁴. According to Thick views, the phenomenal character of perceptual experience can also sometimes (often) involve the experiencing of ‘high-level’ properties such as: natural kinds, causal relations, meanings, functions, affordances, and perhaps also normative and value properties (see section 3.3, below)¹⁵.

3. HOW DOES PHILOSOPHY OF PERCEPTION INTERACT WITH QUESTIONS ABOUT NATURALISM?

Philosophical views on what is most fundamental or real in nature have long influenced and been influenced by philosophical accounts of perceptual experience. Perhaps the clearest historical example is how the mechanical philosophies of the early modern period gave rise to the distinction between primary vs. secondary qualities and to theories about how we perceive and what we perceive. Various important early modern thinkers – including Galileo, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke and Boyle – held that *mechanical properties*, such as size and shape, motion and rest, were the fundamental properties of matter. Whereas other non-mechanical properties – including not only colours, smells and tastes, but also electrical and magnetic properties – were held to be non-fundamental and to be *explained by* the fundamental mechanical properties. This is a general metaphysical picture of the material world that can be thought of as a species of strict scientific naturalism; the mechanistic philosophers sought to explain everything physical in terms of a relatively small set of (what they took to be) scientifically respectable properties. Those features that were not thus explicable – such as the qualitative natures of the colours – were held to be mind-dependent, features of our ideas rather than being genuine, mind-independent features of the physical world. This general mechanistic world-view was reflected in, for example, Locke’s account of how we perceive the world. According to Locke we only have direct conscious access to our own ideas – i.e. mental entities – which mediate our perceptual access to material objects and features in our surroundings. Material objects and ideas can ‘resemble’ each other in some respects but not others. Both ideas and material objects can have sizes and shapes and motions, the ‘primary qualities. But our ideas of colours and smells and tastes are supposed to have no resemblance in the material objects that normally cause these ideas. Thus secondary qualities as attributed to physical objects are held to be ‘in truth nothing in the Objects themselves, but Powers to produce various Sensations in us by their *primary Qualities*’ (Locke, 1975[1690], II.iii.9, 135) – i.e. colours, smells and tastes, qua properties of external objects, are observer-dependent, dispositional properties, that depend on the more fundamental, observer-independent primary qualities. And the *qualitative* natures of colours, smells and tastes are held not to be features of the external environment at all, but rather features of our own sensations/ideas that we mistakenly ‘project’ onto the external, material bodies. These early modern debates show the interplay between a general metaphysical picture of what counts as a genuine/real feature of the (mind-independent) natural world and an account of how we make conscious perceptual contact with that world. (Though of course

¹⁴ For examples of ‘sparse’ accounts, see: Brogaard, 2013; Byrne, 2009; Pautz, 2008; Prinz, 2013; Sosa, 2015; Tye, 1995, 2000.

¹⁵ For examples of ‘rich’ accounts, see: Bayne, 2009; Butterfill, 2009; Scholl & Tremoulet, 2000; Siegel, 2006, 2009, Nanay 2012.

in this period a mechanistic account of material objects and their properties would be standardly combined with a dualist metaphysics when it comes to mental states and properties.)

But leaving aside the historical interplay between these topics, what general theoretical connections are there between Liberal Naturalism and the standard positions in philosophy of perception? More specifically: whilst there is in fact a notable overlap between philosophers who endorse Liberal Naturalism and those who endorse some species of naïve-realism and/or disjunctivism, is there any substantial theoretical connection between these positions? And conversely, is there any genuine tension or inconsistency between Liberal Naturalism or Strictly Scientific Naturalism and any of the other standard views on perception?

One obvious way that there could be a flat-out inconsistency is if one held some strict/reductive version of naturalism according to which there really are no such things as X's. Then one would, of course, be committed to rejecting any view of perception that claimed that we can perceive X's or that X's are somehow essentially involved in perception. So, for example, suppose X is: external, physical colours – any strict scientific naturalist who denied that such colour properties exist in the physical environment would also clearly have to reject any Naïve Realist theory which held that external colours are a constitutive element in visual experience. Or, suppose X is: private sense-data or qualia – any strict scientific naturalist who denied the existence of these private items would obviously have to reject any theory which was committed to such entities.

3.1 Naïve Realism & Liberal Naturalism

It is sometimes claimed that Naïve Realism enjoys some kind of default or presumptive status, so that the view should only reluctantly be given up in the face of persuasive arguments¹⁶. As discussed above, whilst arguments from hallucination and illusion have been thought persuasive by many philosophers, disjunctivism has recently emerged as a possible strategy for resisting these arguments. However, another reason that might persuade one to abandon Naïve Realism is the idea that modern science has shown us that the world is not really populated by objects composed of a homogenous substance with sharp boundaries and coloured surfaces – though it may appear so in perceptual experience. Rather, it turns out that the objects in our environment are actually composed of scattered clouds of micro-particles that have neither familiar macroscopic shapes nor colours. So we could not, as Naïve Realism claims, be directly perceptually acquainted with external instances of such familiar shapes and colours¹⁷. Here it seems that one way for a Naïve Realist to resist this latter, 'scientific' line of thought would be to embrace something like Liberal Naturalism and insist that there can be more in our natural environments for us to perceive than is described by fundamental physics. Thus Naïve Realism might incline one towards Liberal Naturalism at least with respect to colour (*qua* intrinsic sensible quality of external objects) and macroscopic shape. However, it is also possible to combine Naïve Realism with a reductively physicalist account of colour¹⁸ – for further discussion of colour see section 5, below.

Another connection between Naïve Realism and Liberal Naturalism emerges via the topic of 'structural realism'¹⁹. Epistemic structural realism is the idea that our scientific theories can at best provide Knowledge of the causal-dispositional structures and mathematical relationships that obtain, but not the intrinsic/categorical nature of the relata that stand in these

¹⁶ See Allen (2020) for an extended argument that Naïve-Realism enjoys a 'special status' amongst philosophical theories of perception.

¹⁷ See Raleigh (2020) for discussion of this line of thought with respect to macroscopic shape.

¹⁸ See Raleigh (2018) for discussion of how Naïve-Realism might accommodate a physicalist, *non-primitivist* account of colour.

¹⁹ The label 'structural realism' is due originally to Maxwell (1970).

relationships²⁰. Ontic structural realism, in contrast, is the thesis that there is, fundamentally, nothing more to nature/reality than these structural relations. Notice that epistemic structural realism holds that there is *more* to the natural world than can be captured by scientific investigation – since the categorical nature of the world is supposed to be something that is over-and-above the structural relationships between properties and magnitudes that science discovers and describes. Thus it should count as a form of Liberal Naturalism (even if the idea is that the categorical nature of reality will remain forever unknowable to us). Now, one motivation that has been advanced in favour of Naïve Realism is that by positing a relation of direct conscious acquaintance with external qualities it allows us to gain Knowledge of (some of) the categorical nature of the external world – see Brewer (2011), Campbell (2009), Johnston (2006), Logue (2012). Any such form of Naïve Realism, which holds that perceptual experience reveals to us categorical features/properties of the natural world that would not otherwise be knowable to us, will thus be committed to a form of Liberal Naturalism.

3.2 ‘Indirect’ Views of Perception & Liberal Naturalism

It is clearly possible to endorse some kind of ‘indirect’ theory about perceptual experience (sense-data) and yet consistently be a liberal naturalist. If you think that perception is mediated by some kind of veil of appearances, this is obviously compatible with endorsing a liberal, non-reductive ontology. But in fact the connection between Liberal Naturalism and some indirect views is plausibly stronger than mere compatibility. For, as mentioned above, it would seem that most sense-data theories could be understood to *entail* a kind of Liberal Naturalism. According to Russell²¹ and Moore, sense-data were supposed to be real, mind-independent entities, but which were not part of the shared physical environment and so which were not open to scientific investigation. According to more recent Sense-data theories of Jackson (1977) or Bermudez (2003), sense-data are mind-dependent but are located out in the one same physical space that we occupy. All of these sense-data theorists would seem to be immediately committed to a liberal ontology, which accepts the existence of irreducible entities over and above anything posited by the physical sciences²².

Compare: Chalmers (1996) has influentially argued that qualia (phenomenal properties) cannot be reduced to or fully explained by any physical property and so must be recognised as a further fundamental feature of the natural world, alongside fundamental particles and forces. (Chalmers explicitly compares this to Maxwell’s realisation that electromagnetism cannot be explained mechanically and so must be treated as a brute, *sui generis* phenomenon.) This kind of view is explicitly committed to the existence of properties that are additional to anything that is mentioned in our best current scientific theories – so in one sense this could be seen as endorsing a kind of Liberal ontology in opposition to Strictly Scientific Naturalism. On the other hand, the *motivation* for Chalmers’s kind of view is quite different to the motivations of most theorists commonly thought of as Liberal Naturalists. For Chalmers’ accepts the cogency of the location problem challenge for phenomenal properties. And so then when he find that phenomenal properties cannot be reduced to or fully explained by any of the scientifically kosher elements we currently recognise, he draws the radical conclusion that phenomenal properties are a new kind of fundamental property in the universe, on a par with fundamental forces like electromagnetism. More generally, many indirect theories of

²⁰ Roughly the same position has also been given the rather more pessimistic/sceptical labels ‘Kantian Humility’ (Langton 1998) and ‘Ramseyan Humility’ (Jackson 1998).

²¹ At least, this was Russell’s initial view at the time of *Problems of Philosophy*. By the time we get to ‘Mysticism and Logic and other Essays’ (1918), Russell had become a neutral monist and so held that sense-data were ultimately physical.

²² It is perhaps worth noting that there may be possible sense-data theories in logical space on which sense-data are simply *identical* to some physical feature that is acceptable to Strictly Scientific Naturalism – e.g. if sense-data are simply identical to physical processes in the brain. Indeed this may be true of Russell’s later neutral monist account of sense-data – see fn.20 above. Thanks to both Craig French and Ori Beck for helpful discussion on this point.

perception have been motivated by the idea that perceptual appearances cannot be properly explained in terms of the external physical items we perceive and so they locate the sensible properties we are aware of as aspects of our own conscious minds, or as instantiated by non-physical sense-data. Whereas, in contrast, most Liberal Naturalists start by rejecting the whole idea that every genuine property or phenomenon must somehow be ‘located’ within the domain described by our scientific theories. Thus phenomenal properties – and likewise intentional properties or rational properties or moral properties – need not be thought of as posing any special problem for a naturalistic world view in the first place.

The moral then: theories that are standardly thought of as ‘indirect’, accepting mental or non-environmental intermediaries that we are directly aware of, are not only compatible with a Liberal Naturalistic ontology, many such theories entail an ontology that is more liberal than Strictly Scientific Naturalism would countenance. However, some of the standard motivations that lie behind Sense-Data or pure Qualia views are quite opposite to the motivations that have generally driven most Liberal Naturalists.

3.3 Representational Views & Liberal Naturalism

There are very many different kinds of representational/intentional accounts of perceptual experience. But as a broad, general framework the idea that perceptual experiences are fundamentally representational mental states is pretty neutral between Liberal Naturalism and Strictly Scientific Naturalism. The general representational framework allows for the possibility that perceptual contents are ‘thick’ (or ‘rich’). And so properties and features that a Liberal Naturalist might want to insist are genuine and natural could then be included in the content of perception – e.g. moral, normative and evaluative properties, artefactual/social properties, primitive colour properties. Both McDowell (1985) and Stephen White (2010) are Liberal Naturalists who argue that we can directly and non-inferentially perceive objects *as morally valuable*²³.

Whereas, a ‘thinner’ representational theorist could restrict the range of properties represented in perception to only those that a strict scientific naturalist would accept. Notice however that the distinction between thick vs. thin accounts of the representational content of experience does not always line up neatly with opposition between Liberal vs. Strictly scientific naturalism. For example, the idea that perceptual experience represents causal relations between objects or events is standardly counted as a thick view of perceptual content – but of course causal relations are presumably perfectly acceptable within a strictly scientific ontology. Alternatively, one could allow that some properties that would *not* be recognized by Strictly Scientific Naturalism are standardly *represented* in perceptual experience, but claim these properties are not actually instantiated in the environment, so such perceptual representation is systematically illusory – e.g. this is Chalmers’s position on primitive colour properties (see error-theories in section 5 on colour, below).

However, it should be noted that for some Liberal Naturalism theorists – notably McDowell and Putnam – it is important that experience somehow involves representational content (or at least draws on conceptual capacities) in order for it to be able to play the epistemic role of allowing us to make rationally evaluable judgements about the external, natural world. In the work of McDowell at least, this is bound up with large, Liberal Naturalist theses that the natural world is constitutively such as to be conceptualizable and that the ‘rational realm’ is part of the natural order. We turn to the specific views of McDowell and of Putnam in the next section.

²³ E.g. McDowell writes: ‘The idea of value experience involves taking admiration to represent an object as having a property that... is conceived to be not merely such as to elicit [admiration]... but rather such as to *merit* it.’ (McDowell 1985, 118)

4. MCDOWELL & PUTNAM

In recent Anglophone philosophy, two of the most prominent advocates for Liberal Naturalism have been John McDowell and Hilary Putnam, both of whom were also seminally important advocates for disjunctivism about perceptual experience (though as we shall see, both of these philosophers' views on perception evolved over time). In the first of his 1994 Dewey Lectures (later reprinted as 'The Threefold Cord'), Putnam wrote:

"Shortly after I began writing these lectures in the Berkshires, I went to the excellent bookstore on Water Street in Williamstown and looked at the collection of philosophy books on display there. What I wanted to see was what was available about *perception*. Although Wittgenstein was well represented... there was not a single book by John Austin – the philosopher whose *Sense and Sensibilia* represents the most powerful defense of what I am calling 'natural realism' in the history of philosophy. Nor... was there any other work by a natural realist, nor, for that matter, was there a single book devoted to perception as a topic..."
(Putnam, 1999, 11)

25 years later, nobody could complain that perception is a neglected topic in present day 'analytic' philosophy! This is in large part due to the influence of Putnam and McDowell. Given their influence on contemporary philosophy, it will be instructive to briefly consider how their views on Naturalism and on Perception interact.

John McDowell's interests in the philosophy of perception are primarily epistemological. He summarizes his own disjunctivist position in the following passage:

'In perceptual experience a subject has it appear to her that things are a certain way in her environment. In some cases ('good' cases), the experience makes it manifest to the subject that things are that way; in others ('bad' cases), the appearance that things are that way is a *mere* appearance. An experience in which the appearance that things are a certain way is a mere appearance can be such that the subject cannot tell that it is not an experience of the first kind. The point of my epistemological disjunctivism is that this indiscriminability does not imply a match in epistemic significance.' (2013, 259/260)

McDowell takes the main import of arguments from illusion and hallucination to be the following supposed epistemological moral: that when we see our surroundings we have to make a move from a 'lesser informational state' about how things look/appear to us, to a stronger claim about how our external surroundings actually are.

'Consider the Argument from Illusion. Seeing, or perhaps having seen, that things are thus and so would be an epistemically satisfactory standing in the space of reasons. But when I see that things are thus and so, I take it that things are thus and so on the basis of having it look to me as if things are thus and so. And it can look to me as if things are thus and so when they are not; appearances do not give me resources to ensure that I take things to be thus and so, on the basis of appearances, only when things are indeed thus and so. If things are indeed thus and so when they seem to be, the world is doing me a favour. So if I want to restrict myself to standings in the space of reasons whose flawlessness I can ensure without external help, I must go no further than taking it looks to me as if things are thus and so.' (McDowell, 1995 877-8)

Rejecting this 'Cartesian' picture is McDowell's main concern in the philosophy of perception. He often draws a comparison with the case of testimonial knowledge, where he would also reject the idea that we always have to make an inferential move from a lesser informational state about the fact that a testifier, S, asserted that p, in order to come to know that p by testimony. Rather, McDowell would insist, we can often simply be told that p and

thus come to know that p. Likewise, one can often simply see that p and thus know that p without making any kind of inference from how things look or appear to one.

McDowell then is certainly an epistemological disjunctivist. It is less obvious whether he should also be counted as a metaphysical disjunctivist. There are passages where he seems to claim that in the ‘Good Case’ of successful perception, external facts/circumstances are essentially involved in subjective appearances, whereas they are not in the ‘Bad Case’ of experiencing a ‘mere appearance’:

‘Of facts to the effect that things seem thus and so to one, we might say, some are cases of things being thus and so within the reach of one’s subjective access to the external world, whereas others are mere appearances. In a given case the answer to the question ‘Which?’ would state a further fact about the disposition of things in the inner realm (a disposition less specifically mapped by saying merely that things seem to one to be thus and so); since this further fact is not independent of the outer realm, **we are compelled to picture the inner and outer realms as interpenetrating**, not separated from one another by the characteristically Cartesian divide.’ (1986, 150, emphasis added)

This talk of the ‘interpenetration’ of inner and outer is most naturally understood, I suggest, as making a metaphysical claim about what *constitutes* a perceptual experience – i.e. that external circumstances can partially constitute a subjective perceptual perspective on the world. Likewise in a later paper responding to Tyler Burge he states that: ‘a subject’s inner world does not have the characteristic Cartesian independence from the outer world’ (2010, 245). However, in response to Burge, he makes clear that he is happy to accept that there can presumably be a *neuro-computational* state in common to both the Good and Bad cases, and that all he really wants to insist on is that there is a fundamental epistemological difference between these two situations. It is also worth emphasising that McDowell, despite his claims that in perception our minds are open to the external world, is not comfortably categorised as a being simply a Naïve-Realist given the large representational component in his views. In *Mind and World*, he insisted that perceptual experiences have propositional contents and moreover that these contents are *conceptual*– i.e. in having such a representational perceptual state we necessarily deploy *conceptual capacities*. However, partly in response to the work of Charles Travis (2004), McDowell later recanted the claim that experiences have propositional content:

‘I used to assume that to conceive experiences as actualizations of conceptual capacities, we would need to credit experiences with propositional content, the sort of content judgments have. And I used to assume that the content of an experience would need to include everything the experience enables its subject to know non-inferentially. But both of these assumptions now strike me as wrong.’ (McDowell, 2009, p. 258)

McDowell’s rejection of ‘Cartesian’ accounts of perceptual experience is connected with his wider rejection of strict, ‘scientific’ forms of naturalism. According to McDowell, it is the scientific assumption that everything – including the mind and conscious experience – can be explained in the standard causal-physical terms employed by the natural sciences which underlies the appeal of the Cartesian idea that conscious perceptual appearances cannot be intrinsically world-involving. Causal relations are external and non-essential to the physical items that stand in these causal relations to each other. And once we think of a conscious perceptual experience as being just the *endpoint* of a causal chain, running from the light being reflected from a physical surface, through stimulation of the retina, to some pattern of neural activity, then the distal stimulus (i.e. the perceived object) is bound to be treated as external and non-essential to the experience. Thus we arrive at the idea that what perception delivers are mere appearances, which may or may not have been caused in a reliable way by the external world. In rejecting this Cartesian picture, McDowell does not, of course, deny that there is some causal chain of events running from the light reflecting from the perceived

object through to various events in the retina and visual cortex, etc, which is necessary in order to perceive. What is being denied is the idea that a *perceptual experience* can be identified with some pattern of neural activity that can be intrinsically specified in isolation from the rest of that causal chain – or more generally that the mind can be thought of as a separate, self-standing realm that is affected only causally by the external world.

Hilary Putnam credited McDowell (along with William James and John Dewey) for awakening his own philosophical interest in perception²⁴. Having been deeply impressed and influenced by McDowell's 'Mind and World', Putnam used the occasion of his 1994 Dewey Lectures to defend what he called 'natural realism':

'A natural realist, in my sense, does hold that the objects of (normal 'veridical') perception are 'external' things, and more generally aspects of 'external' reality. But the philosopher whose direct realism is just the old causal theory of perception with a bit of linguistic cover-up can easily go along. "We perceive external things – that is to say, we are caused to have certain subjective experiences in the appropriate way by those external things," such a philosopher can say. The natural realist, in William James's sense, holds, in contrast, that successful perception is a sensing of aspects of the reality 'out there' and not a mere affectation of a person's subjectivity by those aspects. I agree with James, as well as with McDowell, that the false belief that perception must be so analysed is at the root of all the problems with the view of perception that, in one form or another, has dominated Western philosophy since the seventeenth century.' (Putnam 1999, 11)

He also characterizes perceptual experience as 'transactional':

'As Dewey might have put it, perception is *transactional*. We are aware of ourselves in *interaction* with our perceptual objects. I am aware of a series of visual, tactile, etc., *perspectives* on the chair without ceasing to perceive the chair *as* an object that does not change as those perspectives change.' (ibid., 159)

These passages are naturally read as expressing a commitment to something like a Naïve realist or relational view concerning the metaphysics of perceptual experience – on which external, environmental features *constitutively* feature in experience. And indeed at this point in his philosophical development, Putnam denied that we can even make sense of *qualia* as they are often conceived – internalist, non-representational, non-conceptual conscious properties.

However, Putnam's views on perceptual experience, as with so many topics, changed very significantly over time. Due mainly to the influence of his former student Ned Block²⁵, Putnam moved away from the McDowellian disjunctivism of his Dewey Lectures and came to accept that there are after all something like 'Qualia' – though understood in what he takes to be an empirically respectable sense, identified as features of brain states.

'The particular form of disjunctivism I sympathized with in the Dewey Lectures is due to John McDowell (although . . . I refused to endorse the claim that all experiences are

²⁴ See fn. 1 in Putnam (1999).

²⁵ Putnam wrote of Block's influence on him: "Two papers by Ned Block—a lecture titled "Wittgenstein and Qualia," which I heard Block deliver at the "Putnam Fest" conference in my honor in Dublin in 2007, and a paper of his titled "Consciousness, Accessibility, and the Mesh between Psychology and Neuroscience," which appeared later in the same year. . . have had an impact on my thinking about the phenomenology of perception comparable to the impact on my later philosophy of mathematics that reading Quine's "On What There Is" (1948) and "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (1951) in my twenties turned out to have. (Putnam, 2016, 169–70)

conceptualized . . .). I now believe . . . that the best “*mesh*” of phenomenological considerations and neuroscientific ones will involve recognizing that many of our experiences are not conceptualized in any of the senses that McDowell has proposed, and will involve rejecting the idea (advocated by Wittgenstein and later by Hinton) that there is no possibility of a scientific criterion for sameness and differences of, say color experience of different subjects in which *intersubjective spectrum inversion is an intelligible possibility*. In sum . . . there is a qualitative and nonconceptual dimension of experience that can be scientifically investigated. (Putnam, 2016, 156; emphasis added)

‘My present view is almost the complete opposite of McDowell’s.’ (Putnam, 2016, 184)

But whilst Putnam towards the end of his life came to reject many aspects of McDowell’s views and to accept the existence of (something like) qualia, he remained interested in developing a viable form of naïve-realism – for example: a late paper from 2011 is entitled “How to be a sophisticated ‘Naïve-Realist’”. Putnam also suggested that a psychologically plausible form of naïve-realism could be supported by appeal to the sort of Enactivist, sensorimotor theories of perception advanced by J J Gibson and later by Alva Noe (another pupil of Putnam). These theories treat perception as an active process of perceptual *exploration* by an embodied subject, embedded in an environment. And so perceptual experiences are understood as (partially) constituted (as opposed to merely caused) by the interaction – or ‘transaction’ to use Putnam’s preferred term – between the subject and her environment. This embrace of Enactivism about perception illustrates Putnam’s late return to functionalism. Having been the leading proponent of functionalism in the 1960’s, in the late 1980’s Putnam famously came to reject functionalism as being incompatible with externalism about mental content. But by this late stage in his career, Putnam thought that there can be a non-objectionable form of *liberal functionalism*, which defines functional states in wide/broad terms that allow for externalism about content. For example, Putnam states that a liberal functionalist ‘will follow Gibson’s pioneering lead in seeking for a description of the complex relations between the properties of the object in question, the organism’s repertoire of actual and possible sensory-motor transactions with the object, and the ways in which the object is perceived” (Putnam, 2016, 167).

Alas, Putnam did not live long enough to fully flesh out this late, ‘sophisticated’ form of naïve realism. But he did insist on the epistemological point that the qualia which he now accepted are (somehow!) involved in perceptual experience cannot be what *justify* our perceptual beliefs. Rather, Putnam thought that there must be something else, which he called ‘apperceptions’, which play this justificatory role and which are, unlike qualia, conceptually saturated and externalistically individuated. Putnam was clear that there is no rational or epistemic relation between qualia and apperceptions – we do not ‘construct’ apperceptions from qualia. However, it is perhaps not entirely clear from these late writings what the positive relationship between qualia and apperceptions – i.e. between mere brain states and fully-fledged perceptual experiences of the external world – is supposed to be exactly.

5. COLOUR

Colour is an especially important and contested topic both for debates about naturalism and for the metaphysics of perceptual experience.

It is very common to find scientists claiming that physical objects are not really coloured – or at least not in the way that we naively take them to be – and that the qualitative natures of colours as we experience them are really just features of our subjective human experiences, which we naively and mistakenly ‘project’ onto external physical items. This was the view of Galileo, Boyle, Newton, Maxwell and Helmholtz. And more recently such a view has been

endorsed by leading vision scientists such as Edwin Land (1983), Semir Zeki (1983) and Stephen Palmer (1999)²⁶. For example:

People universally believe that objects look colored because they are colored, just as we experience them. The sky looks blue because it is blue, grass looks green because it is green, and blood looks red because it is red. As surprising as it may seem, these beliefs are fundamentally mistaken. Neither objects nor lights are actually “colored” in anything like the way we experience them. Rather, color is a psychological property of our visual experiences when we look at objects and lights, not a physical property of those objects or lights. The colors we see are based on physical properties of objects and lights that cause us to see them as colored, to be sure, but these physical properties are different in important ways from the colors we perceive. (Palmer 1999: 95)

This view about the metaphysics of colour is very often presented as a scientific result – established by such phenomena as subjective variation amongst human observers, metamers, the contribution of opponent processing, the different colour spaces for different species (see Hardin 1988 for a philosophically sophisticated presentation of this scientific case for ‘subjectivism’ about colour.) Of course if this eliminativist view about the nature of colour were correct, it would immediately rule out Naïve-Realist/Relational accounts of visual experience – at least insofar as there would be no external colours out there for us to be acquainted with that could explain our ‘colourful’ visual phenomenology. However many philosophers – and not just Naïve Realists – have denied that vision science really does establish any such result about the nature of colour. The metaphysics of colour has given rise to a very large literature, which could be taxonomized in various ways and in more or less detail. But for present purposes we can briefly identify four main positions:

(1) Reductive Physicalism

Colours are objective, physical properties of objects (and light sources). Contra the claims of many vision scientists, colours are real, mind-independent properties located out in the external environment, just as we naively suppose them to be, though they turn out to have complex physical natures that goes beyond their manifest appearance and which is open to empirical investigation. For example, Byrne & Hilbert (2003) and also Tye (2000) argue that colours are (roughly) spectral reflectance properties – i.e. a complex tendency to reflect light only of certain wavelengths – which are ultimately grounded in the case of surface colours in the microscopic texture of the object’s surface. This sort of view is an avowedly *reductive* account of colour that seeks to locate colour as part of the natural, external world by identifying it with a complex, scientifically respectable property. It thus in line with Strictly Scientific Naturalism. See e.g. Armstrong (1969), Hilbert (1987), Byrne & Hilbert (2003), Tye (2000).

(2) Primitivism

Primitivists also take colours to be real, mind-independent properties, located out in the external environment. However unlike reductive physicalists, primitivists deny that these properties can be reduced to some complex physical property of surfaces (or volumes, or light sources etc), or indeed to any other physical property. Colours are held to be *sui generis*, simple, irreducible properties of physical items whose essential qualitative nature is revealed in how they look – though it is generally allowed that these *sui generis* colour properties do at least *supervene* on some or other physical properties of the object (e.g. perhaps the surface reflectance properties mentioned above). In denying that colours need to be reduced to scientifically acceptable physical

²⁶ Byrne & Hilbert (2003) comment: “In fact, the most popular opinion, at any rate among color scientists, may well be the view that nothing is colored – at least not physical objects in the perceiver’s environment...” (p.3)

properties in order to be a genuine/real part of the natural world, primitivism effectively amounts to a (limited/specific) form of Liberal Naturalism²⁷.
See e.g. Hacker (1987), Campbell (1994), McGinn (1996), Gert (2006), Allen (2016)

(3) Dispositional & Relational Views

Dispositional theories of colour, qua properties of external objects, treat them as dispositions to cause certain kinds of experiences in certain kinds of conscious observers. One version of this idea takes these to be dispositions to cause the experiences in 'normal' observers in 'normal' viewing conditions – which then requires the dispositional theorist to give a principled, non-circular account of what counts as normal. (See Peacocke 1984 for an attempt to provide such a non-circular account. See Levin 2000 for arguments that no such account is possible.) A different version of dispositionalism avoids this requirement by *relativizing* these dispositions to different perceivers and different viewing conditions – hence the label 'relational'. On this latter view objects do not, strictly speaking, possess such colours as red or green or blue *simpliciter*. Rather they possess such relational colour properties as: red for perceiver x in viewing condition 1; green for perceiver y in viewing condition 2, etc. (See Cohen 2009 for excellent defence of this relational view.)

Dispositional views rely on distinguishing the dispositional property, or power, of an external object to cause certain experiences in certain observers (in certain conditions), from the phenomenal properties of the experiences thus caused – i.e. from colour as experienced. There is then a choice between treating this dispositional story as *revisionary* with respect to our naïve colour beliefs and colour concepts, or treating it as *vindicating* or everyday beliefs and concepts. The revisionary line was adopted by many of the great scientists mentioned above – e.g. Galileo, Boyle and Newton – as well as many early modern philosophers, such as Locke and Descartes. They held that the colour properties of physical objects are secondary qualities, powers to cause certain experiences in us, but this is not how we naively, pre-theoretically think of colours. This revisionary version of dispositionalism would also seem to be in line with a Strictly Scientific form of naturalism insofar as it treats our manifest image of colours as shown to be erroneous by higher scientific standards.

In contrast, a number of somewhat more recent dispositionalists have held that the dispositional view is in perfect accord with our naïve, common-sense conception of colours – and indeed that colours as we experience them appear to be dispositional. (See e.g. Dummett 1979, McDowell 1985, Peacocke 1984). This version of dispositionalism, if it could be made plausible, would avoid any conflict between science and our everyday conception and experience of colour. It is thus more amenable to Liberal Naturalists – though it certainly does not require that one accept anything like Liberal Naturalism.

(4) Error Theoretic Views

Error-theoretic or eliminativist views can be thought of as more extreme versions of the revisionary kind of dispositionalism sketched above. For whereas the revisionary dispositionalist still allows that it is true to say that there really are coloured objects (though these external colour properties are not how we naively think of or experience them), the error theorist insists that (strictly speaking) there simply are no colours at all. Our experiences as of coloured objects are thus held to be systematically inaccurate and illusory. And so the only way to make sense of our practice of attributing colour properties to external objects is as a useful fiction. One can also understand this sort of eliminativist position as agreeing with the Primitivist that colour properties are simple

²⁷ Strictly speaking, some kind of *non*-naturalism about colours might also allow that colours supervene on features described by the physical sciences and that colours are 'genuine' or 'real', though without being part of the 'natural' realm. Many thanks to Anders Nes for helpful correspondence on this point.

sui generis intrinsic properties, whose essential qualitative nature is revealed in how they look – the eliminativist simply goes on to deny that these properties are actually instantiated anywhere (in our actual universe).

See e.g. Hardin 1988, Boghossian & Velleman 1989, Averill 2005, Maund 2006.

As mentioned above, of these 4 main positions it is Primitivism which amounts in itself to a form of Liberal Naturalism. Whereas Reductive Physicalism, revisionary dispositionalism and Error theories are often *motivated* by something like Strict Scientific Naturalism. However, it is clearly possible to be a Liberal Naturalist in general whilst holding any position, or none at all, concerning the specific topic of colours. As a case in point: John McDowell endorses the non-revisionary form of dispositionalism about colours, allowing that their nature is essentially tied to our specific human kind of sensory experiences – though he does not think of such experience as something ‘inner’ or ‘private’:

‘It is one thing to gloss being red in terms of being such as to look red, and quite another to gloss it in terms of being such as to induce a certain ‘inner experience’ in us. Note that ‘red’ in ‘looking red’ expresses a concept of ‘outer experience’ no less than does ‘red’ in ‘being red’, in fact the very same concept.’ (1994, 31 fn 7)

‘Values are not brutally there – not there independently of our sensibility – any more than colours are: though, as with colours, this does not prevent us from supposing that they are there independently of any apparent experience of them.’ (1998b 146)

One particularly important discussion of colour by a prominent Liberal Naturalist is Barry Stroud’s *The Quest for Reality* (1999). Stroud considers the long history of scientists and philosophers who claim to ‘unmask’ colours as really existing only in the mind. His argument is subtle and complex, but it hinges on considering whether these kind of sceptical conclusions about colour can even be coherently believed. The colour sceptic wants to suggest that reality ‘in itself’ does not correspond to our thoughts and experiences of colour. But Stroud claims that to make sense of this sceptical conclusion we need to be able to understand *which properties* are being (allegedly) misattributed to physical, external objects – i.e. we need to be able to say what the supposedly mistaken content *is* of our everyday colour thoughts and experiences. And he argues that the colour sceptic cannot do this without relying on our everyday concept of colours as qualities of external items. We need, according to Stroud, to think of the external environment as genuinely coloured in order to ascribe each other thoughts and experiences *of colour*. So in order to formulate her sceptical claim – that our thoughts and experiences of colour are systematically misleading – the sceptic has to draw on and employ the very conception of colours that she is seeking to undermine. However, Stroud does *not* go on to draw the positive conclusion that colours therefore must really be genuine qualitative features of our external environments. Repeating his earlier general criticism of transcendental arguments (see Stroud 1984), Stroud points out that from the fact that: in order to understand our everyday colour thoughts and experiences, we have to think of the environment as genuinely containing colours, it does not follow that the external environment *really is that way*. It remains a possibility that our colour thoughts and experiences are radically mistaken even if we cannot coherently disavow such thoughts or fully understand what it would be for them to be so radically mistaken.

6. CONCLUSION

In summary then, it seems that Liberal Naturalism is at least logically compatible with any of the main philosophical theories concerning perceptual experience. That there are no strict relations of inconsistency or entailment here should be unsurprising given that (as mentioned back in section 1) Liberal Naturalism is not a precisely defined thesis, but rather a loose family of views and kindred philosophical approaches. But there is plausibly still a significant negative connection between Liberal Naturalism and the philosophy of perception insofar as

Strictly Scientific Naturalism would rule out Primitivism about colour and so seem to be less congenial to Naïve-Realism about perceptual experience. More generally, insofar as Liberal Naturalism holds that we need feel no philosophical anxiety about the ontological status or scientific respectability of various common-sense or ‘manifest image’ phenomena – not only colour, but also everyday objects and artefacts, mental states, morality, normative properties etc. – it will be a natural ally to any theory of perception that holds we really can perceive such phenomena²⁸.

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