

EXPERIENCE AND BELIEF

AN INQUIRY INTO THE DOXASTIC VARIABILITY OF EXPERIENCE

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If what we believe can directly modify our (visual) experience, our experience is doxastically variable. If so, the following seems possible: our false and irrational background beliefs can modify our experience such that in it, things look distorted, or that it conforms with and appears to confirm the false and irrational beliefs that helped bring it about in the first place. If experience is doxastically variable, it seems, its epistemic function can be undermined.

However, in this dissertation, I argue that we can devise accounts of (visual) experience that meet two requirements: they are fully compatible with all kinds of doxastic variation and on them, even doxastically variable experience serves to rationally constrain our beliefs.

I begin with a novel interpretation of Hanson's account of theory-laden observation—a valiant, yet ultimately unsuccessful attempt to meet both these requirements. Next, I analyze and reject various contemporary relationalist accounts of experience and the most sophisticated recent representationalist attempt to accommodate phenomena of doxastic variation: Siegel's (Rich) Content View. Then, based on the lessons learned and drawing on Hanson's and Gupta's work, I show what shape a successful account may take.

Ultimately, I argue for the following theses: 1) Neither of the two dominant accounts of experience—relationalism and standard representationalism—currently succeeds in satisfactorily meeting both requirements. 2) To arrive at accounts that do meet them, we should drop both the restrictive relationalist conception of experience as a relation to mind-independent items and the standard representationalist conception of experience as justifying beliefs. 3) We make progress by

adopting both the general conception of experience as making rational transitions to beliefs, judgments, and actions and a (slightly) modified version of Gupta's presentationalist account of experiential phenomenology. Finally, 4) the possibility of devising successful accounts is independent of a major issue dividing relationalists and representationalists: whether experience has content.

In the final chapters, I address various follow-up questions concerning the nature of views, conceptual capacities, conceptual content, and linkages between a subject's experience and her responses. In concluding, I show that the account of experience I recommend is widely applicable in philosophy and beyond.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	x
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
2.0 HANSON'S ACCOUNT OF THEORY-LADEN OBSERVATION	9
2.1 EPISTEMICALLY SIGNIFICANT SEEING INVOLVES <i>SEEING AS</i>	11
2.2 <i>SEEING AS</i> IS INTELLIGIBLE ONLY IN TERMS OF <i>SEEING THAT</i>	13
2.3 THROUGH <i>SEEING AS</i> , BELIEFS CAN AFFECT ONE'S VISUAL FIELD	22
2.3.1 What's Wrong with Sense-Datum Accounts	22
2.3.2 The Organization of the Visual Field	25
2.3.3 Effects on the Elements of the Visual Field	28
2.4 DOES OBSERVATION CONSTRAIN OUR BELIEFS?	29
2.5 PHENOMENOLOGY, EMPIRICAL CONSTRAINT, AND AMALGAMATION	34
3.0 FROM HANSON TO RELATIONALISM	38
3.1 NO CONTENT, ACQUAINTANCE, AND CONSTITUTION	45
3.2 RELATIONALISM, DVEC, BMCEC, AND BMCC	52
3.3 HANSON AND RELATIONALISM	55
4.0 RELATIONALISM I: FISH'S OBJECT-PROPERTY VIEW	60
4.1 CONSTITUTION, THE PHENOMENAL, THE PRESENTATIONAL, AND CONSTRAINING FACTORS	60
4.2 NO ACQUAINTANCE WITHOUT CONCEPTUAL CAPACITIES: FISH ON EXPERT VISION	68
4.3 IDENTITY*, SUPERVENIENCE, AND INTERSUBJECTIVE COMMONALITIES	72
4.4 FACTS, PROPERTIES, AND CONCEPTUAL CAPACITIES	78
4.5 BASIC ACQUAINTANCE AND PROJECTION EFFECTS	88
4.5.1 Basic Acquaintance	88
4.5.2 Projection Effects	91

4.5.2.1	The Banana Case	93
4.5.2.2	Physical Illusions	95
4.5.2.3	Cognitive Illusions	99
4.5.2.4	Optical Illusions	105
4.6	CONCLUSION	107
5.0	RELATIONALISM II: BREWER'S OBJECT VIEW	109
5.1	THINLY AND THICKLY LOOKING OBJECTS	111
5.2	WAYS OF THINLY LOOKING AND VISUALLY RELEVANT SIMILARITY RELATIONS	112
5.3	THINLY LOOKING THE SAME, NO DVEP FOR THIN LOOKS, BREWERIAN CONSTITUTION, AND THE GENERAL CONSTRAINT ON THIN LOOKS	117
5.4	THICKLY LOOKING SOME WAY	123
5.5	FISH AND BREWER	125
5.6	MULTIPLE PHENOMENOLOGIES AND (AGAIN) THE BANANA CASE	131
5.7	CONCLUSION	140
6.0	RELATIONALISM III: GENONE'S PROPERTY VIEW	142
6.1	APPEARANCES AS MIND-INDEPENDENT PROPERTIES	146
6.2	GENONE'S (MISSING) ACCOUNT OF CONSTITUTION	154
6.3	MISLEADING APPEARANCES AND DVEP	159
6.3.1	Misleading Appearances	159
6.3.2	Genonean Expert Vision	164
6.3.3	The Banana Case—Strategy 1: Phenomenal Pluralism	169
6.3.4	The Banana Case—Strategy 2: Appearance-Judgment Relations Shifted	174
6.4	OPEN QUESTIONS	180
6.4.1	Phenomenal Pluralism After All?	180
6.4.2	Flexibility—an Epistemic Downside?	182
6.4.3	Appearance-Judgment Relations	186
6.5	LEAVING RELATIONALISM BEHIND	189
7.0	SIEGEL'S RICH CONTENT VIEW	194
7.1	THE CONTENT VIEW	197
7.1.1	Siegel's Notion of Visual Experience	198

7.1.2	Content-Bearing Phenomenal States	201
7.1.3	The Argument from Appearing	206
7.1.4	Which Properties do Phenomenal States Represent?	212
7.1.4.1	Non-Arbitrariness and Expert Vision	214
7.1.4.2	Phenomenal States and Their Contents	217
7.1.5	Implications	229
7.2	THE RATIONAL ROLE OF SIEGELIAN EXPERIENCE	233
7.2.1	Irrational Experiences and Reduced Epistemic Powers	234
7.2.2	Objections	241
7.3	THE GENERAL ROLE OF EXPERIENCE	250
7.3.1	Dropping the Standard Representationalist Conception of the Role of Experience	250
7.3.2	No Defensive Measures Necessary	255
7.3.3	The Alternative	256
7.3.4	Taking Stock	262
8.0	HANSON REVAMPED	263
8.1	A HANSONIAN VARIABLE CONTENT VIEW	265
8.1.1	Experiential Content	266
8.1.2	Empirical Constraint Recouched	269
8.1.3	Amalgamation	274
8.1.4	Modifiable Amalgamation, Genonean Misleading Appearances, and <i>Seemings As</i> as Dispositional States	277
8.1.5	Stable Amalgamations	279
8.2	ACTUAL VS. RATIONAL TRANSITIONS & CONCLUDING REMARKS	281
9.0	GUPTA'S PRESENTATIONALISM	287
9.1	APPEARANCES	291
9.1.1	Subjective Identity, Color Appearances, Projection Effects, and Expert Vision Proper	292
9.1.2	Appearances and Manifestation, Total Hallucinations, the Items Requirement on Appearance, and Projection Effects Again	298
9.2	LINKAGES	306
9.2.1	Linkages in Views	308

9.2.2	Linkage Institution	314
9.2.3	Ineffability	317
9.3	TAKING STOCK	324
10.0	CONCLUSION	327
10.1	SUMMARY	327
10.2	LESSONS LEARNED	343
10.3	THE <i>NO PHENOMENOLOGY</i> CHALLENGE AND THE <i>RECEPTIVE</i> <i>KNOWLEDGE COMPLAINT</i>	346
10.3.1	The <i>No Phenomenology</i> Challenge	347
10.3.2	The <i>Receptive Knowledge</i> Complaint	355
10.3.2.1	McDowell on Receptive Knowledge	356
10.3.2.2	Hansonian Receptive Knowledge	362
10.4	STILL NO END IN SIGHT: OPEN QUESTIONS AND FURTHER AVENUES TO PURSUE	367
BIBLIOGRAPHY		376

PREFACE

“बिन गुरु ज्ञान कहीं से पाऊँ ।”

Mohammad Rafi (1952). *Man Tarpat Hari Darshan Ko Aaj. Baiju Bawra*

This is a long dissertation. Also, it has been long in the making. I cannot pinpoint exactly when I began to think about the so-called theory-ladenness of observation, but I suspect that it must have been roughly 15 years ago, when at the University of Münster, I participated in a reading group on philosophy of science and somehow happened upon Norwood Russell Hanson’s first chapter of his 1958 book *Patterns of Discovery*—the chapter on observation—in which the term ‘theory-ladenness of observation’ is coined.

It is impossible to say how often I have read this chapter since, or the much more extended version of the arguments it contains that spans several chapters in Hanson’s posthumously published *Perception and Discovery*. Not only did I reread this material frequently, I also drew on the concept of theory-ladenness in my Master’s thesis on Bas van Fraassen’s constructive empiricism. In it, I complained, *inter alia*, that van Fraassen does not provide us with a notion of experience that fits his empiricist leanings. Accordingly, I submitted, we cannot assess whether his account improves over that once proposed by the Logical Empiricists, whose notion of experience, arguably, was ill-suited to accommodate theory-ladenness. I repeatedly presented on Hanson’s work and on theory-ladenness in general at various conferences and Hanson’s chapter on observation became a standard syllabus component whenever I taught introductory classes on philosophy of science. Typically, my audiences—and many students, too—enjoyed Hanson’s work and what I extracted from it, but only a handful of people had even so much as heard about Hanson before. And among these select few, even fewer had read anything of him, and nobody had ever read it the way I think we should.

Today, too, though Hanson is frequently mentioned as a forbear of e.g. Kuhn and Feyerabend, his work is largely ignored.¹ Within philosophy of science, the main discussion has long since shifted from *general* philosophy of science—to which Hanson’s account of the theory-ladenness of scientific observation belongs—to the discussion of issues that arise within the special sciences. In discussions within epistemology, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of perception, the same pattern occurs: even if his discussion of theory-ladenness is often mentioned as an important precursor to the contemporary debate on the so-called cognitive penetrability of perception, Hanson is at best cited briefly, or just in a footnote.²

My Master’s degree marked the end of a period of intense studies in Indian Studies, Philosophy, Psychology, some Indo-European Studies, and some Religious Studies, which was generously supported by the *Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes e.V.* Next, I received funding through a doctoral scholarship provided by the *Evangelische Studienwerke Villigst e.V.* Yet since I lacked an advisor who shared my interests, I dabbled along only slowly and ended up focusing a lot on teaching. Halfway through the scholarship, I renounced it to take up a position as main coordinator at the Center for Logic, Philosophy of Science, and History of Science at the University of Rostock, where I taught, organized workshops, conferences, and lecture series. But then things took an important turn: I visited the University of Pittsburgh on a pre-doctoral fellowship granted by the *Max Planck Institute for the History of Science*, Berlin, and inspired by the intellectual atmosphere at Pitt, I decided to apply for Pitt’s Ph.D. program in Philosophy. Throughout, Hanson’s witty and incisive style and the numerous insights he manages to weave into his discussion had never ceased to fascinate me. Accordingly, once I had been accepted at Pitt, I knew right from the start that I wanted to write about Hanson and

¹ To cite an example: in his entry on *Theory and Observation in Science* in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Bogen 2017), Jim Bogen rightly attributes the claim that seeing is a theory-laden undertaking to Hanson. But this attribution is one of only two occasions on which Hanson is mentioned in the entire entry. Hanson’s claims are never discussed.

² An example is Stokes 2015, who in this paper on the cognitive penetration of perception recognizes Hanson as challenging the idea that observation is theory-neutral and sketches a variant of an example from Hanson that will figure prominently in the second chapter of this book as well (it involves Tycho and Kepler). When Stokes cites this example, he does so in a context in which he suggests that theory-ladenness is a potentially problematic consequence of the idea that experiences could be affected by cognitive states such as the subject’s beliefs. On my reading of Hanson, however, it is one of his central contentions that theory-ladenness is not a contingent, but a *necessary* feature of scientific observation, without which such observation would fail to be intelligible. This feature escapes Stokes and has, to my knowledge, been completely ignored in the entire literature on this issue.

showcase the relevance I take his seminal ideas to have for the contemporary debate on perception. By then, I had devoured, *inter alia*, Robert Brandom's *Making It Explicit*, John McDowell's *Mind and World*, and Anil Gupta's *Empiricism and Experience*—a lot of Sellars' work, too—and was eager to absorb and be part of the extraordinarily stimulating philosophical atmosphere at Pitt. Between leaving Pittsburgh after the pre-doctoral scholarship and returning a few months later, I got married to my wife Sabrina, and we were excited to start this adventure together.

An adventure it turned out to be indeed. A few months after our arrival, when I was already knee-deep in coursework on Hegel, Leibniz, Kant, the M&E core, and a seminar on epistemology, Sabrina and I learned that we were expecting. By the end of the first year, our beautiful twin girls Tara and Luna were born. The following years were not always easy. Going through graduate school as a parent of twins, whose wife was in the US on a visa that did not allow her to work, was a tough challenge. Meeting it would have been impossible without the support of friends and family members back home, our new-won friends in Pittsburgh, and, especially, the unending support of my advisor, Anil Gupta. Not only did he enable me to conduct my research by granting me several generous scholarships, he also entrusted me with the organization of a large and immensely stimulating conference on *Perceptual Experience and Empirical Rationality* in 2016, and he believed in my work throughout, even in times when I did not. He was extremely personable, an excellent and supportive mentor, a friend and mentor also to Sabrina, and, to my great satisfaction, like his wife Mukta Ji and his daughter Donna, quite smitten with our girls. Anil, the epigraph, a line from one of my favorite Rafi songs, is for you.

Everyone who knows anything about Anil's work or that of Bob Brandom and John McDowell will see the massive effect their respective ideas have had on this book. Overall, Anil's influence will be most obvious, since I adopt the two key elements of the view I am recommending from him: a) the conception of the general rational role of experience and b) (a slightly modified version of) his account of experiential phenomenology. In the following, his influence becomes most apparent when my inquiry enters its constructive phase, which begins in chapter 7.3.

Long before coming to Pittsburgh, I had convinced myself that Hanson's account of epistemically significant observation is best understood as involving an implicit commitment to a broadly holistic

account of conceptual content. Thus, in thinking through Hanson's view, Bob's intriguing work on inferentialism and conceptual holism was never far from my thoughts. However, I had to consistently resist the temptation to engage with it more. Early on, Anil had advised me—wisely, but surely not always successfully—that I had to be like Arjuna, the warrior prince and famously skilled archer from the Indian epic *Mahābhārata*. Like no other, it is said, Arjuna was able to focus his attention just on what is important—his target—completely oblivious to what else may also be interesting. To be like Arjuna, I had to resist getting side-tracked by including discussions that would have lured me away from my target and invited me to engage with Bob's work more directly, e.g. by thinking about the expressive function of subjunctive conditionals in Hanson's account of *seeing as*. When in 9.2.3, I discuss the role of linkages, the temptation to delve into such discussions was particularly strong. I mostly resisted it, but for everyone who looks more closely, the influence of Bob's work on my thinking remains rather noticeable. For the most part, Bob comfortably dwells in many of the numerous footnotes. But I also address his view explicitly—in 10.3.1, where I consider the challenge raised against the kind of view I recommend by what I call his *No Phenomenology* view.

At times, Bob's presence could seem threatening. "Experience," he likes to say, "is not one of my words." It is one of mine. In the following pages, it occurs numerous times—mostly used, and rarely just mentioned. Since my project focuses on experience, it was clear that Bob would suspect it to be misguided. Like Rorty, he is inclined to take it that the notion of experience is irrecoverably confused. And yet, when I asked Bob to join my committee, he was the first to come on board. He played a tough and incredibly useful devil's advocate. "When you say 'experiential phenomenology,'" he once quipped at me, "all I hear is '*boojang*.' And then I hope that in what follows, you will either explicitly or implicitly define the term." Thanks to Bob, when examining the relationalist accounts of experiential phenomenology, I was reliably disposed to read nothing but '*boojang*.' As will transpire in what follows, in most cases, that disposition has yet to be updated.

As for John, upon coming to Pittsburgh, I was particularly sympathetic to his claim that experience has conceptual content. After all, Hanson thought so, too, and even claimed—just like I thought John would—that only in virtue of having such content, experience can be epistemically

significant in the first place. John, I thought, was on my philosophical team, as it were. To me, John's view remains appealing until today. Moreover, his ability to stop one from making an argument even when one thinks that one has not even begun to make it is impressively uncanny. Somehow, with him, my default expectation is that upon hearing an objection that could be taken to target his view, he will simply respond with a gentle laugh, followed by some ingenious way of dodging the bullet.

Later in this book it will become apparent that I have somewhat moved away from the idea that experience *must* have content. That said, I still expect John to have at least one ace up his sleeve. In part, this is why at the very end of this book, I leave room for the possibility that one might try to undercut the account of experiential phenomenology that Anil proposes, and a modified version of which I recommend we adopt, by arguing that to spell out the notion of presentation on which it fundamentally rests, drawing on the actualization of conceptual capacities is indispensable.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to all my committee members, including Edouard Machery, who was a constant source of support and with whom I had a great and encouraging conversation about the job market and about letters of recommendation that came at just the right time.

Over the years, my views gradually changed, under the influence of my conversations e.g. with Anil, both face-to-face and in the very stimulating reading group on experience he oversaw. In the latter, the following participated or appeared as visitors: Ori Beck, Tom Breed, Bill Brewer, Derek Brown, Peter Brössel, David de Bruijn, Alessandra Buccella, Mazviita Chirimuuta, Chris Hill, Ulf Hlobil, Vincent Israel-Jost, Adam Marushak, John McDowell, Alison Springle, Wayne Wu, and Miloš Vuletić. My heartfelt thanks go to all of them for excellent and trenchant discussions.

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together!

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Since this is a long dissertation, this introduction will be comparatively short. In the following chapters, I embark on an inquiry aimed at devising an account of experience that meets the following two constraints: first, it should be fully compatible with what I call the doxastic variability of experience. Second, it should make available a notion on which doxastically variable experience can provide rational empirical constraint.¹

First of all, what do I mean by ‘*doxastic variability*’? A doxastic variation in one’s experience, according to the most general characterization, is a change in one’s overall experience that is due to a change in one’s overall doxastic state—paradigmatically, in what one believes.

There are many ordinary and straightforward ways in which experience is doxastically variable. Not all such cases are interesting for this inquiry. Not interesting are cases in which the variation in one’s experience is mediated a) via action or b) via an obvious shift in one’s attention,² and c) cases that do not involve visual experience.

For an example of a), suppose that you are sitting in your philosopher’s armchair, realize that you are hungry, and come to believe that there is some eggplant lasagna in the oven. As a result, you might decide to get up, go into the kitchen, and look in the oven. And indeed, you see an eggplant lasagna. It is true of course that in this very simple case, your experience has been modified in part due to your belief that you are hungry and your belief that in the oven, some food can be found. But by themselves,

¹ In the following, I take it for granted that the relevant empirical constraint is *rational*, as opposed to merely causal, so I drop the qualification.

² As we will see later, on some relationalist accounts, cases of expert vision may be explicable in terms of attention shifts. If all expert vision could be explained that way, this would be an interesting result, not an obvious fact.

these beliefs did not suffice to modify your visual experience. Had you merely adopted these beliefs, then quite plausibly, your experience would have remained the same. For a modification of your experience to occur, action was necessary, i.e. that of walking to the kitchen and looking in the oven.

For an example of both b) and c), suppose that a friend, an expert in such matters, informs you that the piece of jazz music that you are currently listening to involves a rather interesting chord progression in the second verse. As a result, you may pay special attention to the second verse. As you do, you notice that indeed, the chord progression is bizarre, yet pleasantly unusual. In this very simple case, your experience while hearing the second verse may be rather different from what it would have been had you lacked the belief you formed upon receiving the piece of information your expert friend made available to you: i.e. that the chord progression in the second verse is rather interesting. But by itself, that belief did not change your experience. Instead, it guided your experience in that it made you selectively focus on the second verse and attend to what you were told was there to be found.

Again, both these cases are ordinary straightforward cases of doxastic variation. However, neither of them falls in the scope of the notion of doxastic variation that matters for the following inquiry.

What, then, *is* the kind of cases that matters? To convey the idea, let me provide some toy examples. Suppose, first, you somehow acquired the irrational and false belief that your upstairs neighbor really hates you. If that belief makes it so that from now on, whenever you see your (in fact rather friendly) upstairs neighbor, she looks hateful to you, your experience has been shaped by your belief. Your experience is doxastically variable.

For another example, suppose someone gives an x-ray picture to you. You do not recognize anything on it, put it somewhere, completely forget about it. You then go through med school and after the day of your graduation, as you are finally cleaning up your desk, you find the x-ray picture again. You right away see it as showing a small brain tumor located in V3. Your knowledge and your training make it so that you now see the x-ray picture differently than before. Your visual experience has changed along with a change in your doxastic state. Your experience is doxastically variable.

Finally, suppose that someone shows you a fairly realistic depiction of a banana and asks you to adjust it to an achromatic gray. If you are like one of the test subjects in a study conducted by Hansen

et al. (Hansen et al. 2006), you will adjust it to a slightly bluish hue. If Hansen et al. are correct, this is due to the fact that you firmly believe, indeed know, that typically, bananas are yellow, which affects your experience in such a way that even when the illustration of the banana is actually gray, it still strikes you as yellowish. As a result, you adjust its color further to compensate for the effect. If this explanation is accurate, then for some time during the process of adjusting the color of the illustration, your belief that bananas are yellow affected your experience. Your experience is doxastically variable.³

For now, these few examples must suffice. Over the course of the next chapters, the notion of doxastic variability will become clearer. As we will see, one important question to raise is what about experience it is that is taken to be doxastically variable. The answer, as we shall see as well, depends on what one takes experience to be.

Suppose, then, that experience is doxastically variable. If we accept this, our notion of experience, whatever it is, meets the first constraint. Why should we be unable to meet the second constraint, as well? What stands in the way of thinking that experience can both be doxastically variable and provide (rational) empirical constraint?

Here is the problem: suppose that as we think of experience as providing empirical constraint, we think that experience constrains what we believe by providing an independent touchstone for it. If so, and if our beliefs are true, our experience should, in some sense, cohere with them. If, conversely, our beliefs are false or irrational, our experience cannot, as it were, confirm them. But if we allow that experience is doxastically variable, this picture may be too simple. For if experiences can change along with changes in beliefs, it may be that if a given experience coheres with your beliefs, this is not due to how things are in the world, but due to the fact that the experience already has been modified by your standing beliefs in such a way as to seemingly conform to them.

If such cases are possible, as the claim that experience is doxastically variable entails, experience can be an independent touchstone only if it has not been modified by our beliefs.

³ I will repeatedly return to this experiment and to the issues it raises for relationalist accounts in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

But how can we know that our current experience has not been so modified? How do we know whether our current experience can be trusted? Doxastic variability, it seems, threatens to undermine the idea that experience can provide empirical constraint.

In the following chapters, I begin my inquiry by examining the seminal account of (scientific) observation offered by Norwood Russell Hanson. As I mentioned in the preface, today, Hanson's work is little known. He is remembered as the philosopher who coined the term 'theory-ladenness of observation' in the first place, but that is about all people know about him.

As I show in the next chapter, Hanson's account constitutes a valiant attempt to characterize an account of experience that meets our two constraints. Ultimately, it fails. But the questions Hanson asks are worth asking, the distinctions he draws useful, the account he provides of the epistemic significance of seeing fascinating, and his account of empirical constraint flawed, but promising.

Hanson's account sets the stage for everything that follows. Here is how I proceed: again, I begin by providing an analysis of Hanson's view, which I take to be flawed in two related respects. First, Hanson fails to provide a satisfactory account of the phenomenology of experience that shows how experiential phenomenology depends, at least in part, on the presence of mind-independent items in the subject's environment. But as I argue, without such an account, his account of empirical constraint does not get off the ground.

Second, Hanson suggests that to understand how experience can be epistemically significant, we should take concepts to be operative in experience itself. As I show, Hanson's broadly holistic account of how such concepts derive an essential part of their significance for the subject from being integrated in the subject's background view allows him to address an interesting puzzle: how subjects whose background views differ can look at the same object and yet each see it as a different kind of thing.

Still, Hanson's notion of experience remains underdeveloped. For not only does he owe us an account of the phenomenal dimension of experience, he also provides no account of how, in experience, its alleged conceptual and phenomenal dimensions relate.

Having uncovered these two issues, I leave—for the time being—the consideration of Hanson's position behind and proceed, in chapter 3, by first characterizing two very different kinds of

experiential doxastic variability that I extract from the discussion of Hanson’s position—the **Doxastic Variability of Experiential Content (DVEC)** and the **Doxastic Variability of Experiential Phenomenology (DVEP)**. With these notions in hand, I then transition to an extended discussion of one of the two dominant contemporary kinds of accounts of perceptual experience: the relational view. I spend roughly three and two thirds of a chapter on an in-depth analysis of three different relationalist positions, viz. the accounts provided by William Fish (chapter 4), Bill Brewer (chapter 5), and James Genone (chapter 6), hoping to extract from these views a viable characterization of the phenomenal dimension of experience that could possibly help improve Hanson’s view. Thus, I focus on analyzing how, on the various relationalist views I consider, experiential phenomenology is said to depend on the mind-independent items in the subject’s environment and whether these views also manage to accommodate effects that fall under **DVEP**.⁴

The result of this analysis, however, is sobering. Each of the accounts is shot through with problems; none fully viable. As I show, the accounts frustrate our hope in both respects. They neither succeed in providing an intelligible notion of experiential phenomenology, nor in accommodating effects that fall under **DVEP**, such as expert vision and projection effects (of which the banana example mentioned earlier is a prime instance). Among the many issues that arise, one is particularly pertinent: according to the relationalists’ core tenet, experience is inevitably a relation between subjects and mind-independent items. Apart from Genone, who hints at the possibility of endorsing the idea that experiential phenomenology could in part be constituted by other factors, relationalists take the mind-independent items to which experience is said to relate us to be that which accounts for experiential phenomenology. This conception, I argue, is the main reason why relationalist accounts are incompatible with projection effects. And since Genone’s view, though interesting and potentially powerful, faces its own issues, I ultimately reject it as well.

In chapter 7, I provide an in-depth analysis of Siegel’s (Rich) Content View—arguably the most sophisticated recent representationalist attempt to accommodate phenomena not just of doxastic

⁴ As will transpire, given the relationalist conception of experience, considering phenomena that would fall under **DVEC** is irrelevant.

variability, but of influences exerted on experience by cognitive states more broadly construed. However, I show that Siegel's view is ill-motivated, lacks an account of experiential phenomenology, an account of experiential content, and—like Hanson—an account of how the phenomenal dimension of experience and the dimension of experiential content relate. Like most standard representationalists, Siegel assumes that the default role of experience is to provide justification for beliefs. From a perspective shaped by that assumption, many conceivable phenomena of doxastic variation appear as a threat. They threaten to provide illicit justification for irrational or false beliefs. Siegel develops a highly revisionary account that, I suggest, we should interpret as a way of putting in place various defensive mechanisms that serve to thwart that threat. On the resulting account, experiences have epistemic powers that are reduced in case the relevant experience has been formed in some epistemically non-kosher way. Furthermore, Siegel suggests that even if unbeknownst to them, subjects undergo experiences that have been formed in some such non-kosher way, the rational way for subjects to respond to their experience is by suspending judgment. The result of these two suggestions is a view on which experiences that *should* not serve to provide illicit justification *do* not provide such justification and should anyway be ignored. The relevant experiences have been rendered harmless, as it were.

Such a view, I argue, is deeply unattractive. Most importantly, it ignores that in an important sense, the rationality of the subject is completely unimpaired if she responds to her experience in a way that given her perspective is rational, and imposes instead the rational requirement that the subject respond to her experience in a way, i.e. by suspending judgment, that from within the subject's own perspective must seem completely unmotivated. My response to Siegel's view is to reject the conception she shares with most standard representationalists of the default rational role of experience. As I will show, once that conception is dropped, there is no longer any motivation to put in place her defensive measures. Accordingly, I drop both her account of epistemic power and her injunction to suspend belief upon having an experience that has been formed in some non-kosher way as both unnecessary and unmotivated. The key move for everything that follows is to adopt Gupta's suggestion that the general rational role of experience is to make rational view-dependent

transitions to judgments, beliefs, and actions. In a series of steps, I subsequently move further away from Siegel's account and show that Gupta's conception of the general rational role of experience is compatible with a modified Content View (chapter 7.3), with an improved and enriched Hansonian view (chapter 8), and with Gupta's view of experience (chapter 9), on which experience has no content at all.

Gupta's view is particularly interesting. For if slightly modified, it succeeds where both Siegel and the relationalists fail: it offers a conception of experiential phenomenology that is fully compatible with all the effects that fall under **DVEP**. Moreover, it has ample room for the idea that phenomenology is at least in part constituted by the mind-independent items in the subject's environment. And if the account is combined with a Hansonian broadly holistic conception of content, it can also preserve Hanson's insights concerning **DVEC**.

Ultimately, I suggest that various rather different accounts can be devised that meet our two constraints. Interestingly, we find that the ability to do so is independent of the long-standing debate between representationalists and relationalists about whether experience has content. With respect to the issue of how to accommodate both doxastic variability and empirical constraint, this debate does not get to the heart of the matter. Making progress requires eschewing both the restrictive relationalist and the limiting standard representationalist conception of what experience is, and what it does for us, and instead endorse the conception of the general rational role of experience that Gupta suggests.

Another constructive result springs from the discussion conducted in the second half of chapter 9. There, I focus on Gupta's central, but as of yet underdeveloped notion of rational linkages. I suggest that a modified version of Hanson's notion of *seeing as* can be utilized to make the conceptions subjects have of these linkages available for empirical debate and, thus, for rational criticism. Furthermore, I offer a way of construing the sense in which these linkages are contained in a view.

In the tenth and last chapter, I provide an extended summary of the book and an eight-point list of important lessons learned. I then confront the kind of view I recommend with two challenges: the *No Phenomenology* challenge (issued by Bob Brandom) and the *Receptive Knowledge* complaint (issued by John McDowell). Though I provide a response to each, both bring us face-to-face with deep

philosophical issues and leave us with open questions and further projects to pursue. I end by compiling a list of issues that in light of our discussion it would be fruitful to investigate further, as well as an overview of areas of research in which the results of this inquiry can be applied—within philosophy and beyond.

Before we begin, let me provide some reading advice. Given my interest in promoting Hanson, I strongly suggest that every reader read chapters 2 and the part preceding chapter 3.1. Those who favor relationalism should read up to and including chapter 6 very closely. For besides the abundance of critical remarks, I also offer several suggestions as to how the views under consideration could be improved. Ultimately, I think that relationalist accounts that draw on a notion of constitution to accommodate the phenomenology of experience are doomed. But those who think otherwise may still find that my attempts to improve them provide some pointers as to how to develop their favored views further. Those who are already convinced that relational views are misguided can either enjoy reading my arguments to that effect or skip ahead to chapter 7. After that, I really do not think that anything else should be skipped.

2.0 HANSON'S ACCOUNT OF THEORY-LADEN OBSERVATION

Our beliefs and theories about the world may be wrong, perhaps partly irrational. But ultimately, we trust, our observations will help us correct them, hold them to objective standards, and make our dealings with the world more rational, responsive, and responsible to the facts. Observation, we think, plays a vital rational role: it constrains our thinking by anchoring it to reality's solid grounds.

As is widely acknowledged, too, observation is also thoroughly theory-laden. We couch it in terms that implicate theories we do or did once hold. And though we routinely distinguish observational from non-observational vocabulary, that distinction is malleable, perhaps purely pragmatic, or merely methodological. Moreover, our philosophical predecessors realized that items on each side of the distinction depend in various ways on items on the other. Consequently, the search for an independent stratum of observation—suitable as a semantic and epistemological foundation—began to look hopeless, if not ill-conceived. However, non-foundationalist alternatives such as full-fledged semantic holism or epistemological coherentism seem unpalatable, too. Such views provide ample room for semantic and epistemological interdependences. But if on them, observation is not credited with any special epistemological significance, these views surely go too far.

Observation as constraining and anchoring our thinking to the world and observation as thoroughly infused by theory—both ideas are now deeply entrenched. But how are we to characterize observation and its rational and epistemic significance while giving theory-ladenness its due? How can observation free us from the superstitions that may affect it, how constrain our thinking while depending on what it purports to constrain?

This, again, is the main question guiding our present inquiry: how are we to think about experience in such a way as to accommodate the various ways in which our background beliefs may conceivably

affect it, while at the same time holding on to the thought that experience also plays the vital role of providing our thinking with rational empirical constraint. To address this issue, we need a starting point. A suitable way of beginning our inquiry, I contend, is by looking at the account of (scientific) observation offered by the philosopher who coined the term ‘theory-ladenness of observation’ in the first place: Norwood Russell Hanson.

In this chapter, I present Hanson’s account of visual experience as an attempt to accommodate both the ideas mentioned above: that our experience can be affected by our beliefs and that experience can serve to exert rational empirical constraint. Ultimately, I argue that Hanson’s view remains in important ways underdeveloped; it needs improvement. Having looked at it closely, we will embark on our quest for a better account, or for the resources that could serve to improve his. For looking at Hanson’s account will already provide us with rich resources, which in the following chapters I will draw on to assess some important versions of the two currently dominant accounts of experience and its rational role are currently: relationalism and standard representationalism.

We will examine these views and provide characterizations of them in due course. For now, let us begin by noting a striking feature of Hanson’s account: on it,¹ theory-ladenness is not a contingent, but an essential feature of observation: observation, he claims, *must* be theory-laden to be epistemically significant.² Note also that often, the term ‘observation’ is used rather liberally, even to report what cannot literally be seen. Hanson, however, restricts its use to visual observation: throughout, his discussion is couched in terms of seeing.³ To understand his account, the questions we shall need to address are the following: why, and in what sense, must such seeing be theory-laden? And if so, how can it still constrain and anchor our thinking?

¹ Cf. Hanson 1958 (henceforth: *Pod*), chapter 1; Hanson 1969 (henceforth: *PD*). Again, Hanson’s view is seldom discussed these days. Radder 2006, Lund 2010, and Hickey 2016 are rare exceptions.

² To affirm that theory-ladenness is an essential feature of scientific observation is to challenge a common preconception. On the latter, theory-ladenness—or generally, the dependence of observation on background beliefs—appears not as essential to observation, but as problematic, as something that must be minimized and, ideally, eliminated, as it allegedly detracts from our observations’ objectivity (I noted this already in fn. 2 of the Preface). As we will see, both the relationalist views I discuss in chapters 4-6 and Siegel’s (Rich) Content View discussed in chapter 7 implicitly share this preconception. Gupta’s presentationalist account, however, which I discuss in chapter 9, does not.

³ In this inquiry, I follow Hanson in focusing on visual experience and will not attempt to extend his arguments to other modalities, though the former may well apply to the latter as well.

To address the first question, I will examine three claims Hanson endorses:

- (1) Epistemically significant seeing involves *seeing as*.
- (2) *Seeing as* is intelligible only in terms of *seeing that*.
- (3) Through *seeing as*, beliefs can affect one's visual field.

Sections 2.1-2.3 are devoted to these claims, respectively. In 2.4, I address the second question and extract Hanson's account of how observation can still constrain our world-directed thinking. In 2.5, I highlight the respects in which Hanson's account is still wanting.

2.1 EPISTEMICALLY SIGNIFICANT SEEING INVOLVES SEEING AS

Seeing, Hanson claims, is not just being in some physical state:

- (1) Seeing is an experience. A retinal reaction is only a physical state—a photochemical excitation. [...] People, not their eyes, see. Cameras, and eye-balls, are blind. Attempts to locate within the organs of sight (or within the neurological reticulum behind the eyes) some nameable called 'seeing' may be dismissed. That Kepler and Tycho do, or do not, see the same thing [i.e. while looking at the sun at dawn] cannot be supported by reference to the physical states of their retinas, optic nerves or visual cortices: there is more to seeing than meets the eyeball. (*PoD*, p. 6f., cf. also: *PD*, chapter 4)

As experiences, seeings are conscious states. These, as passage (1) indicates, cannot be characterized in exclusively physical terms: there is more to seeing than meets the eyeball. Passage (1) also references a fictitious case Hanson frequently revisits: Tycho and Kepler look at the sun at dawn, in identical settings. Both visually relate to it and have normal vision. What is etched on their retinas may be identical, like their respective sketches of the scene (cf. *PoD*, pp. 6-7). But in an epistemically significant sense, Hanson maintains, they start from different data. Though they face the same objects, they see different things (cf. e.g. *PoD*, p. 4).⁴ How so? And what makes seeing significant to begin with?

⁴ There is of course a prior sense, in which, as they visually relate to the same object, both see it. But there may also be a sense in which they see different things. The latter is what Hanson is after.

On a widely-accepted gloss, to say that experiences are conscious states is to say that they are states there is *something it is like* for one to be in.⁵ Moreover, seeings have a distinctively visual aspect; they involve being visually struck in some way. ‘What it’s like,’ however, is an umbrella term: *what it’s like* to have an experience can vary with e.g. what items one faces, one’s response to it, and the internal and external circumstances of one’s experiencing. Tycho and Kepler may differ in *what it’s like* for them to see the sun in some, but not other respects. Some of these respects may, others will not help explain the sense in which Tycho and Kepler see different things. Moreover, while *seeing* involves being visually struck in some way, being so struck does not determine what things one sees. One can be struck in the same way while facing different objects, and struck by the same objects differently.

To understand how, as we experience objects, we can see (different) things, something else must enter the equation. *Seeings* may trigger, but are no instances of judgments: we can judge without *seeing* and *vice versa*. But judgments and significant *seeings*, Hanson contends, share an important feature: both involve *concepts*. As we will see, this assumption is crucial to his account of how two observers who face identical objects can see different things and, more generally, of how *seeing* can be epistemically significant to begin with.

To be epistemically significant, *seeings* must be able to bear on our beliefs. Not all *seeings* are like that. Peeking through a microscope and staring through the window of a moving train—these are instances of *seeing*. But one may be ignorant of what one sees, or stare mindlessly. When Hanson contends that such *seeings* lack epistemic import, his point is broadly Kantian. Without concepts, Kant famously claimed, intuitions are blind (Kant 1968, B 75). Similarly, Hanson holds that *seeings* that are exhausted by one’s being visually struck remain kaleidoscopic. To acquire the ability to bear on our beliefs, the visual aspect of *seeing* must be brought under concepts. For seeing to be epistemically

⁵ The expression, which goes back at least to Wittgenstein’s *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, famously figures in Thomas Nagel’s characterization of conscious states as states there is something it is like to be in (cf. Nagel 1974, p. 519), and is very widely used. For references and discussion on the semantics of ‘what it’s like’ sentences, cf. Stoljar 2016. As we will see in chapter 7, Siegel, too, freely uses this notion.

significant, that is, concepts must be involved. It must, Hanson suggests, involve *seeing as*.⁶ Roughly, his idea is this: as we observe the items we face, we *see* them *as* things of a certain kind, *as* having or lacking certain properties, and *as* behaving in certain ways. Perceptual judgments we issue in response may either cohere or clash with the expectations and beliefs we antecedently harbor with respect to what we *see* things *as*. Hence, the former may either render inductive support to the latter, or trigger revision.

We will explore this further. For now, let us record that according to Hanson, epistemically significant seeing involves concepts and, more specifically, *seeing as*. Let us observe, too, that *seeing as* differs from both judging and *seeing that*. I can *see* something *as F* while judging—or *seeing*—*that* it is not *F*.⁷ Nevertheless, Hanson claims, *seeing as* and *seeing that* are intimately related: the former is unintelligible without the latter. To see why, we must further explore Hanson’s notion of *seeing as*. This will reveal why, for him, scientific observation *must* be theory-laden, and how Tycho and Kepler, looking at the same sun in identical settings, can both *see* it, *see it as* the sun, and yet see different things.

2.2 *SEEING AS IS INTELLIGIBLE ONLY IN TERMS OF SEEING THAT*

Consider the following passage:

- (2) There is a ‘linguistic’ factor in seeing, though there is nothing linguistic about what forms in the eye, or in the mind’s eye. Unless there were this linguistic element, nothing we ever observed could have relevance for our knowledge. We could not speak of significant observations: nothing seen would make sense, and microscopy would only be a kind of kaleidoscopy. For what is it for things to make sense other than for descriptions of them to be composed of meaningful sentences? (*PoD*, p. 25)

⁶ Why *seeing as*? Hanson rejects sense-datum views, on which sense-data are associated with unique meanings that they carry on their sleeves, as it were. Such views are incompatible with what Hanson took to be a fact: experiences of identical items can be *seeings* of them *as* different things. I return to this issue in 2.3.1.

⁷ Sometimes we wince even when we know that what we see is not what we see it as, e.g. that rather than a real tiger jumping at us, we in fact see a computer-generated 3D simulation presented to us on a screen. We cannot but *see* it *as* a tiger, though we don’t take it to be one. I will return to differences in how robust instances of *seeing as* can be in chapter 8.1.3.

If nothing about what forms in the eye is conceptual (or linguistic⁸) then on Hanson's view, it remains kaleidoscopic. But if, to be relevant for knowledge, and to make sense, seeing must involve concepts—indeed: *seeing as*—how are concepts involved? As passage (2) indicates, Hanson thinks that concepts are operative in epistemically significant seeing itself.⁹ In it, visual and conceptual elements are thoroughly blended: “Seeing is, I should almost like to say, an amalgam of the two—pictures and language” (*PoD*, p. 25).¹⁰ Relatedly, Hanson denies that such seeing is a two-stage process:

- (3) [O]ne does not first soak up an optical pattern and then clamp an interpretation on it. [...] Ordinary accounts of [...] experiences [...] do not require visual grist going into an intellectual mill: [rather,] *theories and interpretations are 'there' in the seeing from the outset.* (*PoD*, p. 9f., emphasis added)

Together, passages (2) and (3) reveal a further aspect of Hanson's view: the intelligibility of seeing is construed in terms of meaningful sentences. Not just concepts, but theories and interpretations are ‘there’ in the seeing, right from the outset.

Though he does not quite put it this way, Hanson thinks that having epistemically significant experiences requires that experiencing subjects inhabit some doxastic context. Moreover, some of the beliefs such a context contains must relate the concepts that, on his view, epistemically significant seeing involves to other concepts. Per Hanson, what a concept operative in experience means, to a subject *S*, is to an essential part determined by what role it plays in *S*'s doxastic context.¹¹ Indeed, having *some* such role is essential to something's being a concept to begin with; nothing could be an application of a concept (in seeing or otherwise), if no such context were available. And indeed, absent any doxastic context in which the concept *F* is articulated, what could *seeing something as F* possibly

⁸ Presumably, Hanson's reason for calling that element *linguistic* is that, like Wittgenstein, whom he cites frequently, he takes thinking to ultimately depend on language.

⁹ Albeit in a different context, McDowell 1994 argues roughly for a similar claim: in epistemically significant experience, spontaneity, rather than operating *on* receptivity, is operative *in* receptivity itself.

¹⁰ Here, too, Hanson draws on Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*.

¹¹ The meaning of concepts need not be *exhausted* by their conceptual role. Tycho and Kepler *see* the sun *as* different kinds of thing, though they visually relate to, and refer to, the same physical object. If e.g. reference were taken to be part of a concept's meaning, Tycho and Kepler's concepts would differ in the dimension of sense, not in that of reference.

be?¹² Subjects could not intelligibly *see* anything *as F* if they lacked beliefs about *F*s entirely, including beliefs about how *F*s and non-*F*s differ.¹³ *Seeing as F*, that is, requires a context provided by one's beliefs about how *F*-ish items relate to other items: all *F*s are *G*, probably *H*, perhaps *J*, certainly not *K*, say. Hanson allows that such contexts can remain implicit, “‘built into’ thinking, imagining and picturing” (*PoD*, p. 14).¹⁴ Crucially, though, without *some* such context, *seeing as* cannot occur.

Let us return to Hanson's claim that *seeing as* and *seeing that* are intimately related. Sometimes he suggests that *seeing* something *as F* is *seeing that* it may be expected to behave in all the ways *F*s do (cf. *PD*, p. 116).¹⁵ Sometimes he says, more cautiously, that *seeing* something *as* a certain kind of thing is *seeing that*, if suitably circumstanced, it does, will, or would probably react in ways characteristic of what it is *seen as*.¹⁶ The claim that *seeing as* involves *seeing that*, I submit, encapsulates in a slogan the following line of thought: it starts from Hanson's assumption that concepts are operative in epistemically significant seeing itself, and that such seeing involves *seeing as*. For these concepts to imbue experience

¹² “The appropriate aspect of the illustration is brought out by the verbal context in which it appears. *It is not an illustration of anything determinate unless it appears in some such context.* [...] The context is part of the illustration itself.” *PoD*, p. 14 (emphasis added). This, Hanson claims, obtains not just in illustrations, but “in all seeing.” *PoD*, p. 17

¹³ Suppose that upon seeing an unfamiliar kind of object, you decide to call it *F*. Can't you now, *pace* Hanson, *see it as F*, even though you lack the (allegedly) requisite belief context concerning *F*s? “New visual phenomena,” Hanson responds, “are noteworthy only against our accepted knowledge of the observable world.” *PD*, p. 109. The ability to single out objects as unfamiliar is intelligible only in the context of the ability to distinguish them from familiar ones. This in turn requires attributing properties to them that one believes they share with other objects, lack, or both. As one ostensibly defines something as *F*, where “*F*” is a newly coined term, the context such beliefs constitute and the ability to make or withhold attributions of the properties figuring in them thus make both one's ostensive definition and one's subsequent *seeing* items *as F* intelligible to begin with.

¹⁴ The passage continues (with a nod to the Gestaltpsychologists in a footnote): “We are set to appreciate the visual aspect of things in certain ways.” Also: “Such ‘contexts’ are very often carried around with us in our heads, having been put there by intuition, experience, and reasoning.” *PD*, p. 100

¹⁵ This is too strong. We cannot expect things to behave in ways we don't believe they can. Expressions of expectations, if they complement the *seeing that* locution, must be constrained by what we in fact believe.

¹⁶ *PoD*, p. 21: “To see fig. 1 as a transparent box, an ice-cube, or a block of glass is to see that it *is* six-faced, twelve-edged, eight-cornered;” *PoD*, p. 18: “The schoolboy and the physicist both see that the X-ray tube *will* smash if dropped;” for the probabilistic qualification, see e.g. *PD*, p. 112; *PoD*, p. 20f.: “What is it to see boxes, staircases, birds, antelopes, bears, goblets, X-ray tubes? It is (at least) to have knowledge of certain sorts. [...] It is to see that, *were* certain things done to objects before our eyes, other things *would* result” (all emphases added). Note also *PoD*, p. 24, where he claims that *seeing* something *as* something is to *see that* certain further observations are *(im)possible*. Hanson thus appears to hold that for a concept operative in *seeing as* to be intelligible, the belief context it inhabits must involve at least implicit commitments to subjunctive claims. Though I cannot pursue this here, this view puts Hanson in a camp with Kant and Sellars, who as Brandom argues, subscribed to what Brandom dubs the *modal Kant Sellars-thesis*. On one rough formulation of it, “[t]he ability to use ordinary empirical descriptive terms such as ‘green’, ‘rigid’, and ‘mass’ already presupposes [implicit] grasp of the kinds of properties and relations made explicit by modal vocabulary.” Brandom 2008, p. 96f.

with significance, they must themselves be significant. In general, for a concept \underline{F} to have some significance for a subject S is for \underline{F} to play some role in S 's doxastic context. The beliefs contained in this context that specify what is required and entailed by some object's falling under \underline{F} , including beliefs concerning the various ways *being F* relates to and differs from having other properties, serve to inferentially articulate an essential part of what, to S , \underline{F} means.¹⁷ What a subject S 's *seeing* something *as F* amounts to thus depends on S 's beliefs about F s: on what meaningful sentences S would, in characterizing F s, assert about what else being F involves, follows from, or is incompatible with. Jointly, these sentences constitute the set of suitable complements for the '*seeing that*' locution.¹⁸ Such complements may be rather varied. They need not e.g. specify actual or possible experiences, nor anything visible, though they may (*PoD*, p. 22).¹⁹ Also, some concepts figuring in instances of *seeing as* may link up with numerous beliefs. But for a given seeing to be epistemically significant, links to rather few beliefs suffice.²⁰

Seeing that, Hanson asserts, "threads knowledge into our seeing" (*PoD*, p. 22; *PD*, p. 107; see also the passages quoted in fn. 16). The importance of *knowledgeable* beliefs is something we shall consider. First, however, note that some of one's beliefs about e.g. F s may be false or irrational. Accordingly, in *seeing* something *as F*, one can take oneself to be *seeing that* something is, could, or would (probably) be the case, if certain other things obtained or happened, yet be mistaken. *Seeing that* is of course factive.

¹⁷ In what follows, I focus on beliefs, but the requisite context may be present in form of commitments to apply concepts, commitments at least partly implicit in what the subject does.

¹⁸ Which of these beliefs are more or less salient may of course vary across situations.

¹⁹ In some cases, one may, in a sense, *see that* if x happened, y would, too: if I moved my hand a little closer to the rabid dog's snarling muzzle, I would surely lose a finger or two, don't you see? But *seeing* a certain mark on a black board *as* a 3 involves, *inter alia*, *seeing that* adding 1 to what it represents yields 4. Lest we uncharitably think Hanson credits us with perceptual access to modal contexts, what *seeing that* threads into seeing need not itself pertain to something visible.

²⁰ See also fn. 13 above. Sometimes, how concepts operative in seeing differ come out not in what one would or could say about them, but in their application. Consider looking at an eye chart through a manual refractor, while the oculist who assesses your eye-sight keeps exchanging the lenses. During your subsequent experiences, you *see* the chart *as* (but typically won't not judge it to actually be) differing in blurriness. Generally, Hanson will say, *seeing* things *as* (more or less) *blurry* is intelligible only against the backdrop of doxastic contexts that relate 'blurry' in various ways to further beliefs, and that, presumably, imply that blurriness comes in degrees. *Seeing* the chart *as* more (or less) blurry is an epistemically significant experience. One can issue judgments based on subsequent visual experiences due to how blurry one *sees* things *as* while having them. At the same time, there may not be much one can *say* about what is distinctive of them. Thanks to Alessandra Buccella for urging me to comment on such cases on Hanson's behalf.

If we take ourselves to *see that* which cannot be seen, we thus go astray. Accordingly, something besides knowledge and true belief can be threaded into seeing as well. Acknowledging this fact is crucial, for it allows us to explain both in what sense Tycho and Kepler can see different things and why scientific observation must be theory-laden.

Consider the following passage:

- (4) Seeing the dawn was *for Tycho* [...] to *see that* the earth's brilliant satellite was beginning its diurnal circuit around us, while for Kepler and Galileo it was to see that the earth was spinning them back into the light of our local star. (*PoD*, p. 20, emphasis added)

We, of course, side with Kepler (and Galileo). Tycho's view is geocentric; Kepler's (and Galileo's), like ours, is not. Still, *for Tycho*, i.e. by the lights of what he thought he knew, seeing the dawn—i.e. *seeing* the sun at dawn, *as* the sun—*was to see that* the earth's brilliant satellite was beginning its diurnal circuit around us. Again, since *seeing that* is factive, *we* cannot assert that this is what he in fact saw. But he would have asserted it, which is what in passage (4), the insertion of '*for Tycho*' signals. Surely Tycho's doxastic context was crucially shaped by his belief that the sun revolves around the stationary earth. Failing to acknowledge this is failing to grasp what thing he thought he saw. Again, Tycho and Kepler visually relate to the same object. Both *see* it *as* the sun. But to the extent to which their doxastic contexts differ, they differ in what, to them, the concept sun means, in how it is, in their respective doxastic contexts, inferentially articulated. This, in turn, imbues their experiences with (*differing*) epistemic significances.²¹ In this sense, their theories are there *in* the their *seeings*. Tycho and Kepler *see* the sun *as* the heavenly body that figures in their respective theories. Their theories differ; hence they see different things, even though they look at the same objects and though the visual aspect of their respective experiences may well be identical.

To sum up: starting from the broadly Kantian idea that epistemically significant seeing must involve concepts, Hanson suggests that such seeing involves *seeing* what one faces *as* something. For any concept ψ to be operative in some S 's *seeing* something *as* ψ , he holds, a doxastic context must be present, which is constituted by S 's beliefs about ψ -ish things. These beliefs serve to inferentially

²¹ Also, the extent to which Tycho and Kepler *share* theories is the extent to which they *see* the same thing. Cf. *PoD*, p. 18.

articulate what for S , ψ -ish things are and what S takes *being ψ* to entail, require, or be incompatible with. For any ψ , *seeing* something *as ψ* is intelligible only in the presence and in terms of some such context. And if, as in scientific observation, such a context contains *theories* about ψ -ish things, Hanson's claim ensues: scientific observation *must* be theory-laden.²²

Seeing that, Hanson claims, threads *knowledge* into our seeing. What he means by that comes out e.g. in what Hanson claims *attributing* states of seeing requires:

- (5) [What must] have taken place for a man to be described as seeing a [...] spirochete; unless a person had had at least one visual sensation and *knew* what a spirochete was [and, Hanson adds elsewhere: *what it looks like* (e.g. *PoD*, p. 21)], we would not say that he had seen a spirochete. (*PD*, p. 112, emphasis added.)

In attributing to you that you see an apple, I might simply report that you are visually related to one while being awake, not drugged, etc. For this attribution to be true it is not necessary that you know anything.²³ But Hanson's point concerns not such cases, but cases of epistemically significant seeing. Applied to our example, his claim is that I cannot intelligibly attribute to you that you *see* something *as* an apple unless I take you to know what apples are. In other words, I must assume that you hold at least some beliefs about them that I, too, consider as knowledgeable complements of the

²² Such theories, recall, may figure in contexts implicitly. Two clarifications: First, some (cf. van Fraassen 1980) characterize theories, not as sets of beliefs, but as families of models and reject the assimilation of theories to doxastic contexts. But if proponents of such a view grant that proponents of different theories hold different beliefs, Hanson's point is secured. Second, *theory-ladenness* is not what makes seeing epistemically significant in general. For many ordinary concepts – e.g. sister, pain, or rose garden – it is absurd to hold that such concepts cannot be intelligibly operative in seeing unless a corresponding *theory* were held. If taken to entail that we need to hold e.g. some theory of pain to intelligibly attribute pain to others or express that we are in pain, such a view would imply a dubious conception of psychological and other ordinary concepts (for discussion, see Hacker & Bennett 2010, chapter 13). We best read Hanson as claiming that generally, epistemically significant *seeing* must be *concept-laden*, only scientific observation must be theory-laden. For ease of exposition, I will stick with the term 'theory-ladenness,' while noting the following: whether a given concept functions as observational or as theoretical concept and whether what is required for its mastery includes that one hold something properly called a *theory* may vary with concepts and contexts of use.

²³ Such attributions may be reasonable even if I mistakenly believe that you are so related, even if your *or* my concept *apple* is confused: nothing falls under it. If so, reasonable attributions of *seeings* of F do not require knowledge of F . But if having a belief context at all required that the subject have *some* knowledge, then so would attributing *seeings* of F – if not knowledge of F -ish things (for there may be none), then knowledge implemented in one's ability to *see* whatever one takes to be F *as* being distinct from other things. Consider a subject, S , who can subsequently overcome and revise the many beliefs she holds. The procedure S engages in as she does may involve assuming these beliefs, reasoning from them, and adjusting them in light of other beliefs and her experience. In an important respect, S is more rational than R , most of whose beliefs are true, yet who cannot engage in a similar procedure to weed out false ones. If we take this dimension of rationality – and the procedure that S can engage in, but not R – to be part of what 'reasonable' picks out, one can be reasonable even if some of the beliefs one reasons from are false, and reasonable in reasoning from them.

seeing that locution.²⁴ Again, we grant that Tycho *saw* the sun *as* the sun while acknowledging that some of his sun-related beliefs were false. However, suppose *all* of them had been false. If so, so would have been those that serve to differentiate the sun from other objects. Lest we render it completely indeterminate what, by claiming that Tycho *saw* the sun *as* the sun, we are attributing to Tycho, we cannot thus assume that all his beliefs about the sun were false.²⁵ For our attribution to make sense as a specification of a determinate propositional attitude to Tycho, at least *some* of them must have been knowledgeable by our lights, too.²⁶ Without knowledgeable complements of the *seeing that* locution, in other words, attributions of *seeing as* remain unintelligible.

This latter idea is compelling independently of the perceptual situation we consider. Often, for instance, *S*'s *seeing* something *as* red is a case of *seeing* (and knowing) *that* it is red, *that* it is colored, and, depending on *S*'s knowledge, other things, e.g. *that* what bears its complementary color will be green. But Peter Achinstein objected against Hanson that when *A* playfully *sees* a cloud *as* a horse, *A* cannot

²⁴ Taking attributions of *seeing that* as governed by what we *take* true is more appropriate than endorsing a strong factivity requirement that is met only if what complements the *seeing that* locution are sentences expressing facts that actually obtain. That we may not know all the facts, either, then does not make such attributions inappropriate.

²⁵ Likewise, we deny that phlogiston theorists saw phlogiston, and, as they looked at phenomena involving combustion, that they *saw that* phlogiston was involved. Still, we affirm that they *saw* such processes *as* involving phlogiston. Moreover, like Tycho, phlogiston theorists were not *completely* off. We still find their characterizations of the phenomena significant, can reconstruct what they saw, and pinpoint the respects in which they went astray. If we accept that the meaning of one's concepts is at least in part articulated by the way these concepts figure in one's total belief context, we cannot separate what the beliefs phlogiston theorists held *were* from how these beliefs were *articulated*, i.e. how these beliefs, and the concepts figuring in them, were inferentially entangled with other beliefs, some of which we have since come to reject. Fully grasping what their beliefs were would be a massive interpretive task. It would involve reconstructing the entire doxastic context in which these beliefs lived and breathed. However, we need not perform such gargantuan tasks to acknowledge the wide-ranging similarities between their and our ways of characterizing relevant phenomena. Moreover, there are broad similarities between the inferential moves licensed within their and our theories of combustion, respectively. As we assess their views, the proper unit of comparison might thus not be belief, but rather significant differences in the structures constituted by the inferential moves that constitute their and our belief contexts, respectively.

²⁶ For many concepts, different sub-communities differ in what standards they impose on concept mastery. They will differ in what else one needs to know, or be able to do, for a belief one holds to count as knowledgeable. Hanson observes that some of the knowledge *seeing as* requires is "of a rather more logical nature [...]. [W]e should not say of anything that it was a physical object [...], were it not locatable in space or itself a tangible, space-occupying entity; nor should we say of any physical object that it is a cube unless it is six-faced, twelve-edged, and eight-cornered. On the other hand, that liquids and gases (*per se*) are not suitable for the formation of boxes and cubes and rigid frames is something we must learn from experience in a way rather different from the ways in which we gain our knowledge about what *objects* and *cubes* are." *PD*, p. 113. If he is right, then some beliefs regarding physical objects are not only more modally robust than others, but express facts concerning what something *must* be to be a physical object at all. Though I cannot pursue this here, it may thus be that for some concepts, there are beliefs one *must* have, or that one *must* at least be implicitly committed to, to have the concept at all. Moreover, it may be that certain kinds of such implicit commitments *must* be in place for one to count as having *any* concepts at all.

see that, if suitably circumstanced, it would act in ways we know horses do (see Achinstein 1972). Since *seeing that* is factive, Achinstein’s assessment is quite correct. It would, however, be mistaken to infer that playful *seeing as* does not involve *seeing that* at all. For surely, to intelligibly engage in playfully *seeing* a cloud *as* a horse, *A* must *see* it *as* a cloud and thus *see that* it does, will, or would behave like *A* knows clouds do, when suitably circumstanced.²⁷ Likewise, to *see* a cloud *as* a horse, *A* must *see that* if it were a horse, it would be what *A* knows horses are, and behave like *A* knows horses do, when suitably circumstanced.²⁸ Finally, suppose *A* has an illusory experience as of a horse, or hallucinates one. Arguably, both illusions and hallucinations involve ways their subjects are struck visually, though in hallucinations, no physical object may do the striking.²⁹ Still, *A*, if unaware of her state, will *see*, or at least *seem* to *see*, something *as* something. But note that the concepts operative in seeing—and the seeing, too—can be significant even if *A* does not in fact visually relate to what she *sees* things *as*, or to any object.³⁰ Intelligibly attributing to someone (oneself or others) that one *sees* something *as* *F* requires a doxastic context that involves at least some beliefs that the attributer takes to be knowledgeable. But so does the *seeing as* and the *seeming* involved in illusions and hallucinations.³¹ In illusory or hallucinatory experiences, too, we cannot assume that none of *A*’s beliefs about *F*s is knowledgeable and still ascribe to *A* that she *sees* something *as* *F*. The former assumption renders the

²⁷ From an attributor *B*’s perspective, it may involve *seeing that* *p*, *q*, ..., where these express beliefs *both* *A* and *B* endorse.

²⁸ Here, what complements ‘*seeing that*’ is a *subjunctive conditional*. As e.g. Sellars 1948 and, following him, e.g. Brandom 2015, have argued, such conditionals express modally robust commitments. Construed as complements of ‘*seeing that*’, they tie the concepts operative in *seeing* to modally robust commitments explicitly or implicitly contained in our belief context—including e.g. laws and lawlike generalizations concerning the things we take to fall under them.

²⁹ Though many take it to be obviously true, the assumption that visual hallucinations involve a visual aspect is not universally shared. Fish 2009, who takes hallucination to lack phenomenal character, denies it (see also chapter 4). Moreover, as we will see in chapter 9, Gupta holds, and I reject, that even in total hallucinations, there must be something that does the striking.

³⁰ Accordingly, concepts that nothing falls under can be significant.

³¹ As for known illusions, consider the Müller-Lyer. Upon first exposure, we typically *see* it *as* featuring two unequal lines. Doing so will involve *seeing that*, if things were the way we *see* them *as*, we would be able to measure a difference in their length. But *seeing* what we *know* to be an instance of the Müller-Lyer illusion *as* featuring two apparently unequal lines is compatible with both *seeing that* if we were to measure the lines, we would discover that they are equal in length and *seeing that* we would detect a difference in length if the lines were the way we *see* them *as*. We may not be able to *see* the lines of the Müller-Lyer *as* anything but unequal in length, while we typically do not find it difficult to stop *seeing* a cloud *as* a horse, or to *see* it *as* not horse-like, e.g. by focusing on dissimilarities. If so, there are certain limits to the extent to which how we are *set* to *see* things *as* can be modified (recall also the tiger case from fn. 7).

latter ascription indeterminate. This generalizes. Also, if all my own beliefs about *F*s were false, I could not be *seeing* anything *as F*, either. For on the former assumption, '*seeing* something *as F*' does not single out anything determinate I could be doing. Accordingly, *seeing as* involves *seeing that* and is unintelligible without it.

This concludes our analysis of Hanson's second claim. As we saw, *seeing as* inherits its significance from how the concepts figuring in it are inferentially articulated in the subject's doxastic context, which thus determines an essential part of what these concepts mean to the subject in question. Doxastic contexts can differ in what theories they explicitly or implicitly contain. Subjects who inhabit different doxastic contexts and look at identical objects in identical settings can therefore still see different things in the following regimented sense: they *see* objects *as* things of the sort that populate their respective different theories. If in scientific observation, we see objects in the context of the theories we endorse, scientific observation must be theory-laden (and ordinary seeing at least concept-laden). Moreover, if some of our beliefs are false, then in *seeing* something *as* something, we may take ourselves to be *seeing that* something is or would be the case even though it is not, or would not be. However, one cannot intelligibly engage in *seeing as* while lacking knowledge altogether: if one's belief context contained only false beliefs, the concepts it contained would be indeterminate, as would be ascriptions of *seeing as*. Hence, *seeing as* must occur against the backdrop of doxastic contexts that contain at least some knowledgeable beliefs—or rather: beliefs that we, too, would count as knowledgeable. *Seeing as* without *seeing that*, so construed, is unintelligible.³² Let us turn next to Hanson's third claim: through *seeing as*, beliefs can affect one's visual field.

³² Again, such commitments may be partly or entirely implicit. Depending on the expressive power of their language, subjects may be unable to thematize commitments to the material or subjunctive conditionals that would serve to articulate the role their concepts play. *Material* conditionals, incidentally, encode commitments to inference rules that govern applications of 'is *F*' to 'is *G*', 'is not *J*', etc. *Subjunctive* conditionals, in contrast, encode commitments to rules that are modally robust across a range of contexts. Such commitments come in different modal flavors, they can be commitments to e.g. laws of nature, a priori principles, moral, aesthetic, epistemic, or semantic norms. I cannot here address the question commitment to which (kinds of) conditionals *must* implicitly govern our linguistic and perceptual practice to make it intelligible how *anything* could count as a concept suitable to figure in instances of *seeing* something *as F*. For an investigation of the expressive roles of material and subjunctive conditionals see Brandom 2008, 2015.

2.3 THROUGH *SEEING AS*, BELIEFS CAN AFFECT ONE'S VISUAL FIELD

So far, in my analysis of Hanson's account, the visual aspect of seeing played no important role. I focused on the claim that to be (epistemically) significant, (visual) experience, or seeing, must be able to bear on our beliefs and thus, on Hanson's view, involve concepts. I then showed that for Hanson, such concepts are in turn intelligible in terms of the doxastic contexts in which they are inferentially articulated and that changes in such contexts translate into changes in what things subjects see. So far, theory-ladenness thus appears to be a predominantly semantic affair—it comprises the content-determining effects one's doxastic context has on the meanings of the concepts that instances of seeing as involve.

As we will see shortly, though, Hanson thinks that theory-ladenness can take other forms as well: what we believe can affect the visual aspect of seeing itself. As he refers to this visual aspect, or an experience's phenomenology, 'the visual field and its elements' is the characterization Hanson resorts to most frequently. One could suspect that talk about the visual aspect reintroduces sense-data. Hanson does not offer a full account of the visual aspect, but does reject sense-datum accounts. To remove this apparent tension, I will sketch, next, what Hanson finds objectionable in sense-datum accounts: *not* the idea that seeing may involve mental images of some sort, but a certain conception of what role such images could play (2.3.1). Next, I explain his view that beliefs and theories may affect the *organization* of the visual field and how it *coheres* (2.3.2) and, finally, that via *projection* effects, they may affect the visual field itself (2.3.3).

2.3.1 What's Wrong with Sense-Datum Accounts

In many places, Hanson forcefully rejects sense-datum accounts (cf. esp. *PD*, ch. 5). Note, though, the following passage:

- (6) If Tycho and Kepler are aware of anything visual, it must be of some pattern of colours. What else could it be? [...] This private pattern is the same for both observers. [...] what they really see is discoid to begin with. It is but a visual aspect of

the sun. In any single observation[,] the sun is a brilliantly luminescent disc, a penny painted with radium.

So something about their visual experiences at dawn is the same for both: a brilliant yellow-white disc centred between green and blue colour patches. Sketches of what they both see could be identical—congruent. In this sense Tycho and Kepler see the same thing at dawn. The sun appears to them in the same way. The same view, or scene, is presented to them both. (*PoD*, pp. 7-8)

“[O]ur visual consciousness,” Hanson maintains as well, “is dominated by pictures;” “[v]ision is essentially pictorial” (*PoD*, p. 25). Occasionally, he even refers to such pictures as sense-data.³³ He also grants that sometimes, the phenomenal language featured in passage (6) is quite appropriate: in the oculist’s office or if, in the lab, one lacks detailed knowledge of what one sees. Plausibly, both Kepler and Tycho could agree on a characterization of the sun, or of their sketches thereof, in phenomenal terms. Such agreement would indicate that the doxastic contexts both inhabit, respectively, are similar enough for them to use phenomenal terms in sufficiently similar ways. It would not, however, entail a two-stage account of seeing, on which both are first aware of a mental image, characterized in identical phenomenal terms, on which, second, they then put different interpretations. The two-stage account, if true, would have to be true of seeing reversible figures also, e.g. the duck-rabbit. But we typically do not *see* such figures *as* something for which a description in phenomenal terms would be accurate. Indeed, coming to see them in such a way, if possible, requires tremendous effort. Phenomenal seeing, Hanson claims, is atypical, not a kind of seeing on which all ordinary seeing must be modeled.³⁴ Moreover, the two-stage account is inaccurate not just of cases of seeing reversible figures:

³³ About congenitally blind patients who post-surgically learn to see, Hanson asks: “Of course, these people can see in the sense-datum sense of “see,” but can they see anything?” *PD*, 151. Clearly, he wants to elicit agreement with the first, disagreement with the second half. Such patients have visual experiences, but it takes them a long time to *see* what they face *as* anything. Hooking up the visual aspect of seeing with our knowledge is a complex and arduous process.

³⁴ See also *PoD*, 20, and *PD*, 150: “It [phenomenal observation] is something we must develop from our ordinary sorts of seeing, and not that from which our ordinary sort of seeing is developed.” Like Bacon, who advocated freeing the mind from the *Idols of the Tribe*, Hanson holds that *phenomenal seeing*, while atypical, can be useful for getting rid of preconceptions or for arriving, ultimately, at new ways of seeing. Cf. also *PD*, 109, 111-2. For Bacon on idols of the mind, cf. Klein 2015, esp. section 3.1.

- (7) Is the physicist doing more than just seeing? No; he does nothing over and above what the layman does when he sees an X-ray tube. [...] One does nothing beyond looking and seeing when one dodges bicycles, glances at a friend, or notices a cat in the garden. (*PoD*, p. 16)

Sense-datum theorists, Hanson suggests, focus on cases in which we do not *see* things *as* what they are. They try to find “something pure and unadulterated by inference or intellect” (*PD*, p. 114), something that could, presumably, serve to ground knowledge. In doing so, he argues, sense-datum theorists ignore the wide range of cases wherein we are in fact right in our observations:

- (8) They [sense-datum theorists] are so concerned to discover what it is that we are right about when we are right in saying we see a duck (when only an owl is before us) that they leave unexamined all that is involved when we are right in saying we see a duck when there is a duck to be seen—a surprisingly frequent occurrence. In dotting on our observational mistakes[,] the phenomenalist portrays a world in which the senses are generally misleading and deceptive. But the world of science is not [...] everywhere like this. [...] This “pure visual something,” whether it be the crude retinal reaction or the more subtle sense-datum, is what no one without a theory would dream of calling *seeing*, save in those relatively rare contexts where *seeing as* and *seeing that* are not possible, as with the oculist’s eye-exercises or at the furthest frontiers of scientific research or in the visual responses of infants and idiots.³⁵ (*PD*, p. 114)

The thought that there *must* be something purely visual that different observers placed in identical settings share could rest on the hope that one could find, in that purely visual something, a certain ground for knowledge. But this hope, Hanson holds, rests on a confusion: reference to some unadulterated seeing cannot possibly help provide a full explanation of what it is that we get right even when we are mistaken. Surely, when mistakes occur, the relevant experiences, lest they disqualify as *seeings*, must have a visual aspect. For *seeings* to be mistaken or correct, however, they must bear epistemic significance, they must be *seeings as* (or corresponding *seemings*). Moreover, if Hanson is correct, one’s doxastic context, even if flawed, must contain *some* knowledge. Yet if so, then whatever images significant seeing may involve, they cannot *ground* knowledge from scratch. Hanson’s insistence on the claim that epistemic significance requires beliefs, including knowledgeable ones, thus undercuts certain foundationalist motivations for insisting that in relevantly similar settings, the visual aspect of

³⁵ Hanson’s focus is on *seeing* objects *as* things of some kind or other. However, complements of “*seeing as*” need not be limited to names of things. We can *see* something *as* e.g. red, blobby, flashlike, x-shaped, as instantiating or involving certain processes, as beautiful, or wrong. *Pace* Hanson, some of the cases he lists may thus involve *seeing as*, too.

subjects' seeings must be intersubjectively stable. For the idea that such stable aspects could ground knowledge founders on the following fact: epistemically capitalizing on such aspects requires that concepts and beliefs, including knowledgeable ones, are already in place.³⁶

Again, Hanson rejects neither that seeing has a visual aspect, nor that we may talk about it in terms of images. But whether such images are intersubjectively stable or not, they cannot ground knowledge. Let us consider, next, Hanson's claim that beliefs affect the *organization* of the visual field.

2.3.2 The Organization of the Visual Field

To approach the issue of organization, consider the following passage. In it, Hanson draws on the duck-rabbit figure and on an example from Pierre Duhem, which serves to contrast what an untrained visitor to a physicist's lab sees with what the physicist sees (cf. Duhem 1954, 218):

- (9) The elements in his [the visitor's] visual field, though perhaps similar or identical to the elements of the physicist's visual field in color, shape, arrangement, etc., are not *organized conceptually* for him as they are for the physicist. And this is much the same situation as we find when both you and I gaze at *Figure 3* [depicting the duck-rabbit] but I see a rabbit and you see a duck. The conceptual organization of one's visual field is the all-important factor here. It is not something visually apprehended in the way that lines and shapes and colors are visually apprehended. It is rather the *way* in which lines, shapes, and colors are visually apprehended. (*PD*, p. 104, emphases added)

Though we lack a precise account of it, let us accept Hanson's talk of visual fields and its elements. What could it be for these elements to be *organized* differently? Organization, passage (9) indicates, is *conceptual*. Relatedly, Hanson points out that the plot of a story is not another detail of it, nor is the tune of a musical piece just another note. Likewise, the organization is not an element of the field, nor something that can be seen (cf. *PoD*, p. 13; *PD*, p. 95).³⁷

³⁶ I return to the assumption of intersubjectively stable visual aspects in the discussion of Fish, who accepts it, and in the discussion of Gupta, who, I think, quite rightly rejects it.

³⁷ Perhaps the elements in one's visual field cannot be seen. Searle 2015 argues that only real-world objects can be proper objects of one's experience, ontologically subjective entities, however, cannot. This view, too, is compatible with the idea that both seeing real world objects and hallucinating involve *having* (though not *seeing*) conscious experiences in which one's visual field's is populated with elements.

We can explicate Hanson’s talk of *ways of apprehending* and *conceptual organization* by drawing on our previous discussion: if we *see* something *as* the sun from Tycho’s perspective, we *apprehend* the item seen in one way, if we *see* it from Kepler’s perspective, we *apprehend* it in another way. Likewise, *seeing* the duck-rabbit figure *as* depicting a duck or *as* depicting a rabbit are two different ways of apprehending it. Generally, to say that the same objects can be apprehended in different ways just is to claim that they can be *seen as* different things (or features).

Ways of apprehending objects typically involve expectations as to how, were we to perform in certain ways with respect to them, they would in turn perform (cf. *PD*, p. 150). The context set up, *inter alia*, by such expectations organizes the elements of the visual field conceptually—by situating them in a space of expectations concerning how the visual field is likely to change.

Differences in conceptual organization may yield further effects. One example of such effects are so-called *selection* effects. We rarely attend to the space between the leaves of a tree (*PoD*, p. 17), or to our own noses and cheeks (*PD*, p. 152), even though surely, in almost all seeing, the latter serve to co-constitute our visual field. Moreover, whenever leaves leave their marks on a subject’s visual consciousness by figuring, *in our experience*,³⁸ as elements in the visual field, so does the space between them. Selection effects concern what we look at, what is foregrounded or, conversely, what is taken to be part of the background (cf. *PD*, p. 92). They concern which aspects of the items populating our visual field are “thrown into relief” (*PD*, p. 104) as salient or ignored. “[T]he identity badge of every modern scientist,” Hanson quips, “consists of those things he ignores among his visual data” (*PD*, p. 152).³⁹

A different kind of effect concerns how the elements of one’s visual field “pull together” (*PD*, p. 94) or “cohere” (*PoD*, p. 13; *PD*, p. 103). Imagine yourself as you see an unidentified object; some

³⁸ See *PoD*, p. 15: “Elements *in our experience* do not cluster at random” (emphasis added).

³⁹ What counts as significant may change along with one’s theories and the development of new technologies. A well-known example concerns the Golgi apparatus. Although discovered by Camillo Golgi as early as 1898, for more than 50 years many scientists suspected that what we now affirm is a *bona fide* cell organelle was an artefact of certain staining techniques. Only after the introduction of the electron microscope the controversy subsided. See Farquhar & Palade 1981 for details and further references. In the following chapters, I will mostly ignore selection effects. They do matter for my suggestion as to how Genone could try to accommodate cases of expert vision (cf. chapter 6).

of its parts are visible, others covered in mist. Once you recognize the object, things snap into place. Its visible parts pull together, forming a coherent and unified whole, whereas previously, they may have seemed almost like randomly juxtaposed. In seeing reversible figures, too, the elements of one's visual field cohere in different ways, depending on how one apprehends the figures at hand. And finally, it may be that once one becomes an expert, the way the objects of one's expertise look to one, how their parts cohere, may differ from how they did back when one was a layperson.

This effect is difficult to place and Hanson admits as much. Maybe, as Hanson at times suggests, as we transition between ways of seeing reversible perspective figures, “[n]othing optical or sensational is modified” (*PoD*, p. 12). Though you and I see them differently, our sense-datum pictures “must be the same” (*PoD*, p. 11). But it is also tempting to say that once we recognize what we face, our seeing is so thoroughly transformed that the visual field *itself* must have changed. As Hanson suggests, one might argue with Wittgenstein that the duck-rabbit figure, if *seen as* (depicting) a duck, has not the slightest similarity to the same figure if *seen as* (depicting) a rabbit (cf. *PD*, p. 98; *PoD*, p. 13).⁴⁰

As we transition from merely *seeing* something to *seeing it as* something determinate, or from *seeing it as* one determinate kind of thing to *seeing it as* another, characterizing what changes is hard. Don't the elements of one's visual field alter? Sense datum theorists may be mistaken in what epistemic role they assign to the visual aspect. Yet for all we have said, it remains possible that Hanson's claim that beliefs affect how the observer's visual field is organized is compatible with the idea that the visual aspect remains stable across observers whose belief contexts differ. Either way, as we will see next, Hanson explicitly allows that due to what we believe, elements of the visual field themselves can be, and sometimes are, modified as well.

⁴⁰ I return to such effects in Chapter 9.1.1.

2.3.3 Effects on the Elements of the Visual Field

That objects can be seen differently, Hanson claims, philosophers must accommodate. *Why* such differences obtain, and *how* they arise, psychologists must address (cf. *PoD*, p. 17).⁴¹ However, such claims do not settle whether the elements of the visual field can themselves vary with the subject's beliefs. Hanson's remarks on this issue waver between both options and are often fairly guarded.⁴² If asked if the elements of different observers' visual fields differ, Hanson claims that "we can do no better here than to review some of the findings of experimental psychologists [...] [who] rush in where philosophers fear to tread" (*PD*, p. 158). After surveying such findings, he concludes:

(10) Many experiments have shown how, e.g., the shape, size, color, and position of objects are, as it were, "projected" onto them by the observer. The perception of color and shape depends not alone on the thing looked at but partly on past experience of the color and shape of similar and dissimilar things. (*PD*, p. 152)

Despite the scare quotes and the cautionary 'as it were', the term 'projected' is highly suggestive. On a natural interpretation of (10), it is not just the *actual* color, size, etc. of what one faces that constitute the visual field. Rather, if projection effects occur, what color, size, etc. one *sees* things *as* having is modified by subjective factors. Maybe projection effect could even co-determine what elements populate the field. Hanson does not explicitly mention beliefs as what may cause such effects. However, the following is a natural assumption: one way for past experiences to influence current experience is via (possibly implicit) beliefs and expectations that the former helped shape.

Some of the experiments Hanson cites in support of his assessment (cf. *PD*, chapter 9) have since come to be eyed with suspicion. In contemporary discussion, too, what kinds of effects on the visual aspect of seeing occur remains a contested question. However, it is certainly conceivable that, as

⁴¹ Since on Hanson's account, such differences will partly rest on differences in subjects' belief contexts, psychologists may furnish explanations why people hold certain beliefs and explore whether, and how, holding certain beliefs, having undergone certain kinds of experiences, or kinds of training, may dispose subjects to single out certain objects or features as significant – in short: what subjects *set* to see things in certain ways.

⁴² Recall e.g. passage (9): it is only *perhaps* that the elements in the visitor's field are similar or identical to those populating the physicist's. But cf. *PoD*, p. 17, where Hanson seems to grant that the elements of their visual fields are identical.

Hansen et al. suggest, one's knowledge, beliefs, or memory of the typical color of bananas could bring it about that a realistic depiction of a banana, though colored in a monochromatic gray, still strikes one as slightly yellow.⁴³ And when biased subjects primed with pictures of black men tend to classify ordinary tools as guns,⁴⁴ such effects could be partly visual. How things visually strike one and what properties subjects *see* items *as* having could be affected by what kind of thing one *sees* them *as* and by what context one's being primed makes salient, given what expectations it contains about what may happen next.

The philosopher's currency is logical possibility, it is not their task to settle empirical facts in advance. Nothing conceptually rules out that such effects could occur. Moreover, many psychological experiments can be, and are, interpreted as involving **projection effects**, as we will henceforth call them. Hence, accounts of visual experience had better not rule them out as impossible, but show how to accommodate them. It is a distinctive virtue of Hanson's view, that it purports to accommodate them. Let us examine next whether he also accommodates the idea that observation can anchor and constrain our beliefs.

2.4 DOES OBSERVATION CONSTRAIN OUR BELIEFS?

Since it allows that our visual fields may be shaped by factors that depend on the subject, it can seem as if on Hanson's account, the idea that seeing has objective import, anchors, and constrains our thinking, has little room. Observation, it seems, could be a less than objective guide to how things are. Rather than assisting us in overcoming our prejudices, it may seem to confirm them if the beliefs we want to test are those that affect our visual field. Hanson is aware of such concerns. As the following

⁴³ See Hansen et al. 2006, Olkkonen et al. 2008. As mentioned before, I return to an extensive discussion of this case in the various chapters on the relational view.

⁴⁴ Cf. Payne 2001. There is a large body of psychological literature and a raging philosophical debate concerning the question whether such cases, often subsumed under the label *cognitive penetration*, do in fact occur. For discussion, see e.g. Siegel 2012, 2015, 2017; Stokes 2013; for a critical voice, see Scholl & Firestone 2016.

passage shows, he concedes that the visual facility with which we see, notice, and observe familiar things has its price:

- (11) For it [the visual facility with which we see. etc.] does incline us sometimes to overlook certain discrepancies between what is there to be seen and what we ourselves see. By its use, as by the use of any efficient adaptation to our environment, we can occasionally go wrong. (*PD*, p. 153)

To make such a concession, however, is not to give up the idea that observation can exert empirical constraint. In this context, Hanson's remarks on illusions and conjuring tricks are instructive:

- (12) We see only what we know, that is what makes conjuring tricks possible. Deceptions must proceed by an exploitation of what is the normal, ordinary case. [...] [T]hat a sleight-of-hand artist can get our minds and our eyes, i.e. our *seeing*, moving in one direction while catching us out in another direction is a clear indication of the way our SEEING usually proceeds. It is because our thoughts are so intimately a part of seeing that we must sometimes rub our eyes at illusions. (*PD*, p. 115)

To be deceived or subject to illusions, passage (12) reminds us, our belief context must contain expectations governing how, in the situation at hand, our visual field may change. Our expectations may be off. But when they are frustrated, we may of course realize it:

- (13) [W]hen we have seen the conjurer saw the young lady in half, we are no longer at liberty to see this as an ordinary case of [...] *dis*-joinery. We cannot see the conjurer's saw as an ordinary saw, nor his actions as those of an ordinary woodsman, nor the situation as an ordinary case of sawing, if when he is finished with his work the young lady smiles and waves gaily while happily kicking her feet. And when we say we cannot believe our eyes in such a case, we indicate that seeing things as we saw them originally was just to *see that* certain things could not follow. (*PD*, p. 116)⁴⁵

Seeing is corrigible, "which everyone would happily concede." If the behavior of what we *see as x* diverges from "what we expect of *x*'s[.]" we may be blocked from seeing it as a straightforward *x* any longer" (*PoD*, p. 22; similarly: *PD*, p. 116). The possibility of such divergence, I submit, is the possibility of friction between our belief contexts and the world; it is what enables our seeing to constrain our world-directed thinking. Such friction, note, is possible even if projection effects occur often. Only if one assumes, *pace* Hanson, that generally, the doxastic contexts that we inhabit fully determine our

⁴⁵ In such a case, correcting one's view is triggered by the realization that one did not in fact see what one thought one did, but that one was mistakenly *taking* oneself to *see that* certain things could or could not follow. I return to the case in chapter 8.

visual field in such a way as to force it to conform with our expectations, the idea of empirical constraint is lost.⁴⁶ For empirical constraint to be possible, the visual aspect, the phenomenology of experience, must thus be able to at least sometimes change independently of our beliefs, in a way that may thus frustrate our expectations. At the same time, the visual aspect, even if it does change in such unexpected ways, cannot exert empirical constraint by itself. For not only must what we see diverge from what we expect, we must also *acknowledge* such divergence; we must *see* the items we face *as* exhibiting features or behavior we did not expect. Put differently, to be able to exert constraint, seeing must be epistemically significant. It must, as Hanson will insist, involve *seeing as*.

Relatedly, the visual aspect alone cannot settle how or even whether to adjust our beliefs. Again, if what we *see as x* behaves in unexpected ways, we may be blocked from *seeing it as x* any longer. In response, we may decide to drop the concept *x* altogether. Or we may decide to revise it to accommodate that *x*'s sometimes *do* behave in ways we had not previously envisaged. At times, we may not know how to respond. If so, we may suspend judgment, keep observing, and search for new intelligible ways of organizing what we see. Which of these is called for neither depends just on what we see, nor on the visual aspect alone. Crucially, it depends on the doxastic context we inhabit and on how robust we take our frustrated expectations to be. We could e.g. barely keep *seeing* something *as* a piece of gold if we saw it melt at 100° F. But depending on our doxastic context, we may reasonably keep *seeing* a celestial body *as* a comet even as it takes unexpected turns, or our friend *as* good-natured and kind, even as we see her commit what otherwise looks like a heinous crime.

For Hanson, then, the relation between beliefs and the world is anything but simple. *Seeing* what we face *as* what it is—this is a remarkable ability. For many items (but not for all), especially items

⁴⁶ For a similar assessment, see Schurz 2015, p. 140. The idea that our visual field is fully determined by our explicit and implicit beliefs, while highly counterintuitive, is not *logically* defective. However, motivating and defending an account of experience that incorporates it, while retaining the idea that experience plays a vital role in our epistemic endeavors, or that alternatively shows why the latter idea is mistaken, is a daunting task and anyway requires substantial argument. Pending it, there is no special onus on Hanson to show that such an account is impossible. It is, incidentally, compatible with his view that *some* aspects of our visual life *are* systematically determined by what we believe. But to entertain this possibility is neither to say that we could not find out whether it is actual, nor to deny that visual experience could play an important role in doing so. I return to Hanson's account of empirical constraint in more detail in 8.1.2.

populating our scientific theories, mastering this ability may require that we overcome dispositions to apprehend shaped by deeply entrenched false beliefs and expectations. These may make us ignore or overlook important details, make things seem to cohere in odd ways, or cause us to project onto the scene elements or features it does not contain. Coming to see not what we expect, but what is there to be seen is a difficult, perhaps an ongoing task. Sometimes it may be helped by bracketing our expectations, by paying close attention to details, and by characterizing what we see in phenomenal terms to find new ways of *organizing* the phenomena, of making what we see intelligible. But improving our beliefs may require time and effort. As Hanson reminds us, “thirteen centuries of expert observation failed to disclose the error in Galen’s contention that the septum between the ventricles of the heart is perforated” (PD, p. 168).⁴⁷

Before I proceed to a critique of Hanson’s view, let me take stock: in section 2.1, I introduced Hanson’s claim that epistemically significant seeing must involve concepts. On his account, seeing involves two elements blended together like an amalgam: a visual aspect, characterized in terms of the visual field and its elements, and a way of apprehending things, characterized in terms of *seeing as*.

In 2.2, I argued that on Hanson’s view, instances of *seeing as* derive an essential part of their significance for the subject from the way the concepts figuring in them are inferentially articulated in her doxastic context. So construed, doxastic contexts serve to determine what, in the given setting, instances of e.g. “This is *F*” are taken to entail, what they are taken to follow from, and what they are taken to be incompatible with. Doxastic contexts, I emphasized, may contain false or even irrational beliefs. Again, suppose you *see* something *as F*. If so, your erroneous beliefs about *F*s may bring it about that you take yourself to be *seeing that* certain other things do or would obtain, in various further specifiable circumstances, even though they do or would not. As Tycho *saw* the sun at dawn *as* the sun, he took himself to *see that* the earth’s brilliant satellite was beginning its diurnal circuit around us. He was, of course, mistaken. Still, his mistaken beliefs were central to the geocentric worldview he

⁴⁷ Plausibly, overcoming flawed dispositions to *see* what one faces *as* things that do not exist is hard to do *solo*. But as the quote indicates, even as a *social* enterprise, correcting our views can be a laborious and time-consuming endeavor.

endorsed. Accordingly, we cannot grasp what thing he saw as he looked at the sun at dawn unless we take that view into account. Hanson claims that observers who look at the same physical objects in identical settings may see different things and that scientific observation must be theory-laden. If instances of *seeing* something *as F* inherit their significance from the belief context in which “*being F*” is integrated, these claims, I argued, are defensible. Finally, I argued that Hanson is right that every *seeing as* must involve *seeing that*. For if everything *S* believed about *F*s were false by the lights of what we, too, consider knowledgeable, ‘*S sees something as F*’ could not pick out any determinate activity.

In 2.3, I did two things. First, I showed that though Hanson rejects sense-datum theories, he does not reject the idea that seeing involves a purely visual aspect or, as he puts it, a visual field with elements. Instead, he rejects the idea that this aspect could serve to ground knowledge. Proponents of this idea, he thinks, fail to acknowledge that to epistemically capitalize on the visual aspect of seeing, concepts and beliefs, including knowledgeable ones, must *already* be in place. Again, epistemically significant seeing involves *seeing as*, and *seeing as* must involve *seeing that*. Second, I showed that apart from selection effects, Hanson also accommodates effects beliefs may have on the *organization* of the visual field, on how its elements *cohere*, and, finally, *projection effects*. At least some of these, I argued, pertain not to the concepts Hanson takes seeing to involve, but to the visual aspect of seeing itself.

In 2.4, I showed how on Hanson’s view, observation can constrain our thinking even if it is theory-laden. In this context, the visual aspect of seeing turned out to play a vital role, albeit one it cannot play *solo*, but only in tandem with our beliefs. If that aspect is typically (though not necessarily) brought about at least partly by the worldly items we face, the development of the visual aspect depends not fully on what we believe, but in part on what is in fact the case. This partial independence of the visual aspect of our beliefs, I argued, creates the possibility of friction between what we *see* things *as* with our beliefs and expectations and thus anchors our seeing to the world. Note, however, that which worldly items do the anchoring, and how exactly they do it, may often remain opaque to us. In epistemically significant seeing, our relation to the world is mediated twice, once through the visual aspect of seeing, once through the ways we are set to apprehend things. The former must sometimes be at least in part independent of what we believe, the latter, however, is not. As I pointed

out, it follows that for many items, *seeing* them *as* what they are is a remarkable ability. To acquire it, the doxastic context we inhabit must be sufficiently correct and justified. If it is not, we may apprehend such items incorrectly and in endorsing that things are what we *see* them *as*, *we may* subsequently issue perceptual judgments that are false or unjustified. In doing so, we need not be rationally at fault. And yet, the judgments we issue, the beliefs we form, and the actions we accordingly take may be based on the mistake of taking what we face to in fact be what we erroneously *see* it *as*.

In sum, on Hanson's view, seeing is crucially shaped by the doxastic context we inhabit—indeed, epistemically significant seeing, *seeing as*, is unintelligible without such a context. In seeing, our beliefs can lead us astray. Still, seeing is corrigible. Hanson thus appears to accommodate both ideas mentioned at the outset: observation, though deeply laden with theory, can nevertheless constrain and anchor our beliefs.⁴⁸

In the remaining section of this chapter, I argue that Hanson's account, despite its appealing features, is wanting. The central issue is this: it lacks an account of the visual aspect, or of the phenomenology of experience.

2.5 PHENOMENOLOGY, EMPIRICAL CONSTRAINT, AND AMALGAMATION

As we saw above, Hanson's preferred way of referring to the visual aspect of experience is in terms of the so-called *visual field* and its *elements*. He variously characterizes this aspect as pictorial, as involving mental images, and as representing objects in the way pictures do, by being a kind of copy of what is seen.⁴⁹ The problem, however, is that we lack a more thoroughgoing account of this aspect, of the

⁴⁸ Acknowledging that our seeing can be impaired should humble us. Others might see better where our vision is murky. Attending to them may provide an antidote to our prejudiced dispositions. For the idea that facing alternative viewpoints can be *productive*, and that they can serve as *antidotes* to our mistaken views see also Feyerabend 2010. For views that emphasize humility and paying close attention to alternative viewpoints in the domain of moral perception see Murdoch 1970, Buddhaghosa 1991 for a Buddhist source, also Garfield 2015, chapter 8, and Heim 2015.

⁴⁹ “[W]hile seeing is at the least a ‘*visual copying*’ of objects, it is also more than that. It is a certain way of seeing objects: seeing that if *x* were done to them *y* would follow.” *PoD*, p. 29, emphasis added. The second sentence of this

phenomenology of experience. To some extent, this lack of an account of the phenomenology may be explained by the fact that in the context of the conceptions of experience Hanson responds to—sense-datum theories—the idea that the visual aspect of experience represents, resembles, or copies mind-independent items was standardly taken for granted. This, arguably, is why Hanson feels compelled to point out, for example, that “the gap between pictures and language is not closed one millimeter by focusing on sense-data and basic sentences” (*PoD*, p. 29). Only if epistemically significant seeing is construed in terms of involving concepts, he thinks, and—as per his more specific suggestion—in terms of involving *seeing as*, can that gap be bridged.

Hanson’s focus on the conceptual element that he thinks seeing involves, I contend, is thus at least in part explicable against the backdrop of the dialectic setting from within which he operates. Given that within the contemporary discussion, sense-datum theories have lost their appeal, the demand for a thorough account of experiential phenomenology can no longer be ignored as easily. And clearly, this demand is pressing. For recall that on the account Hanson offers, the phenomenology of experience plays a vitally important role. As we saw, Hanson relies on the assumption that the phenomenology is at least in part generated by the mind-independent items that surround us. Even though the phenomenology may also in part, perhaps often, be the result of doxastic effects, this assumption is absolutely crucial for him to get his conception of empirical constraint off the ground. Against this background, the fact that Hanson remains largely silent on how to construe the relation of such mind-independent items to experiential phenomenology constitutes a serious deficiency in his account of empirical constraint.

There is a further serious problem. Hanson, recall, claims that his conception of seeing allows him to bridge the gap between pictures and language. Seeing, on his account, involves the application of concepts, which in turn serves to explain that seeing can be epistemically significant. However, not

passage, I think, is slightly misleading. For as Hanson suggests before, epistemically significant seeing involves *seeing as*, which is intelligible in terms of *seeing that*. A better way of putting his point, I think, would be the following: It is a certain way of seeing objects: it is to *see* them *as* something—*F*, say—which is to see that if they *were* in fact *F* (which they may not be), then if *x* were done to them *y* would follow. Since I have repeatedly noted that one can *see* something *as* what one knows it is not, *seeing as* should, I think, be construed as involving no commitment to whether things are indeed the way one *sees* them *as*.

only does Hanson owe us an account of what the phenomenal dimension *is*, we also lack an account of how, in epistemically significant seeing, the conceptual and the phenomenal dimension are fused. What exactly it is that settles which instance of *seeing as* having an experience with a certain phenomenology involves? How are the conceptual and the phenomenal, as Hanson puts it, *amalgamated*? What governs such amalgamation? Is amalgamation robust, can it be modified? If so, how? These are issues Hanson never explores. Jointly, they constitute what I call the problem of **Amalgamation**.

To sum up, I conclude that Hanson's account allows us to distinguish various ways in which a subject's doxastic context could affect her experience. For one, it contains an interesting and broadly holistic account of experiential content; an account of how we are to understand an essential part of what to a given subject, the concepts Hanson takes to figure in her epistemically significant experience *mean*. This account is powerful since it allows Hanson to address the puzzle how e.g. Tycho and Kepler could see the same object, *see it as* the same object, and yet see different things.⁵⁰ For another, the account purports to be compatible with various kinds of effects that an experiencing subject's doxastic context can have on her experiential phenomenology. However, pending an account of the phenomenology, this cannot be but a promissory note.

Third, the account provides an account of how experience, even if it is often affected by the subject's doxastic content, can still exert empirical constraint. But again, without an account of how experiential phenomenology is to be understood, how mind-independent items can constitute it, and without an account of **Amalgamation**, neither his account of empirical constraint nor his claim that *seeing as* serves to bridge the gap between the phenomenal and the conceptual are clear enough to be acceptable. As things stand, thus, Hanson's account remains seriously underdeveloped.

As we move on to the discussion of contemporary views, we will have to keep these issues in mind. The strategy I pursue in what follows is to look for a solution to the problems Hanson's account

⁵⁰ As should be clear by now, the solution is, in effect, to reject the characterization of the puzzle. For even if both Tycho and Kepler were to claim that they both see the sun as the sun, what their *seeing something as* the sun involves, respectively, is different. Accordingly, they both see the sun, both may also call it 'sun', but what, in doing so, they say is rather different.

faces by examining the two dominant accounts of experience in the contemporary literature. I begin by examining so-called relationalist accounts of experience. As we shall see, it is a central relationalist tenet that experience relates subjects to mind-independent items, and relatedly, that the phenomenology of experience is constituted by the items that experience relates us to. We may thus hope that the relationalist accounts enable us to improve our understanding of the phenomenology of experience, perhaps even provide an account that could serve as a supplement to Hanson's account.

Ultimately, I argue that this hope is in vain. For it is precisely their excessive emphasis on the thought that experiential phenomenology *must* be explained in terms of the subject's being related to mind-independent items that renders relationalists incapable of accommodating at least some of the doxastic effects that Hanson calls our attention to.

3.0 FROM HANSON TO RELATIONALISM

If what background beliefs one holds may, by itself, affect one's perceptual experience, I stipulate, perceptual experience is *doxastically variable*. In the previous chapter, I examined the view of observation implicit in Norwood Russell Hanson's account of the theory-ladenness of scientific observation. As we saw, there are two ways in which, according to Hanson, (visual) experience is doxastically variable. These two varieties of doxastic variability are captured by the following two theses: **Doxastically Variable Experiential Content** and **Doxastically Variable Experiential Phenomenology**.

Doxastically Variable Experiential Content (DVEC) is the thesis that experiential content, construed as the conceptual content of (visual) experience, is doxastically variable: if everything else is held fixed, the experiential content of a subject's experience may vary just with what the subject believes. For any subject *S* who holds beliefs and undergoes experiences, **DVEC** is non-vacuously true if *S* enjoys experiences of which the conjunction of the following two claims is true:

Content

S's visual experience *e* has conceptual content: experiential content.

Beliefs May Co-Determine Experiential Content

If everything else is held fixed, differences in *S*'s beliefs may yield differences in *e*'s experiential content.

Hanson, recall, motivates **Content** as follows: to be epistemically significant, he insists, perceptual experience must be such as to possibly bear on our beliefs. This conception of what the epistemic significance of experience requires makes him wary of conceptions of visual perceptual experience on which experience has a phenomenal dimension, yet lacks conceptual content altogether. Such conceptions, he contends, establish a logical gulf between the phenomenal and conceptually contentful

items such as judgments or beliefs. Unless they provide a way of bridging this gulf, proponents of such conceptions thus leave it mysterious how experience could ever be significant or relevant for our beliefs.

With this concern in mind, Hanson develops his own proposal: epistemically significant (visual) experience is an amalgam of a pictorial and a conceptual dimension. We must, Hanson suggests, accept **Content** for epistemically significant experience, though we can leave it as a possibility that some (atypical) experiences may lack such content and, thus, epistemic significance. Either way, for Hanson, the upshot of adopting a conception of epistemically significant experience that endorses **Content** is that on such a conception, the logical gulf between experience and conceptually contentful states such as beliefs or judgments disappears. For that experiences that have conceptual content already can bear on other contentful items such as beliefs or judgments is at least *prima facie* hardly mysterious.

As we noted, Hanson is particularly impressed by the fact that bi-stable pictures such as the duck-rabbit can be seen as depicting rather different things. Seeing such pictures, he maintains, cannot be properly understood in terms of a two-stage process of taking in a picture first and then, second, clamping on an interpretation. We simply do not see bi-stable pictures in some allegedly neutral purely phenomenal way first, i.e. not already *as* depicting either a rabbit or a duck. Indeed, if we can see such pictures in such a neutral way at all, Hanson insists, doing so takes considerable effort. This, he suggests, is true of vision quite generally. As Hanson puts it, in all ordinary cases of seeing, theories are there in the seeing right from the start. To capture this idea, he construes epistemically significant seeing generally in terms of *seeing as*.

Unpacking the notion of *seeing as* further revealed Hanson's rationale for accepting **Beliefs May Co-Determine Experiential Content (BMCEC)**. More specifically, in discussing his claim that *seeing as* is intelligible only in terms of *seeing that*, I suggested that we take his commitment to **BMCEC** to flow from his patent commitment to a broadly holistic conception of conceptual content.¹ According

¹ Recall that it had to be left open whether his conception of content is completely holistic or whether content could also be partly determined by other, e.g. referential relations. To remain neutral with respect to this possibility, I talk—here and in what follows—in terms of a *broadly* holistic conception of conceptual content, of the subject's background

to this conception, concepts that complement the *seeing as* locution derive an essential part of what they mean to the subject *S* from how they are inferentially articulated within the set of *S*'s (possibly implicit) background beliefs. Roughly, the idea is that the commitments *S* undertakes in endorsing various beliefs jointly form an inferential network of commitments and entitlements that in turn serves to *semantically* co-determine the meanings of the concepts figuring in that network, including those that can feature in *S*'s experiential content.² In any such network of interrelated contents, I suggested, at least some beliefs must be knowledgeable by our lights as well, since the assumption that *none* of them are makes it unintelligible how the relevant set of purported beliefs and commitments could confer determinate contents on those concepts in the first place. But if so, then Hanson seems right: every *seeing as* is intelligible only against the backdrop of a set of beliefs that—though it may contain false beliefs as well—must contain at least some beliefs that are not merely assumed as true by the perceiving subject, but knowledgeable by our lights as well. *Seeing as*, in other words, is intelligible only in terms of *seeing that*.

Returning to **BMCEC**, the argument I attributed to Hanson ran roughly as follows: differences in background beliefs entail differences in how the concepts featuring in these beliefs are articulated within the inferential network these beliefs jointly set up, which in turn typically affects the inferential articulation of many (possibly all) other (non-logical) concepts. Again, on a broadly holistic conception of meaning, the way beliefs are inferentially related and the way that the concepts featuring in the network set up by these beliefs are, accordingly, articulated, is taken to co-determine the meanings of these concepts. Thus, differences in a subject's beliefs and, hence, in the inferential network set up by

view as *co-determining* experiential content, and in terms of a concepts inferential articulation as conferring an *essential part* of what that concept means, to the relevant subject, on that concept.

² One reason to think that Hanson's account of concept determination is incomplete is that a full story may require drawing not just on the inferential relations holding between beliefs (and the commitments and entitlements these involve) held by the individual subject, but also on social processes e.g. of mutual recognition, the attribution of commitments and entitlements to others, processes of negotiation, rational reconstruction, and, where necessary, sanction (see Brandom 1994, 2009 (especially part I), and Brandom ms. for a fully developed account that accommodates such factors). None of this, however, appears in Hanson. Accordingly, presenting his account did not require drawing on such factors. All that mattered was understanding the general idea that *does* figure in Hanson, i.e. that the significance a concept has *for a given subject* at least to a large extent consist in the way the beliefs it figures in (and the commitments and entitlements these involve) are inferentially related with one another and with other beliefs that are contained in the subject's belief context.

them, may and often do amount to (perhaps rather subtle) differences in what, to the subject, the concepts articulated in that network mean. This, the idea goes, applies to all (non-logical) concepts. Accordingly, the concepts figuring in experiential content, too, derive an essential part of what they mean to the subject by way of being articulated in the inferential network constituted by the subject's set of beliefs. Differences in that set may thus yield differences in what, to the subject, these concepts mean. In this sense, differences in belief may yield differences in the content of the subject's experience itself. This, in short, is how Hanson's account of epistemically significant experience—based on a notion of *seeing as* and combined with his commitment to a broadly holistic construal of the meanings of the concepts that complement the *seeing as* locution—captures the idea that theories are there in the seeing right from the start. Due to the holistic component, his account entails **BMCEC** and, hence, **DVEC**. Again, **DVEC**, so construed, is a semantic claim. According to it, if everything else is held fixed, experiential content may vary with what subjects believe precisely because a subject's beliefs semantically co-determine what the experiential content of her experience is.³

Doxastically Variable Experiential Phenomenology (DVEP), on the other hand, is a claim that concerns not the putative conceptual content of epistemically significant (visual) experience, but its phenomenal dimension. Hanson's characterization of this dimension, recall, remains incomplete. He rejects sense-datum accounts, but not because he opposes the idea that perceptual experience has a phenomenal dimension that the notion of sense data is supposed to capture. The reason he takes such accounts to be flawed is rather that their proponents typically take the phenomenal to play a certain role, namely to serve as a foundation in foundationalist accounts of knowledge. Given his view on what is required for experience to be epistemically significant, Hanson must reject such accounts. Again, he thinks that for a subject to be able to epistemically capitalize on her experience, that experience must involve concepts; on his view: the subject's experience must be one of *seeing things as something*. And given his particular construal of this notion, Hanson thinks that to epistemically

³ The stronger claim that experiential content *must* vary with changes in what subjects believe may be true on an account of meaning on which meanings are very fine-grained. We can remain neutral with respect to the question whether such an account should be endorsed, and for lack of evidence must remain neutral with respect to the question whether Hanson endorsed it.

capitalize on experience, beliefs, including knowledgeable ones, must already be in place. Again, then, while Hanson does deny that sense-data can play a foundational role in epistemology, he does not deny that sense-data exist—or perhaps something like them. Quite to the contrary, he insists that epistemically significant seeing essentially also involves a phenomenal dimension. This dimension, Hanson holds, is logically separable from the conceptual, involves some sort of iconic representation, and is frequently referred to in terms of the *pictorial* or in terms of *the visual field and its elements*. That we do not learn much more about the specifics of this dimension was a problem, as I argued near the end of the previous chapter. Nevertheless, even from what little he divulges, it is clear that Hanson endorses the following thesis:

Phenomenology

For any subject S and any of her visual perceptual experiences e , e has a phenomenology characteristic of vision: (visual) experiential phenomenology.

Moreover, and importantly, he also accepts:

Beliefs May Co-Determine Experiential Phenomenology

If everything else is held fixed, differences in what S believes may yield differences in the experiential phenomenology of S 's experience.⁴

For subjects who hold beliefs and undergo visual perceptual experiences, **DVEP**, the claim that (visual) experiential phenomenology is doxastically variable—that if everything else is held fixed, it may vary with what subjects believe—is non-vacuously true if the subjects enjoy experiences of which the conjunction of both these claims is true.

Hanson motivates **Beliefs May Co-Determine Experiential Phenomenology (BMCEP)** by way of providing examples that he draws both from ordinary contexts and from the psychological literature of his time. In doing so, he distinguishes several kinds of effects he thinks a subject's beliefs may have on experiential phenomenology. Apart from leading to *selection effects*, Hanson thinks that

⁴ We need not attribute to Hanson the stronger and less plausible claim that each difference in belief implies some difference in phenomenology. Also, different sets of beliefs could affect experiential phenomenology in the same way. However, since we saw that the relation between the phenomenal and the conceptual is something Hanson fails to address, how he would have conceived it must remain open. I return to this issue with a more constructive proposal in chapters 8 and 10.

one's beliefs may also affect how the elements making up the visual field are *organized*, how they *cohere*, or *pull together*—a claim he illustrates by drawing on cases in which the elements of the visual field seem to snap into perspective as one recognizes an object, when one transitions from one way of seeing a bi-stable picture to another, when one *sees it as* something new, or when one sees an item equipped with the sophisticated understanding and the recognitional capacities of an expert.

Another kind of effect that Hanson thinks is not just possible but—as he takes the empirical evidence to suggest—actual are **projection effects**, i.e. effects that manifest as modifications of specific features of the elements populating the visual field, such as their size, color, shape, or movement properties, perhaps even as effects on which elements are present.

While some of the empirical studies Hanson cites to support the claim that projection effects are actual have since been contested, the contemporary psychological literature is rife with similar evidence—evidence that often figures in the context of the debate on the so-called cognitive penetrability of perception. That said, in the contemporary debate, too, the question how wide-spread such effects are remains a contentious issue. Patently, however, such effects will be markedly different from effects that fall under **DVEC**. For when the elements of the visual field snap into perspective as one recognizes an object or when the depiction of a banana that is in fact monochromatic gray strikes one as slightly yellow still simply because that is the color that one knows bananas typically are, these are hardly *semantic* effects on the concepts that Hanson takes experience to involve.⁵ Instead, they appear to be *causal* effects that affect how things subjectively are for experiencing subjects when they undergo their experience: they affect their experiential *phenomenology*. On accounts of experience that accommodate such effects, **BMCEP** and **DVEP** must thus be true; they must allow for a subject's experiential phenomenology to vary just with what the subject believes.⁶

⁵ In my discussion of the individual relationalist views, I will return to the banana case repeatedly.

⁶ Once one has a proper fix on the terminology, it may remain be an open question whether the differences in background beliefs that alter experiential content (if such content is taken to exist) are the same differences that lead to modifications in experiential phenomenology. Likewise, it can be an open question whether the way in which these kinds of effects are related is the same across individuals.

With the distinction between these two different kinds of doxastic variability of experience in hand, we can examine influential contemporary accounts of experience with respect to whether they can accommodate the idea that experience is doxastically variable in these ways.⁷ As I indicated in the preceding chapter, I begin by focusing on the *relational view*. The main motivation for turning to relationalist view first is that on the relationalist view, experience is a relation between subjects and mind-independent items. And as we saw in the previous chapter, for Hanson to be able to flesh out his account of empirical constraint, he needs an account of how the phenomenology of experience can be understood as at least in part generated by relations to mind-independent objects. Since relationalists purport to provide such an account, looking at it for help is a natural step to take. At the same time, the account of experiential phenomenology should have room for doxastic effects. Accordingly, we must ask not just what the relationalist account of experiential phenomenology is, but also the following: *can the relational view accommodate the idea that experience is doxastically variable?*

To tackle this question, I begin, in the remainder of this chapter, by sketching some of the main ideas underlying the relational view, then raise some initial questions, and draw out some preliminary implications. As will quickly transpire, proponents of the relational view must reject **DVEC**, though they could endorse a closely related thesis. I suggest that their view presents them with exactly the kind of challenge that Hanson sought to avoid by endorsing **Content**. For Hanson, this particular challenge does not arise. Nevertheless, I will suggest that if we abstract from the details, we see that Hanson and the relationalists face issues that are structurally analogous.

In the following chapters, I pursue the question whether various proponents of the relational view can accommodate **DVEP**. I proceed by taking a close look at three different versions of the view: the version suggested by Bill Fish (chapter 4), the account developed by Bill Brewer (chapter 5),

⁷ Note that depending on how one construes experience, further flavors of doxastic variability are conceivable. If, for instance, one combines the idea that experience has content with the insistence that such content is non-conceptual, one could hold that such non-conceptual content, too, can be affected by what the experiencing subject believes. Like the phenomena captured by *Doxastically Variable Experiential Phenomenology*, the effects constituting the doxastic variability of such content would probably need to be understood in terms of causal, not semantic effects. Siegel's view that I discuss in chapter 7 can be understood as being an instance of such an account. That said, as I will argue there, her notion of experiential content, and her account of what determines it, remain problematic.

and the view defended by James Genone (chapter 6). The views differ in various respects, notably in what they take the mind-independent items to be that experience is said to relate subjects with and with respect to the role conceptual capacities play in experience. Ultimately, I argue that with the possible exception of Genone, these views fail to accommodate all possible variants of **DVEP**. They particularly struggle with accommodating projection effects. And if Genone appears to succeed where the others fail, we will see that this is so only because his account provides powerful resources that enable him to explain away such effects. This, I will suggest, is a laudable and interesting feature of his account. However, there are still numerous further respects in which it fails. The overall conclusion of the arguments presented in the following chapters is this: to accommodate all variants of **DVEP**, relationalists must give up some of their core ideas. In other words: if **DVEP** is true without further restrictions, relationalism is not.

In the following, I begin by sketching some main ideas underlying the relational view (3.1). I then briefly suggest that while relationalists cannot accommodate **DVEC**, they may try to accommodate a similar claim in the vicinity, but that doing so presents them with a challenge (3.2). I end this chapter by commenting on the dialectical situation between Hanson and the relationalists (3.3).

3.1 NO CONTENT, ACQUAINTANCE, AND CONSTITUTION

The relational view is standardly introduced by contrasting it with its main alternative: representationalism. Following this practice, let us consider what as per Susanna Schellenberg's widely accepted characterization is the most minimal representationalist commitment. According to it, perceptual experience is inevitably a matter of a subject representing her environment as being a certain way (cf. Schellenberg 2011, p. 715; similarly: Genone 2014, Nanay 2014).

There are various ways in which this minimalist commitment can be enriched, notably with respect to how the putative representational content of perceptual experience is specified. We saw one way of doing this in the last chapter: in terms of *seeing as*. As we noted, *seeing as* does not form

propositional contents. But other conceptions of non-propositional contents are available as well. For instance, one could follow Wilfrid Sellars in thinking of such contents in terms of complex demonstrative expressions. Or one could think (as does McDowell in McDowell 1994) that such contents are propositional, and then go on to specify what kind of proposition such contents can be or add further commitments that pertain to the question what propositions are in the first place.

Relationalists, however, reject even the minimal representationalist commitment. Perceptual experience, they insist, is not a matter of representing anything. Instead, they claim, it is a relation. Here is how Bence Nanay characterizes the basic idea. On the relational view, he says,

- (1) [p]erceptual states are not representations: they are constituted by the actual perceived objects. Perception is a genuine relation between the perceiver and the perceived object—and not between the agent and some abstract entity called ‘perceptual content’ (Nanay 2014, p. 3).⁸

If perceptual experience is characterized as a relation, what are its relata? What kind of relation is it? According to (1), the answer to the first question is that experience is a relation between a perceiving

⁸ Representationalists need not understand perceptual content merely in terms of abstract entities. Like e.g. Schellenberg (cf. Schellenberg 2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2016a), they can claim that at least typically, perceptual content is *singular* or *object-involving*. On such a view, it is (typically) the singular worldly items one perceives together with general abstract entities—concepts, Fregean senses, or modes of presentation—that co-constitute the representational content of perception. On Schellenberg’s account, cases of perceptions of numerically different but otherwise indistinguishable objects share modes of presentations, or content-schemas, but differ in content since the worldly items that fill the slots reserved for them in the relevant content schema are numerically different in the different cases. However, on such accounts, too, there are cases in which perception is *nothing but* a relation between the perceiver and some general abstract entity: in hallucinations, no relevant objects may be present. In such cases, the perceptual content is solely constituted by the content-schema involved, which remains gappy in those slots which in the non-hallucinatory case is filled by particular items. An advantage of such views is that their proponents acknowledge and seek to capture the intuition that perceptual experiential states may have singular contents. Such proponents can thus claim that perception, as John Campbell has put it, “can confront [one] with the individual substance itself” (Campbell 2002a, p. 116), which in turn may enable them to also develop an account of how the contact with the relevant mind-independent particulars may ground our demonstrative thoughts about such objects. At the same time, they can insist that they can explain that while veridical perceptions and matching hallucinatory differ in content, they can seem the same to subjects: both involve the same concept-schema or mode of presentation.

Two comments: first, relationalists will welcome the thought that perceptual states typically involve relations with singular worldly items. However, they will insist that this is so generally, i.e. that it is true of every perceptual state. At the same time, they will reject the idea views like Schellenberg retain: that perceptual experience inevitably involves representation. Second, regardless of such relationalist qualms, taking perceptual contents to be potentially gappy may come at a price. Representationalists like Schellenberg must explain the connection between the representational content they take perceptual states to involve and judgments that a subject is said to acquire evidence for through having such states. If, however, they construe the content of perceptual states in terms of a (potentially gappy) content-schema, such a content cannot obviously figure in such an explanation. The problem is that content-schemas lacks truth conditions. If so, content so construed fails to specify a determinate way the world would have to be if it is to be the way it seems. Consequently, it remains unclear what the singular judgments would be for which gappy content-schemas could serve as evidence (for an argument along these lines, see Gersel 2017).

subject and perceived objects. Importantly, contemporary relationalists emphatically reject a view once defended by e.g. Bishop Berkeley and Bertrand Russell, viz. that the direct objects of perceptual experience, the items experience relates its subject with, are mind-*dependent* objects, such as, e.g. ideas or sense-data. Instead, relationalists insist that perceptual experience directly relates perceiving subjects with mind-*independent* items in the perceiver's environment. Bill Brewer, for instance, states that

- (2) [t]he direct objects of perception are the persisting mind-independent physical objects that we all know and love [...]. The very objects that are presented to us in perceptual experience are themselves mind-independent in nature. (Brewer 2011, p. 93f.)⁹

Similarly, William Fish asserts the following:

- (3) [T]he naive realist claims [...] that when we see the world, the presentational character of the experience we have—the array of features that we are presented with [...]—is constituted by features from the mind-independent world. (Fish 2009, p. 15)¹⁰

To characterize a perceptual experience, relationalists contend, it does not suffice to cite the perceiving subject and the mind-independent enviroing items with which the subject's experience relates that subject. And indeed, were these all that relationalists cited, they would lack the resources to explain that subjects can be perceptually related to the same items while the relevant ways of experiencing these items differ. They would be at a loss to explain, for instance, why to a subject who is perceptually related to a coin, say, that coin may sometimes look round, sometimes elliptical, sometimes blurry, sometimes small, sometimes large, sometimes salient, and sometimes not. Conversely, relationalists should also want to be able to say that subjects can be perceptually related to different items and yet be appeared to in ways that are subjectively the same.¹¹ In other words,

⁹ Brewer endorses property nominalism, other relationalists do not. That said, proponents of the relational view are united in insisting that perception is a relation with mind-independent items. How such items are specified, i.e. as *qualities* of mind-independent objects (cf. Campbell & Cassam 2014), as *physical objects* (cf. Brewer 2011) as *facts*, construed as object-property couples, (cf. Fish 2009), as *perspectival properties* (cf. Noë 2004), *appearance properties* (cf. Shoemaker 1994 and Genone 2014), or yet differently, is then a further issue. In chapters 4-6, I consider accounts that are based on three different conception of such items.

¹⁰ I return to Fish's view in chapter 4. Roughly, on it, the *presentational character* of one's experience is constituted by facts, which he construes as mind-independent object-property couples. As we will see, according to Fish, it depends on further factors which of the facts populating the subject's environment the subject is presented with in her experience.

¹¹ As specified, both these requirements rely on the idea that there are two ways of characterizing experiences that need not line up: first, a way of characterizing the experiential relation itself and, second, a way of characterizing how things are with the subject of the experience as she stands in that relation, viz. that to her, in her experience, things looks or appear a certain way, say, that the experience has a qualitative or phenomenal character, or that there are ways it is like to have the relevant experience. Not all relationalists accept this idea. Notably, Campbell tries to eschew talk of

proponents of the relational view must accommodate a rather ordinary fact about perception: how, in perceptual experience, things look or appear to the subject can vary with factors besides the perceiver and the mind-independent items experience is said to relate her with.¹² Some relationalists address this issue by lumping several pertinent factors together into a third relatum of the perceptual relation, variously labeled the subject's *standpoint* (cf. Campbell 2009) or the subject's *point of view* (cf. Brewer 2011; Campbell & Cassam 2014). On such construals, experience emerges as a three-place relation between a perceiving subject, environing items, and a point of view, where the latter is standardly taken to comprise the subject's spatiotemporal position vis-à-vis the relevant environing items and further relevant circumstances of perception such as e.g. the sensory modality (or modalities) involved, the perceiving subject's visual acuity (assuming the perception is a visual one), the distribution of her attentional resources, or lighting conditions.¹³

With this rough specification of the alleged relata of the experiential relation in hand, let us ask next what *kind* of relation relationalists take perceptual experience to be. According to the standard relationalist response, perceptual experience is a relation of *direct awareness* of, of being *acquainted* with, environing mind-independent items. Acquaintance is said to be a conscious relation. Typically (and not just by relationalists), the idea of experience as having a conscious dimension is expressed in terms of the assertion that experience has a *phenomenal* or *qualitative character*, which in turn is frequently glossed in terms of saying that there is *a way it is like* to undergo experiences. Like Hanson, relationalists thus accept **Phenomenology**. But they disagree among themselves on how exactly to characterize the phenomenal dimension of experience.

phenomenal properties of experience entirely, at least if these are taken to be some sort of inner phenomenon. If, however, such talk is accepted, the relationalists' task, as it were, is to provide an account of the experiential relation that enables them to explain how differences and similarities in that relation generate the appropriate differences and similarities in how things are with the experiencing subject. And such an explanatory account will have to respect that the set of differences and similarities in the experiential relation may not be congruent with the set of differences and similarities in how things are with the experiencing subject that stands in such relations.

¹² All I am claiming here is that in ordinary contexts, it is perfectly uncontroversial to assert that how things appear may differ with a variety of factors. I am not claiming that there is an ordinary and obvious way of cashing out this claim. Just like Hanson's talk about the *visual field* and its *elements* left us wondering how to think about such alleged entities, talk of *looks*, *appearances*, and *the phenomenal* notoriously stands in need of further explication, too.

¹³ As we will see, Fish pursues an alternative strategy. On his account, the factors that others characterize as elements of the third relatum of the perceptual relation appear as constraints on which facts feature in the perceiving subject's presentational character. I return to this issue in chapter 4.

John Campbell, for example, an influential champion of contemporary relationalism, is especially wary of the idea that one should characterize the qualitative character of experience as some sort of internal phenomenon, as something that somehow occurs *in the head*, as it were. On his alternative proposal, he wants to give a fully externalist account of experience. Integral to this externalist account is the following claim: the external objects, their colors, etc., are *themselves* that which *constitutes* the phenomenal character of visual experience. The *locus classicus* for this characterization is the following, widely cited passage:

- (4) On a Relational View, the phenomenal character of your experience, as you look around the room, is *constituted* by the actual layout of the room itself: which particular objects are there, their intrinsic properties, such as colour and shape, and how they are arranged in relation to one another and to you. (Campbell 2002a, p. 116; similarly: Martin 1998, pp. 173-5; Foster 2000, p. 60; Smith 2002, pp. 43-44; Logue 2012, p. 212; French 2014, pp. 395-6; Campbell & Cassam 2014, e.g. p. 72, p. 136)

The question how to understand constitution is, however, a difficult one. Frequently, Campbell claims that “[o]n the relational view, the qualitative character of the experience is the qualitative character of the object itself” (e.g. Campbell & Cassam 2014, p. 33). So construed, constitution appears to be identity; the qualitative character of the experience *just is* the qualitative character its direct objects possess—relative, presumably, to a point of view.¹⁴ But it is hard to see how that could be true. Note that Campbell contends the following: the relational view he proposes manages to give an account of

¹⁴ Cf. also Campbell & Cassam 2014, p. 18. Campbell concedes that next to the point of view, further parameters may have to be taken into account, such as adverbial modifications of the type of experience in question like ‘*watchfully*’ and ‘*steadily*’ (Campbell & Cassam 2014, p. 28 and p. 51). But he insists that “once these other parameters are set, on the relational view, the qualitative character of the experience is then constituted by the qualitative character of the object.” (Campbell & Cassam 2014, p. 33). Incidentally, Cassam, too, interprets Campbell’s constitution talk as identity talk (see *ibid.*, p. 138).

Taking the phenomenal character to be constituted by the qualitative character of the enviroing objects themselves constitutes one major respect in which the relational view differs from many representationalist views, since many (though not all) representationalists think that the phenomenal character of experience is constituted by, supervenes on, or is somehow identical with its representational content. Even so, if like e.g. Schellenberg (see fn. 8 above) representationalists think that at least in the veridical case, the representational content of experience is co-constituted by the actual enviroing items perceived, their position is not very far from Campbell’s. But there remains a crucial difference: Schellenberg will affirm what relationalists deny, i.e. that these items are never the *sole* constituents of experience. Rather, she will insist that modes of representation, concepts, or content schemes also make crucial contributions. Representationalists could not side with Campbell and hold that that at least in the veridical case, the qualitative character of experience is *fully* constituted by the particular enviroing items perceived (though Cassam seems to suggest that they might, cf. Campbell & Cassam 2014, p. 140). After all, representations of items are not identical with the items represented. If Campbell construes ‘constitution’ in terms of identity, representationalists will thus insist, against Campbell, that in experience, something must be present that differs from the enviroing items and that does the representing.

how, through experience, the environing objects' "qualitative features are brought into the subjective life" of the perceiver (Campbell & Cassam 2014, p. 33).¹⁵ However, it is not obvious how one is to understand the metaphor of transportation involved, let alone the idea that whatever such transportation into the perceiver's subjective life may yield could be *identical* with the properties of the environing objects themselves. Briefly put, it is not obvious why and how we are to think of features of the subjective experiential states that presumably make up the perceiver's subjective life as being identical with features of what is experienced. Conversely, if the idea of an internal experiential state of the subject is to be eschewed, it is not obvious what sense, if any, to attach to Campbell's notion of the perceiver's subjective life. Again, Campbell's view is influential; many relationalists cite him approvingly and readily adopt his language of constitution. As we will see below, however, they differ significantly with respect to how they characterize the kind of dependence they take constitution to involve.

It is fair to say, though, that relationalists are united in thinking that the main role of the experiential relation is to (somehow) bring (features of) the environing items into our subjective lives and to thus make them in some sense available to us as something that we are consciously aware of. And since they all share a commitment to some version of constitution-talk, they agree, further, that there is some strong dependence between the mind-independent items that a subject's experience relates her with and the phenomenal features characteristic of her conscious visual perceptual experience.

¹⁵ One may wonder what it means to say that a physical object has a qualitative character. Campbell states that the world can be described at various different levels. We can acknowledge, he concedes, that "there is something fundamental about the physics of our surroundings, at least in that all other facts about our world supervene on physical facts," and at the same time hold that other levels of description are available, too – such as the level of description we employ to characterize the qualitative world we encounter in experience. However, and this is his central contention, we can treat the attribution of qualitative features to the environing objects simply as "a matter of saying how things are 'at a different level' than the level of description used by the physicist." We may then hold on to the thought that these features are still mind-independent, even if we may lack the ability or knowledge that would allow us to translate between different levels of description. (See Campbell & Cassam 2014, p. 3). Accordingly, if Campbell says that a physical object has qualitative features, this is to be read in the light of his commitment to the idea that qualitative expressions ultimately refer to mind-independent features of the world and that we should not, as he puts it, allow "physics to push visual experience inside the head." (e.g. *ibid.*, p. 12)

Typically (though not necessarily), these phenomenal features vary with differences in the relata of the perceptual relation. In most perceptual circumstances, there will be a phenomenal difference between the experiences one undergoes when looking at suitably different objects—a picture of Phil Collins, say, and a single grain of rice. Likewise, there will be a phenomenal difference between the experience of looking at a person face-to-face and that of looking at the same person from behind or from above, and a difference between looking at an object when one’s visual acuity is impaired and looking at it in otherwise identical circumstances when it is not.¹⁶

On the other hand, the mere existence of some difference in the relata of the acquaintance relation need not entail a corresponding difference in phenomenology.¹⁷ Intuitively, there is no phenomenal difference between looking at two numerically different, but otherwise qualitatively identical objects, if all the other factors are held fixed. Moreover, if perceptual circumstances are suitably tweaked, it may well be, again intuitively, that there is no phenomenal difference between two experiences, even though the items the two experiences relate one with differ in various ways. However, relationalists are confident that each of these phenomena can be accommodated within the relationalist framework, by way of suitably spelling out the third relatum or by citing further constraints that may govern the experiential relation.

Keeping in mind that there are differences with respect to how to understand the kind of dependence that the constitution relation is supposed to involve and differences with respect to how to construe experiential phenomenology, we can sum up the basic commitments of the relational view by characterizing it as the combination of the following three theses:

No Content

Experience lacks (representational) content; it is not a matter of a subject representing anything.

Acquaintance

Experience is a relation through which a perceiver becomes acquainted with certain mind-independent items. Acquaintance is a relation through which perceivers become directly and consciously aware of such items, from a point of view. This in turn is a

¹⁶ This should be uncontroversial on any notion of the phenomenal.

¹⁷ Whether relationalists agree with this claim depends on how they spell out the notion of phenomenology. This will become pertinent in the discussion of Fish’s view in chapter 4.

matter of the perceiver's experience's having certain phenomenal or qualitative features or a matter of its bringing certain features of the mind-independent items into the subjective life of the perceiver.

Constitution

The phenomenal character of an experience is constituted by the environing mind-independent items with which the experience relates the perceiver.

With this characterization in hand, let us proceed by briefly examining the relationalists' position vis-à-vis **DVEC** (3.2), to then consider the dialectical situation between them and Hanson (3.3).

3.2 RELATIONALISM, DVEC, BMCEC, AND BMCC

Patently, **No Content** serves to set apart the relational view from representationalist views. Notably, it also entails that experience can neither be veridical or non-veridical, neither accurate nor inaccurate. After all, having such properties requires having contents that can be evaluated for truth or accuracy.¹⁸

Due to their commitment to **No Content**, proponents of the relational view will also reject **Doxastically Variable Experiential Content (DVEC)**: if perceptual experience lacks experiential content, it *a fortiori* lacks experiential content that is variable—doxastically or otherwise.¹⁹ For the same reason, they must reject **Beliefs May Co-Determine Experiential Content (BMCEC)**—the claim, recall, that what subjects believe co-determines the experiential content of their experience such that (if everything else is held fixed) differences in a subject's beliefs may yield differences in that content.

¹⁸ According to Genone (2014), this is indeed one of the main respects in which the relational view differs from representationalist views: according to the latter, but not the former, experience itself can be erroneous.

¹⁹ As should be obvious, proponents of the relational view must make extra efforts to accommodate total hallucinations. For one, according to **Acquaintance**, it follows that total hallucinations are not experiences. After all, in total hallucinations, subjects are *ex hypothesi* not perceptually related to environing objects. Relatedly, via **Constitution**, it follows that total hallucinations either lack phenomenal character altogether (this is, incidentally, Fish's view) or, if they do not lack it, that it must be generated in a way that differs from how the phenomenal character of matching experiences is generated. This is a familiar issue. Some relationalists acknowledge the problem, but set it aside (e.g. Brewer 2018), others characterize total hallucinations epistemically, i.e. in terms of their subjective indistinguishability from the good case (e.g. Martin 2004), but without giving a positive account of them. Since this issue has been extensively covered in the literature, I will not focus on it here.

However, perhaps some relationalists are sympathetic to a broadly holistic account of conceptual content—even one similar in shape to the one we attributed to Hanson. They might, that is, accept a kind of view according to which what a given concept means to a subject depends at least to a significant part on how the relevant concept is articulated in the network constituted by the subject's set of inferentially related beliefs. Again, since they endorse **No Content**, proponents of the relational view will reject the idea that differences in such articulation may affect experiential content—according to them, there is none. But they could accept that such differences affect contents that, though not contents of experience itself, are closely associated with experience—contents of perceptual beliefs or judgments, say. Such relationalists could well accept **Beliefs May Co-Determine Content (BMCC)**, i.e. the more general claim that what subjects believe co-determines the content of their conceptually contentful states and activities, including perceptual judgments or conceptual categorizations, such that if everything else is held fixed, differences in subjects' beliefs may yield differences in the conceptual content of such states and activities.

Note, though, that to accept this idea is to incur an explanatory debt—one that, as we saw above, may be owed by Hanson as well. For presumably, relationalists will want to insist that the conceptual content of beliefs, judgments, etc., rather than being fully determined by the inferential relations that concepts stand in, is at least in part determined externally, i.e. by the actual mind-independent items that the subject is acquainted with through her experience. Accordingly, if Hanson's account is unsatisfactory in part because it leaves us in the dark with respect to what role, if any, experience might play in co-determining experiential content, then surely, the same would hold of a relationalist account that accepts **BMCC**, but remains silent about what role, if any, experience plays in their account of conceptual content. Hence, if relationalists are willing to accept that specifying a concept's position within the inferential structure of the subject's beliefs is a way of specifying a crucial dimension of that concept's content, and if they also insist that such content is also in part determined externally, they will need to provide an account that shows how these two ideas can come together.

I am not aware of any fully developed relationalist account of conceptual content that takes this shape.²⁰ But this is not the place to assess whether an account of conceptual content that entails **BMCC** could be acceptable to proponents of the relational view, and what an account that combines **BMCC** with an externalist component agreeable to relationalists would have to look like—this is a task suitably inclined relationalists would have to take on. For our purposes, it suffices to observe the following: relationalists reject **Content** and, thus, **DVEC** and **BMCEC**. Accepting a more general claim in the vicinity, **BMCC**, might allow them to take on board suitably adjusted versions of the claims Hanson makes about concepts, and to take these to apply not of experience itself, but to the perceiver’s conceptual responses to experience. However, relationalists who pursue such a strategy would owe us an account of conceptual content that combines the broadly holistic picture of conceptual content with a role carved out for experience, construed as acquaintance. The existence of such an explanatory debt does not, however, speak against relationalism *per se*. Arguably, Hanson, too, owes an analogous debt, i.e. an account of what, if any, contribution the phenomenal dimension of experience makes to experiential content.

I will argue next that with respect to the challenges they face, the parallels between the two kinds of views extend even further.

²⁰ The closest I have seen is Campbell’s account in Campbell & Cassam 2014. In chapter 2, Campbell suggests that the grasp of a term referring to an ordinary physical object is a combination of a) the grasp of the characteristic patterns of inference to which the term is subject and b) grasp of the semantic justification for the pattern of use of the term, which, Campbell contends, is provided by our acquaintance with the categorical objects themselves in experience. Again, the idea is that through sensory encounters with the categorical objects themselves, the thing itself is brought into the perceiver’s cognitive life. How exactly one is to understand the relevant notion of grasp of semantic justification (sometimes: *validation*, cf. *ibid.* p. 41) that figures in b) remains, however, at least as unclear as the notion of bringing the objects (or features) themselves into the subject’s life. For some pertinent discussion of related issues, e.g. the role acquaintance may play in understanding singular thought, see the various contributions in Jeshion 2010.

3.3 HANSON AND RELATIONALISM

Recall again that what motivates Hanson's endorsement of **Content** is his assumption that to be epistemically significant, it must be intelligible how experience can bear on our beliefs. This, Hanson thinks, requires that concepts be involved in experience itself, which ultimately leads him to construe epistemically significant seeing in terms of *seeing as*. If asked how perceptual experience so construed can intelligibly bear on beliefs, Hanson's response could go roughly like this:

“Suppose my perceptual experience e is such that I *see*, or seem to see, something *as F*. Suppose, further, that I am not aware of any pressing reason to believe that what I see is not F – I may even take myself to have excellent reasons to believe that for me to encounter F s, circumstanced as I am, is quite likely. In such a case, I may well come to believe, or judge, on the basis of my experience, that I am, in fact, in the presence of some F —that as far as the presence of F s is concerned, things are as I see them. I could of course be wrong. I could be misclassifying what I see, or hallucinate and see nothing. If so, future experiences might (but need not) reveal my mistake and force me to revise my beliefs or judgments. But it could also be that e is indeed a case of seeing an F . Perhaps my *seeing it as* an F even enables me to gain knowledge. If I endorse that things are what I *see* them *as*, thus take myself to *see that* there is, in fact, an F , I could be quite right, and for good reasons. Either way, given what else I believe about F s, the perceptual circumstances, the status of my visual system, the likely presence or absence of suitable ringers and so forth, having e may make it perfectly rational for me to form the belief (or issue the perceptual judgment) that I am, in fact, in the presence of some F .

Conversely, suppose again that my perceptual experience e^* is such that I *see* (or seem to see) something *as F*. But now suppose that as I keep observing the scene, I *see* what I *see as F* also *as* exhibiting a kind of behavior— φ , say—of which I believe that F s do not (or cannot) exhibit it. In such a situation, and assuming I do not fail to notice the issue, I face a choice. One option is to revise my beliefs—and, accordingly, my concept of F (and even of φ -ing)—in such a way as to accommodate what I would take myself to have just discovered: though I previously thought that they do not or cannot φ , F s do φ after all! Alternatively, I could hold on to the belief that F s cannot φ and thus insist

either a) that what I *saw as F* previously cannot actually be *F*, or b) that it was an *F* alright, but that, since it could not have φ -ed, I must have misclassified its behavior. Finally, I could also be uncertain which of these options to take, suspend judgment, keep observing, and hope for further clues to be revealed.

Which of these responses to undergoing e^* would be rational for me to exhibit, in the particular setting in which I find myself, will presumably depend on what other beliefs I hold, how firmly I hold them, and revising which of my beliefs accordingly seems best and, perhaps, least costly in terms of the net-preservation of beliefs I take to be true.²¹ Figuring out these details may be a complicated task and may require extended reflection. But the important point is this: while it may at times be difficult to figure out what exactly the rational bearing is that a given experience has on my beliefs, the question how perceptual experience can have a bearing on my beliefs in the first place is, on my view, not mysterious.”

If, thus primed with a reminder of the considerations that motivate Hanson’s view, we return to the relational view, the fact that its proponents endorse **No Content** prompts an obvious question: how can (visual) experience—construed as conscious acquaintance with mind-independent enviroing items from a point of view—be epistemically significant? How can *it* bear on our beliefs? How can it be anything but kaleidoscopic?

If asked what perceptual experience does for us, different relationalists provide different answers. A common response is to claim that perceptual experience somehow *grounds* our concepts, that it makes mind-independent enviroing items available for demonstrative reference and puts subjects in a position to think about them.²² Some also hold that experience serves to *explain* how we can have the conception of objects as mind-independent in the first place or, again, that experience somehow

²¹ As we will see in the discussion of Siegel’s view in chapter 7, this conception of what determines what would be rational to do in a given situation is one she explicitly rejects.

²² See Campbell 2002a, Campbell & Cassam 2014, also Imogen Dickie: “A subject, *S*, is acquainted with an object, *o*, iff *S* is in a position to think about *o* in virtue of a perceptual link with *o* and without the use of any conceptual or descriptive intermediary.” Dickie 2010, p. 213. Brewer 2011 suggests (albeit without defense) that an acceptable account of concept possession should involve reference to the conscious confrontation with paradigm instances of kinds that fall under the relevant concept.

grounds such a conception. Furthermore, some relationalists think that acquaintance provides a kind of *non-propositional knowledge* that is somehow more basic than, and required for, obtaining propositional knowledge and that it serves to *justify* not perceptual judgments themselves, but our use of certain patterns of inference.²³ Other relationalists, however, reject the classification of acquaintance as providing knowledge and claim that acquaintance is more basic than any epistemic relation, that it neither is nor entails knowledge, but may serve as a source of it, in that it makes certain perceptual judgments *evidently* correct.²⁴

Among this mix of purported semantic and epistemic contributions, let us focus on the epistemic ones. We need not rule out that perhaps an account of justification can be given on which it is not conceptually contentful states, but the mind-independent objects themselves that can intelligibly serve as *justifiers* for patterns of inference. Likewise, maybe one can develop an account of perceptual evidence on which standing in a given experiential relation can itself be what makes certain perceptual judgments *evidently* correct, or an account on which the mind-independent objects experience relates one with figure themselves as *reasons* for the truth of certain perceptual judgments.²⁵ We need not deny, that is, that relationalists may be able to propose some account that explains how perceptual experience, construed as a conscious relation of acquaintance with mind-independent objects, may be said to feed into or otherwise ground, support, or make possible our epistemic activities. It is worth emphasizing, however, not just that a full account of that shape has yet to developed, but moreover, that it is not obvious what such an account must look like.

On Hanson's account, in contrast, it is comparatively easy to see how experience, just in virtue of having conceptual content, can play an evidentiary role. And Hanson has no need for the notion of acquaintance, nor does he, accordingly, need to give an account of it or of its epistemic significance. Nothing forces him to characterize of mind-independent objects as reasons, as justifiers, or as explanantia of the appropriateness of certain beliefs, judgments, or patterns of inferences. Hanson

²³ See again Campbell & Cassam 2014, chapter 2, as well as Cassam's criticism, especially chapter 7.

²⁴ See Brewer (2011), pp. 141-143 and *ibid.*, section 6.3.

²⁵ See again Brewer (2011), pp. 143-144, for this way of talking.

thus dodges many of the clarificatory tasks at least some of which relationalist must address to provide an account of the epistemic role that experience—construed as a specific kind of relation between a subject with mind-independent items standing in which is associated with, or gives rise to in the subject, a certain phenomenology—is supposed to play. And if it is indeed not obvious how relationalists must proceed to address these tasks, Hanson’s dialectical position vis-à-vis the relationalist appears to be fairly strong.

However, recall that Hanson’s view, too, raises questions. If the complaint is raised against the relational view that the epistemic and semantic role of experience and its phenomenal character remains unclear, a similar complaint can be raised against Hanson’s account as well. After all, on his view, what epistemic significance a given experience has, in a given context, ultimately rests on the concepts it is said to involve. But what epistemic or semantic contribution, if any, the *phenomenal* dimension of experience is supposed to make, or in virtue of what it can make it, must remain unclear as long as an account of experiential phenomenology is pending.

Quite generally, I contend that both Hanson and proponents of the relationalist view face structurally similar issues: ultimately, both owe us an account of what the phenomenal dimension of experience is and how exactly it relates to both the conceptual and the realm of mind-independent objects. From Hanson, we would thus need to know more about how to understand the notions of iconic representation, the visual field, and its elements. What are these elements? Given that Hanson takes it that beliefs can modify them, e.g. via projection effects, he clearly takes them both to be distinct from and to be less than fully dependent on the mind-independent objects they are in some sense said to represent. But how we are to understand them and the way they relate to the mind-independent items in the perceiver’s environment? These remain open questions. As for the relation between the phenomenal and the conceptual, recall that on Hanson’s view, in perceptual experience, the conceptual and the phenomenal dimensions are fused like an amalgam. Accordingly, for him, the question how the phenomenal and the conceptual relate must concern the mechanics of amalgamation.

How, then, are we to think about the associations between phenomenal elements and conceptual items? How do they come about and what is their status? Are they fixed once and for all or can they (or some of them) vary, perhaps with what subjects believe? If so, what governs such variation? Again, these questions remain open.²⁶

Proponents of the relational view, on the other hand, pull apart what on Hanson's account is assumed to be fused. Accordingly, for them, the question how the phenomenal and the conceptual relate takes a different shape and turns into the question how to understand the (epistemic and semantic) relations between perceptual experiences, on the one hand, and conceptually contentful items—such as beliefs, judgments, or conceptual classifications—on the other. But like for Hanson, questions arise not just with respect to how the phenomenal relates to the conceptual, but also with respect to how it relates to the mind-independent items in the perceiver's environment. As we have seen already, it is clear that via **Constitution**, relationalists want to tightly link the phenomenal dimension to the mind-independent objects themselves. But as we noted also, how exactly we are to construe **Constitution** and the dependence of the phenomenal features of experience on mind-independence it is taken to involve remains a question that different relationalists respond to differently.

Let us grant, then, that both accounts face serious explanatory challenges. However, as I will show in the next three chapters, relational accounts are not as powerful as Hanson's account purports to be when it comes to accommodating potential cases of **Doxastically Variable Experiential Phenomenology**. Indeed, as I will argue, relationalist accounts are marred by two crucial issues: first, their accounts of the phenomenology of experience cannot serve to help further develop Hanson's view: they are riddled with problems. And even if these problems are bracketed, there is a range of cases of doxastic variation that relationalists cannot accommodate. Let us turn, then, to the analysis of our first relational view: the relational account William Fish develops in his 2009 book *Perception, Hallucination, and Illusion*.

²⁶ I will return to these questions frequently.

4.0 RELATIONALISM I: FISH'S OBJECT-PROPERTY VIEW

In this chapter, I critically analyze William Fish's relationalist account of the phenomenology of experience and the prospects it affords for accommodating **Doxastically Variable Experiential Phenomenology (DVEP)**. I begin by laying out Fish's view, including his take on **Constitution** and his understanding of the phenomenal dimension of experience (4.1). Next, I show how he tries to accommodate at least some cases of **DVEP**, notably cases of expert vision (4.2). After raising several issues for his account (4.3 and 4.4), I show, first, that even if these could somehow be resolved, Fish's account still appears to be at odds with a fundamental relationalist commitment. Second, I argue Fish cannot accommodate **projection effects** (4.5). In 4.6, I briefly sum up the discussion.

4.1 CONSTITUTION, THE PHENOMENAL, THE PRESENTATIONAL, AND CONSTRAINING FACTORS

Qua relationalist, Fish accepts **No Content**. He also clearly endorses some version of **Constitution**. Here is how, using terminology by Martin, he initially phrases this commitment:

- (1) [W]hen we see, external objects and their properties “shape the contours of the subject's conscious experience” (Martin 2004, p. 64), where the metaphor of ‘shaping’ is read in a constitutive rather than a merely causal sense. [...] [E]xternal objects and their properties shape the contours of the subject's conscious experience [...] by actually *being* the contours of the subject's conscious experience. (Fish 2009, p. 6)

This passage suggests that like Campbell, Fish, too, understands ‘constitution’ in terms of identity.¹ However, without a clearer sense of what Fish thinks conscious experience is and given the metaphorical character of the specification of such experience as having *contours*, it is hard to gauge what the relata of the identity relation are supposed to be.

To get a better handle on Fish’s reading of **Constitution**, let us ask how he understands the notion of *phenomenal character*. As indicated in the previous chapter, this notion is often used (not just by relationalists) to refer to the conscious character of subjects experiences, which is also frequently glossed in terms of *what it’s like* for a subject to undergo a given experience.² Fish, too, adopts this gloss: he understands the phenomenal character of an experience *e* as “that property [of *e*] that types *e* according to what it is like to undergo *e*” (Fish 2009, p. 7 and p. 8, citing Byrne 2002, p. 9, and Chalmers 2006, p. 50). Phenomenal character, Fish contends, is composite: it is composed of phenomenal properties, so that (again following Chalmers): “[t]wo perceptual experiences share their phenomenal character if [...] the experiences instantiate the same phenomenal properties” (Fish 2009, p. 10). Accordingly, Fish endorses:

Phenomenal Character Composition

The overall phenomenal character of an experience *e* is composed of *e*’s phenomenal properties (cf. Fish 2009, p. 10; p. 147).

Patently, one point of introducing phenomenal properties is to give a sense to the assertion that what it is like to have experiences that differ in their overall phenomenology may nevertheless be the same in some respects. To illustrate, consider the experience of looking at the red aspect of a traffic light in Pittsburgh (USA) and the experience of looking at the red aspect of a traffic light in Edmonton (Canada). If the color properties of the aspects, the lighting conditions, and the other conditions of perception (e.g. my position vis-à-vis the traffic light, my visual acuity, etc.) are relevantly similar, then intuitively, the phenomenal dimension of my experience of the red aspect of the traffic light in Pittsburgh may be very much the same as the phenomenal dimension of my corresponding experience

¹ He, too, approvingly cites Campbell on constitution, referencing passage (4) of the previous chapter.

² Again, the expression is said to go back to Nagel 1974, but can already be found in Wittgenstein’s *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* (Wittgenstein 1980). Cf. also Stoljar 2016.

in Edmonton, even if the objects I experience differ in the two cases, as well as the items surrounding the two traffic lights and even how the aspects of the traffic lights are arranged (vertically in Pittsburgh, horizontally in Edmonton). Do the two experiences share phenomenal properties, then? Intuitively, the answer should be “yes.”

On Fish’s view, however, the two experiences do not share any phenomenal properties. For as he has it, phenomenal properties are individuated along with the mind-independent items the experience relates its subject with. Accordingly, even if from the perspective of the subject, there is no detectable or undetectable difference with respect to how things are, phenomenally, as far as the experience of the respective red aspects of the two traffic lights is concerned, Fish will insist that the two experiences differ in their phenomenal properties precisely because they are experiences of different objects.

To understand this better, note the distinction Fish draws between the *presentational* and the *phenomenal*. Partly, this distinction is a response to Campbell’s characterization of **Constitution**. Recall that the reason why Campbell’s take on **Constitution** is so mystifying is that it is hard to see how we are to understand the claim that the qualitative features of subjective experiences *just are* the qualitative features of the experienced objects. Fish concurs, asserting that “a phenomenal character that was constituted by external objects and their properties could not be a property of an experience” (Fish 2009, p. 10, citing Dretske 2003, p. 67, Tye 2000, p. 49, and Lycan 2001, p. 32, who voice similar worries).

Unlike Campbell, Fish thus refrains from identifying the qualitative or phenomenal features of experience with the qualitative features of the mind-independent items themselves that, on the relational view, one’s experience relates one with. Instead, following Chalmers and Martin, he distinguishes the phenomenal properties and the phenomenal character of an experience from its presentational properties and its presentational character (cf. Chalmers 2004, p. 156; Martin 1998, p. 174).

According to this distinction, the phenomenal character is indeed a property of an experience, viz. that property that types the experience according to what it’s like to have it. The presentational

character, in contrast, is said to be “the perceived scene” itself (Fish 2009, p. 13), “a collection [or *array*] of properties (and perhaps objects) that the subject is presented with in having an experience and that thereby characterize what it is like to have it” (ibid., p. 16).

Representationalists, Fish points out, can accept this distinction, too. But they will also hold that experiences have the property of *representing* that the elements constituting the presentational character of the experience are instantiated and then identify this property with the phenomenal character of experience. For relationalists, this is unacceptable. First, it would be patently at odds with **No Content**. Second, if we read **Constitution** as intended to imply a strong dependence of the phenomenal character of experience on mind-independent objects, representationalism threatens to undercut the spirit of **Constitution** in the following way: unless further specifications are added, the view allows that two experiences are identical with respect to their representational properties—and thus their phenomenal characters—yet differ in that only in one of them, the properties the experiences represent as being instantiated are indeed part of the presentational character of the subject’s experience. But if so, then contrary to **Constitution**, the experience’s phenomenal character does not seem to depend on the presence of suitable mind-independent items in the subject’s environment, but merely on the experience’s representational properties.³

For Fish, the phenomenal character of a given experience *e* is neither identical with qualitative features of the mind-independent objects that *e* relates one with (as Campbell holds) nor with some representational property. Instead, it is identical with *e*’s property of acquainting one with *e*’s presentational character. Here is how Fish phrases the idea:

- (2) [A]cquaintance names an irreducible mental relation that the subject can only stand in to objects that exist and features that are instantiated in the part of the environment at which the subject is looking. [...] Thus, for any given presentational character—the array of features that the subject is presented with in having that experience—the experience itself will have the property of *acquainting* the subject with that

³ This is known as *explanatory screening off* (cf. Martin 2004, p. 71). If we find something that serves to explain the phenomenal character of an experience in cases in which no actual perception takes place, the question arises why the same something should not be that which serves to explain the phenomenal character in the perceptual case as well. If there is a preferred alternative explanation for the perceptual case, it seems to be explanatorily screened off, i.e. rendered explanatorily redundant. In the present case, the representational property is taken to be that which constitutes the phenomenal character in the non-perceptual case. Accordingly, in the perceptual case, that property appears to explanatorily screen off the actual presence of what it purports to represent.

presentational character. [...] This acquaintance property can [...] be identified with the experience's phenomenal character [...] [T]he phenomenal character of the experience—the property of the experience that types the experience by what it is like to have it—is the property of acquainting the subject with such-and-such a presentational character. (Fish 2009, pp. 14-15; and similarly: *ibid.*, p. 50)

As evidenced by passage (2), Fish endorses the following two claims:

Irreducibility

Acquaintance is an irreducible mental relation subjects can only stand in to objects that exist and features that are instantiated in the part of the environment at which the subject is looking. Whenever a subject *S* is presented, in her experience, with a given presentational character, *S*'s experience has the property of acquainting *S* with it.

Identity

For every experience *e* and every subject *S*, *e*'s phenomenal character is identical with *e*'s property of acquainting *S* with *e*'s presentational character.

Note that while Fish does entertain a notion of acquaintance, on his construal, acquaintance emerges not as a three-place relation between a subject, mind-independent items, and a point of view. Rather, given **Irreducibility** and **Identity**, acquaintance is a two-place relation holding between a subject and the presentational character of her experience. And since the presentational character is said to be the perceived scene itself, the acquaintance property of any given experience and thus its phenomenal character are tied to the specific mind-independent items that populate that scene.⁴

On Fish's view, the basic units featuring in the presentational character of experiences are object-property couples – *facts*, on his usage of the term.⁵ Facts so construed are not true propositions. Rather, they are necessarily actual pieces of reality. They are states of affairs that are either of the form “a's being F” or (for relational facts) “a's R-ing b” that can serve as truth-makers for beliefs and judgments (cf. Fish 2009, p. 52; though Fish only considers binary relations, the account naturally extends to n-ary relations). Accordingly, Fish also holds

⁴ As we will see below, there are constraints as to which of the envioning items make it into the presentational character.

⁵ To motivate the idea that the items constituting the presentational character of experience are object-property couples, Fish draws on arguments presented by Matthen and Firth (cf. Matthen 2005; Firth 1949) to the effect that neither objects nor properties could appear in experience *solò*. We cannot, he suggests, perceive objects without properties, nor properties that are not of objects.

Presentational Character Composition

The presentational character of an experience e is composed of all the object-property couples—the individual facts—that e presents to the subject.

Moreover, analogous to the way he understands the phenomenal character of an experience e as e 's property of acquainting its subject with e 's presentational character, Fish takes the phenomenal properties of e to be identical with the properties e has of acquainting its subject with the individual facts featuring in e 's presentational character. Accordingly, we can modify **Identity** in the following way:

Identity*

An experience e 's property of acquainting its subject S with e 's presentational character is identical with e 's phenomenal character and e 's properties of acquainting S with the individual facts that feature in e 's presentational character are identical with e 's phenomenal properties.

With this explication of the difference between the presentational and the phenomenal in hand, we can now return to the two issues that arose earlier. First, we can now elaborate on Fish's take on **Constitution** and sum up how, on his view, the phenomenal aspect of experience depends on the mind-independent items in the subject's environment. Second, and relatedly, we can now understand why on Fish's view, experiences like those of the two traffic lights that we mentioned above cannot, strictly speaking, share phenomenal properties.

As for the first issue, the version of **Constitution** Fish accepts clearly differs from Campbell's. Both understand **Constitution** in terms of identity. However, Campbell takes it that it is the *phenomenal* (or qualitative) *character* of a subject's experience that is constituted by the features of mind-independent items. For Fish, in contrast, it is the *presentational character* of the subject's experience that such items constitute—in his case: the facts that populate the tract of the environment that the subject is looking at—or at least some suitable subset of them. And the sense in which the phenomenal character and the phenomenal properties of a subject's experience e depend on the relevant mind-independent items is provided by **Identity***, i.e. via the claim that the phenomenal properties of an experience are identical with the properties the experience has of acquainting the subject with the specific facts that constitute the presentational character of her experience.

We see, thus, that on Fish's account, it follows that the phenomenal properties of a given experience (and its phenomenal character) are individuated along with the facts that constitute its presentational character. Accordingly, if two experiences are relations to different objects, they cannot share a phenomenal character. Moreover, the phenomenal properties of two experiences e and e^* can only overlap to the extent that the respective presentational characters of e and e^* are at least partly constituted by the exact same facts. This explains why Fish must resist the idea that the experiences referred to in our example above, i.e. the experiences of the two traffic lights, share phenomenal properties. After all, the phenomenal properties of the two experiences are identical with different things, viz. with the property each of the two different experiences has of acquainting the subject with the specific object-property couples present in their respective environments.

Above, we observed that one point of introducing phenomenal properties in the first place is to give a sense to the assertion that experiences that differ in their overall phenomenal character may nevertheless be such that in some respects, what it's like to have them may be the same. However, given the way Fish specifies the notions of phenomenal properties and phenomenal character, they cannot, on his view, play that role.

In response to this issue, Fish follows McDowell in suggesting that phenomenal characters and phenomenal properties can be grouped into kinds. Experiences that have phenomenal properties or characters that are not identical, but match phenomenally—such as e.g. the experience of two numerically different, but qualitatively identical objects—can then be said to be “of the same kind.” Accordingly, with respect to what it is like to have them, experiences with (partly) matching but different phenomenal properties are, if not (partly) identical, then at least (partly) of the same kind (Fish 2009, p. 24, fn. 28, referring to McDowell 1984/1998, p. 200).

With this general picture of Fish's view in mind, let us ask, next, how Fish accommodates what other relationalists seek to capture by way of adding a third relatum to the acquaintance relation, i.e. that perceivers who look at the same items can have experiences that differ in phenomenal character. Fish answers this question by way of construing the presentational character of a subject's experience as being constrained by various further factors, including the subject's position vis-à-vis the environing

objects, lighting conditions, her visual acuity (Fish 2009, p. 55), and the distribution of her attentional resources (ibid. pp. 58-64). The tract of the environment one looks at, Fish grants, typically contains more facts than those that end up constituting the presentational character of one's experience. This is very plausible once we acknowledge that some of these further facts may be such that they cannot be picked up by vision or, for that matter, by any other sensory modality. But among the more specific set of facts that subjects who are endowed with a functioning visual system can pick up on in principle, the question which facts will in fact be picked up, Fish contends, depends, *inter alia*, on the various further factors mentioned above.

Note that by thinking about these factors as constraints on the presentational character of the subject's experience, Fish respects the claim central to **Irreducibility**, viz. that the acquaintance relation is primitive and cannot be further analyzed—not even by reference to further factors. For on the view he suggests, the dependence of acquaintance (and, thus, via **Identity***, of the phenomenal character of one's experience) on these further factors is merely indirect. Rather than affecting the phenomenal character of experience directly, the relevant factors constrain which facts figure in the presentational character of the subject's experience and thus only mediately what her experience acquaints her with. But once the relevant constraints are in place, acquaintance really is nothing but a relation between a given subject and a given presentational character—a relation, Fish can insist, that is irreducible and unanalyzable.

This way of setting things up is especially important in the context of the final factor that Fish thinks governs the presentational character of experience and that is especially pertinent to his attempt to accommodate **Doxastically Variable Experiential Phenomenology (DVEP)**. I turn to it next.

4.2 NO ACQUAINTANCE WITHOUT CONCEPTUAL CAPACITIES: FISH ON EXPERT VISION

Again, there is one final factor that Fish takes to govern the presentational character of a subject's experience. Here is how he introduces it:

- (3) [F]or one to become acquainted with a particular fact, or to have a particular fact feature in the presentational character of one's experience, one must have the *capacity* to see that fact or, more broadly, facts of that kind. (Fish 2009, p. 67)⁶

The thought, then, is that for subjects to be acquainted with various kinds of facts, they need to possess the relevant capacities to see them. For our purposes, this feature of Fish's view is interesting since by adding it, Fish creates the conceptual leeway required to accommodate some cases of **DVEP**, notably cases of *expert vision*.

That accommodating such cases is indeed what he has in mind comes out when, drawing on an example discussed in Crane 1992, he asserts that the fact that the object in front of her is a cathode ray tube is one that can feature in the presentational character of the expert, but not in that of an untutored child.⁷ Here is Fish's explanation:

- (4) [T]he former [i.e. the expert] has a conceptual-recognitional capacity that the latter [i.e. the untutored child] lacks—the capacity to pick up on the fact of the object's being a cathode ray tube. This is a [...] *visual*-recognitional capacity because it is a capacity to recognize, through vision, certain features in the world; it is a conceptual capacity because possession of the capacity requires the subject to possess the relevant concept. (Fish 2009, pp. 68-69)

⁶ Note that passage (3) also corroborates that Fish is indeed committed not just to **Identity**, but to **Identity***. **Identity***, if combined with **Phenomenal Character Composition**, suggests **Acquaintance Composition**, i.e. the claim that being acquainted with the *presentational character* of one's experience is a property that obtains in virtue of one's being acquainted with the individual facts that compose that presentational character. If so, the acquaintance property of one's experience that is identical with that experience's having a phenomenal character would be reducible to the properties the experience has of acquainting the subject with the individual facts that compose the presentational character of her experience. **Irreducibility** would have to be restricted in scope so as to yield **Irreducibility***, according to which acquaintance is an irreducible mental relation that subjects can only stand in to facts that exist in the part of the environment at which the subject is looking. Whenever a subject's experience presents her with a fact, that experience has the property of acquainting the subject with it.

⁷ This is an example also discussed in Hanson 1958 (=PoD).

Suppose, then, that which conceptual-recognitional capacities S possesses affects the presentational character of her experience. If so, then surely, possessing the capacity to recognize cathode ray tubes will typically require that S possess certain beliefs, e.g. beliefs about what cathode ray tubes are, how they work, what one can do with them, etc. Fish concurs: having the concept of a cathode ray tube requires mastery of the relevant term—which will at least in part be a matter of holding certain beliefs. If so, Fish’s account entails that if everything else is held fixed, what beliefs one holds may affect what facts constitute the presentational character of one’s experience. And if they do, then given **Irreducibility** and **Identity***, what beliefs one holds mediate affect what facts the experience acquaints the subject with, thus its phenomenal properties and, given **Phenomenal Character Composition**, the phenomenal character of one’s experience. **DVEP** is thus true on Fish’s account—at least for cases of expert vision. Knowing more about what one faces, Fish thinks, can have a phenomenal effect: it can modify one’s conceptual capacities so that these can lift more or different facts into the presentational character of one’s experience and thus modify the experience’s phenomenology.

Fish adds several further remarks. First, he wants to accommodate the intuition that the physicist and the child have something perceptually in common. To that end, he tentatively endorses the idea that the presentational character of both the child’s and the physicist’s experience could be co-constituted by rudimentary or basic shape facts, color facts, etc. (cf. Fish 2009, p. 68).

Second, he concedes that a substantive story must be told about what it is to have a conceptual capacity. He does not provide such a story, but expresses some sympathy with the idea that often, having such a capacity will require not only that one have a functioning visual system. As noted already, he thinks that in many cases, it may also require the mastery of a language that contains the relevant term, viz. “cathode ray tube” (cf. *ibid.*, p. 69). Furthermore, following McCulloch 1995 and Noë 2004, he thinks that it will also require having a range of tacit expectations as to how the appearances of certain objects will change under movement (*ibid.*).⁸

⁸ Noë’s view is reminiscent of Hanson’s in that he contends that to see something “*as a tomato* is to see it as something whose visual appearance will vary in certain predictable ways as we move around it.” As Fish tries to translate this

Finally, Fish holds that for *every* fact, its figuring in the presentational character of a subject's experience requires that the subject have the corresponding conceptual-recognitional capacity. Accordingly, on his view, conceptual-recognitional capacities are not a factor that constrains the presentational character of a subject's experience. Rather, they enable subjects to have experiences with a presentational character—and thus, mediately, an experience with a phenomenal character—in the first place. In other words, Fish's view entails what we may dub the **No Acquaintance Without Conceptual Capacities** principle. Modifying a claim by McDowell, Fish asserts the following:

- (5) In experience, one finds oneself saddled with presentational character. One's conceptual capacities have already been brought into play, in the presentational character's being available to one, before one has any choice in the matter (Fish 2009, p. 71).⁹

idea into his own terminology, he states that in perceiving “the fact of an object's being a tomato, we implicitly take that object to fall under a particular pattern of sensorimotor contingencies, which in turn explains why we experience the three-dimensional nature of that object.”

It is an interesting question how to understand the notion of a perceiver's implicitly taking an object to fall under such patterns. If made explicit, the relevant commitments involved in such taking could be characterized in terms of a set of subjunctive conditional beliefs about what one would be likely to observe were one to engage in certain activities directed at the object. For instance, to see something as a tomato is, *inter alia*, to see that if it were a tomato, it would be very likely that we would make very specific further observations (i.e. $O_1, O_2, \dots O_n$) were we to move around it, pick it up, cut it in half, etc. As we saw, Hanson grants that it may well be that such commitments, which form part of what can complement the *seeing that* locution, may remain implicit. Indeed, it could be that the *practise* a subject engages in with respect to tomatoes lends itself to a characterization in terms of such commitments even if the subject himself lacks the conceptual capacities to express such commitments.

Fish's claim that in perceiving the fact of something's being a tomato we implicitly take what we see to fall under a particular pattern of sensorimotor contingencies could be spelled out in a similar way. Perhaps one could stipulate that for a subject to possess the conceptual capacity to see an item's being a tomato, the subject's actions must be of a certain sort. More specifically, they must be such that they can be construed as manifesting dispositions to act towards tomatoes that can in turn be characterized in terms of subjunctive conditionals that accurately capture the relevant patterns of sensorimotor contingencies associated with the perception of tomatoes. However, without a full account of what conceptual capacities are, the precise nature of the relation between a subject's possession of conceptual capacities and the phenomenology of her experience must remain unclear. In particular, it remains unclear how to construe Fish's contention that specific facts about how a subject's conceptual capacities are related to patterns of sensorimotor contingencies could serve to *explain* why we experience the tomato's three-dimensional nature.

⁹ Fish cites McDowell 1994, p. 10, where McDowell asserts a claim that is identical with the one Fish is happy to endorse except for the fact that it has “content” where the passage above has “presentational character”. With respect to it, Fish then says the following: “Substitute “presentational character” for “content” here, and I fully endorse McDowell's claim” (Fish 2009, p. 71). The result is passage (5). Fish also briefly discusses the possibility that “our capacities to see certain *rudimentary* facts, including e.g. facts about shape and color, are not *conceptual-recognitional* capacities at all” and that instead “subjects have the capacity to see such facts simply in virtue of having, say, a fully functional visual system” (*ibid.*, p. 72). He rejects this possibility, however, because he thinks, similar to McDowell, that the capacity responsible for perceiving and for bringing facts into the presentational character of one's experience is the same capacity that allows one to think about these facts.

Referring to Kirk 2005, Fish then suggests that having a conceptual capacity need not be construed in terms of the subject's being a language user (Fish 2009, pp. 73-74) at least not for all such capacities. In other words, while he grants that possession of *some* conceptual capacities, e.g. the conceptual capacity to recognize cathode ray tubes, presupposes language possession, he rejects that this need not be true for every such capacity.

It is a virtue of Fish's account that he seeks to accommodate doxastic effects on experiential phenomenology. And as we are looking for a way to think about the phenomenology of experience that could supplement Hanson's view and provide us with a way to make sense of his account of empirical constraint, Fish's incorporation of expert vision as one kind of **DVEP** makes his view attractive. From a relationalist point of view, too, the way he attempts to do so seems attractive. For suppose Fish were to understand the possession of conceptual capacities (and whatever beliefs on the part of the subject such possession may require) as forming part of a third relatum of the acquaintance relation itself. If so, the acquaintance relation would appear to be further analyzable, viz. in terms of the conceptual capacities of the subject and whatever representational states the possession of these capacities may require. Understanding acquaintance as analyzable in terms of representational states would undermine **Irreducibility**. Moreover, it would do so in a particularly damaging way, for such an analysis would be fundamentally at odds with the relationalists' anti-representationalist commitments. However, if, like on Fish's view, the possession of conceptual capacities is said to govern the phenomenal character of experience only indirectly, i.e. via determining the presentational character of one's experience, then on the resulting view, acquaintance—at least acquaintance with particular facts—remains irreducible.

In the next sections, I will argue that Fish's position is problematic in various ways. It remains underdeveloped, appears to be at odds with at a commitment at least some relationalists hold dear, and affords no conceptual leeway to accommodate **projection effects**.

4.3 IDENTITY*, SUPERVENIENCE, AND INTERSUBJECTIVE COMMONALITIES

Fish, recall, wants to accommodate the intuition that the physicist and the child who look at the cathode ray tube have something perceptually in common. On the assumption of **Identity*** and **Irreducibility**, differences in which facts constitute the presentational character of one's experience entail differences in the acquaintance properties and, accordingly, the phenomenal properties one's experience possesses. As we saw, this thought—combined with the idea that conceptual-recognitional capacities play an essential role in generating the presentational character of a subject's experience—allows Fish to accommodate the phenomenon of expert vision: given the differences in their conceptual-recognitional capacities, the presentational characters of the expert and the child will differ, as will, hence, the phenomenal characters of their respective experiences.

Conversely, to the extent that the facts composing the presentational characters of both the child's and the expert's experience overlap, the acquaintance properties of the two experiences and thus, presumably, the phenomenal properties of their respective experiences, will be the same.

Though the basic idea seems rather straightforward, it raises several questions. Let us begin by focusing on **Identity***. Consider two experiences, e and e^* , had by a subject, S , where e and e^* are experiences of two numerically different but qualitatively identical items in otherwise identical perceptual circumstances. Since e and e^* relate S to different objects, on Fish's view, each acquaints S with a different set of object-property couples. As per **Identity***, differences in acquaintance properties entail differences in phenomenal properties. Accordingly, it follows that even though the objects of e and e^* are qualitatively identical, and though there is neither a difference in the circumstances of perception nor in the subject of the respective experiences, the phenomenal properties of e and e^* differ and, hence, their phenomenal characters.

In this context, recall also that Fish characterizes the *presentational character* as the perceived scene itself “that the subject is presented with in having an experience *and that thereby characterize[s] what it is like to have it*” (Fish 2009, p. 16, emphasis added). On the most straightforward reading of this latter

remark, what facts one's experience acquaints one with individuates both the phenomenal character of a given experience, but also what it is like to have it. Accordingly, when Fish concedes, with respect to experiences that are like e and e^* —i.e. experiences of qualitatively identical but numerically different objects—that *what it is like* to have them “will plausibly be the same,” he must be speaking carelessly. At best he may be able to say (as he does a few lines further in) that what having these experiences is like is the same *in kind* (cf. Fish 2009, p. 24, fn. 28).

We have noted this before, when we noted that phenomenal character is individuated along with the mind-independent items that experiences relate subjects with. It is, however, worth emphasizing how odd this result is. It is odd because presumably, the notions ‘phenomenal character’ and ‘what it's like to have an experience’ are intended to refer to the conscious nature of experience, i.e. to how things subjectively are for the subject, something that at least presumably is readily accessible to self-conscious subjects. But as it turns out, on Fish's view, both the notion of the *phenomenal character* of an experience and the notion of *what it is like* to have an experience ultimately refer to features that may remain outside the subject's ken. If the phenomenal character of one's experience is individuated along with the facts one's experience relates one with, and if what these facts are can be beyond one's ken, then one can err with respect to what the phenomenal character of one's experience is. Likewise, since the phenomenal character of an experience is taken to type experiences by what it is like to have them, one can err with respect to what it is like to have one's experience.¹⁰ Note that such a situation need not be one in which the subject suffers an illusion. Rather, it could be a perfectly innocuous non-illusory experience such as having e^* instead of e . Either way, the upshot is this: if what it is like to have an experience is also individuated along with the facts that one's experience acquaints one with, and if the expression ‘what it's like to have an experience’ is intended to refer to specific ways things subjectively are for the experiencing subject, Fish is saddled with the odd consequence that how things subjectively are for the subject may well remain opaque to the subject.

¹⁰ Note also the following consequence: that two token experiences are the same in what it's like to have them will be a very rare occurrence since the relevant identity will hold only between experiences that are composed of the same facts.

What about Fish's suggestion that experiences that differ in phenomenal properties can be of the same kind? The problem is that one must wonder what the relevant sameness in kind amounts to and how it is to be explained. Note that to a representationalist, the following response to this question is available: she can suggest that e and e^* (say) are fully or partly the same, or the same in kind, in virtue of the fact that both represent things as being the same way. Depending on the precise specification of experiential content she endorses, this could be true even when the objects of e and e^* differ.¹¹

To the relationalist, this strategy is patently unavailable. Unless they give up their anti-representationalist commitments, they cannot tie the identity conditions of phenomenal properties to representational states. But if we think that it is not acceptable for relationalists to simply take it to be a brute fact that the phenomenal character of certain experiences is of the same kind, then, as Miloš Vuletić rightly points out, “[r]elationalists who reject the possibility of different objects having identical looks owe us an account of looks that accommodates and explains this apparent identity” (Vuletić 2015, p. 56). And this is a task that arises independently of the fact that illusions or hallucinations are possible. For as soon as one accepts the commonplace idea (as Fish does) that in suitable circumstances, the same objects can give rise to experiences with differing phenomenal characters, there is also room for the possibility that various experiences of objects that differ both numerically and qualitatively may have phenomenal characters that are subjectively the same. In other words, one could have an experience e^* , which is an experience of objects and properties rather different from those involved in e , in rather different perceptual circumstances, but which is nevertheless such that the relevant factors conspire in such a way that things are the same with the subject as they would have been had she undergone e instead.

The notion of **phenomenal identity**, or of *things being the same with the subject* appealed to here may need a more careful explanation, especially if one is sympathetic to the relationalist's claim that such sameness is not to be construed in terms of the identity of experiential content.¹² For present purposes,

¹¹ It is not true on views like Schellenberg's, on which the objects perceived are themselves taken to be part of the content.

¹² I return to this issue in the discussion of Gupta's view in chapter 9.

let us note that all parties of this debate agree that there is an intuitive sense in which the experience of two numerically different but qualitatively identical items can be the phenomenally the same.¹³ But as soon as this is granted, we can easily transition to the idea that the same kind of phenomenal identity could obtain between experiences that differ not just with respect to the objects involved, but also with respect to the properties these objects instantiate and the viewing conditions in which they are had.

Unless we rule out that such scenarios are possible (and it is hard to see why one should), the following issue thus arises: if, as Fish stipulates, the identity of phenomenal properties is tied to the facts that feature in the presentational character of the subject's experience, then experiences may be phenomenally identical in the intuitive sense just sketched, but different in their phenomenal properties, in what it is like to have them (as Fish construes these notions), and in which objects and properties they involve.

If this is so, then it seems not open to Fish to suggest an explanation on which the relevant phenomenal identity obtains in virtue of, say, the identity of the properties instantiated by the objects of the respective experiences. How else Fish could hope to account for the relevant identity remains, however, an open question.¹⁴ Perhaps he could modify his view and grant that from the perspective of the subject, there really is no difference in what it's like to have *e* and *e**, respectively. He could eschew **Identity*** and instead embrace:

Supervenience

An experience *e*'s phenomenal character supervenes on *e*'s property of acquainting its subject with *e*'s presentational character. Likewise, *e*'s individual phenomenal properties supervene on *e*'s individual properties of acquainting its subject with the individual facts featuring in *e*'s presentational character.

¹³ As for Fish, this is indicated by the passage already quoted two pages earlier, in which he grants (though he cannot really claim it) that what it is like to have experiences of qualitatively identical items that differ only numerically is plausibly the same.

¹⁴ Phenomenal identity, Fish could insist, is a brute fact. However, one suspects that relationalists will want to give an informative explanation in terms of the sameness, in some respect, of the constituent items. As we will see in the next chapter, Brewer offers a solution to the problem in terms of similarity relations.

Perhaps this is acceptable to Fish. Note, however, that to accept this proposal is to put some distance between the presentational character and the phenomenology of experience: the phenomenology of experience cannot be individuated along with its presentational character. And if **Supervenience** is supposed to be more than the label for the problem of how to explain sameness in phenomenal kind, an account of that relation is still needed. Moreover, if **Identity*** is given up in favor of **Supervenience**, the resulting view no longer entails that two experiences that differ in presentational character will also differ in their phenomenal properties. From the mere fact that the expert has the (visual) conceptual recognitional ability to pick up on the fact of an object's being a cathode ray tube, it then still follows, via **Irreducibility**, that the expert's experience will acquaint her with facts that differ from those that the layperson's experience acquaints her with. It no longer follows, however, that upon looking at a cathode ray tube, the phenomenal character of the expert's experience will differ from that of the layperson.

Substituting **Supervenience** for **Identity*** thus yields a view that does not entail that expert vision could involve **DVEP**. However, the resulting view does not rule out such effects either; it remains compatible with the possibility that some or all cases of expert vision exhibit the relevant kind of variation. Even so, what triggers such variation would remain to be explained. An account would be needed to specify why acquaintance with some facts, but not with others, does or may modify the phenomenology of experience, how we are to think of such modifications, and—given that the tight link between acquaintance and phenomenology is severed—how we are to think of the identity criteria governing what is being modified in the first place.

Consider, next, Fish's suggestion that the physicist and the child might have something perceptually in common. One way of interpreting this suggestion is as a claim about the phenomenology of their respective experiences. The view would be that for the physicist and the child to have something perceptually in common is for there to be an overlap of the phenomenal properties of their respective experiences. Such an overlap would then presumably rest on the fact that the child's and the physicist's respective experiences relate them to at least some of the same facts.

In this context, we should note that it remains unclear why the phenomenal properties that according to **Identity*** and **Supervenience** are either identical with or supervene on a subject's being acquainted with the specific facts that compose the presentational character of her experience should be identical (in kind) across subjects, or even across different time-slices of one and the same subject. Why should we believe that when different (time-slices of) subjects are acquainted with the same facts in sufficiently similar conditions, the phenomenal properties and characters of their respective experiences will be the same (in kind) also? Is acquaintance with a given fact phenomenally the same (in kind) for you as it is for me? Is it the same (in kind) for you now as it was, or would have been, yesterday, or ten years ago? And what, if any, are the epistemological consequences associated with the different answers one could offer to such questions?

Fish does not address such concerns. But if the claim that the physicist and the child have something perceptually in common is indeed to be cashed out in terms of an overlap of the phenomenal properties of their respective experiences (at least in kind), it remains unclear whether Fish does in fact manage to accommodate it.

To be sure, it is not obviously the case that Fish's account rules out that phenomenal commonalities could obtain across subjects. But pending an argument for the assumption that acquaintance and phenomenal properties and the facts of which the presentational character of a subject's experience are composed are linked in the same or sufficiently similar ways across (time-slices of) subjects, it remains perfectly conceivable that the phenomenal character of the experiences of the child and that of the expert differ wildly.

Part of the issue is that tying the individuation of phenomenal properties closely to (somewhat) more familiar entities such as e.g. facts or—as representationalists would prefer—representational contents can appear to be what allows us to individuate phenomenal properties in the first place. If so, then once we loosen or sever these ties (by accepting **Supervenience**, say, or by introducing talk about identity in kind), we lose our grip on what it is for (kinds of) phenomenal states to be identical or different, on how they can be compared, let alone across different individuals. Accordingly, as we question the tight links Fish takes to obtain between facts and phenomenal properties, ask what these

links are and in virtue of what they are said to obtain, we realize that we do not have much of an independent grip on what, on his view, phenomenal properties are.¹⁵ Pending a satisfactory account of what the criteria are for sameness and difference (in kind) of phenomenal properties, and how these may be generated, the claim that there is an overlap between the phenomenal properties of the experiences of the expert and the layperson is simply hard to evaluate. As a skeptic, one may take this to show that like Hanson, Fish provides us with a fairly unsatisfactory account of what the phenomenal dimension of experience is supposed to be. But suppose one is sympathetic to the idea that some specification of the phenomenal dimension may be given and that some important links obtain between facts and the phenomenal properties of subjects' experiences. Even then, the question remains what explanatory and epistemological weight the idea is supposed to bear that some such connections are or must be the same across different (time-slices of) individuals, and further, whether the obtaining of such similarities is a brute fact or something relationalists can explain or argue for. Fish does not address these issues. But even if they are bracketed, further problems soon obtrude.

4.4 FACTS, PROPERTIES, AND CONCEPTUAL CAPACITIES

Patently, Fish takes the phenomenology of a subject's experience to depend in some strong sense (i.e. via **Identity*** or, perhaps, **Supervenience**) on what facts feature in the presentational character of

¹⁵ Two comments: first, it is exactly this kind of issue that motivates Campbell to interpret **Constitution** in terms of identity. For if the relevant identity claim could be made sense of, it would be guaranteed that the experience of subjects that are acquainted with the same items in sufficiently similar circumstances will have the same qualitative features, i.e. those that the enviroing items actually possess. However, as indicated above, Campbell's identity claim remains problematic in that it leaves us with the problem of understanding how a property of an experience should be identical with the property of that experience's object.

Second, suppose one suggested that the similarity of the phenomenal character of the child's and the expert's respective experiences could be inferred from an alleged similarity of their respective neuronal properties. Even if such similarities could be shown to obtain, to Fish, this move is unavailable for the following reason: to make room for his claim that hallucinations lack phenomenal character altogether, Fish spends a lot of effort on rejecting what he calls the local supervenience principle, according to which the phenomenal character of an experience supervenes on the subject's brain processes. Were he to appeal to the goodness of inferential moves from brain processes to phenomenology, he would thus threaten to undermine his own arguments against the goodness of such inferential moves in hallucinatory cases.

her experience. And which facts do so feature is in turn said to depend on the conceptual-recognitional capacities the subject possesses. Differences and similarities in the phenomenology of a subject's experience (and, on Fish's assumption, across subjects) thus hinge not just on differences in which facts one's experience relates one to (given specific perceptual circumstances), but also, and crucially, on differences and similarities in the perceiving subjects' conceptual capacities. The role of these capacities is to lift such facts, as it were, into the presentational character of her experience or, to use another image, to bring them into the subject's view.

But do we have a good sense of how this is supposed to work? Suppose we ignore the issues that we saw arise in the context of characterizing the relation between acquaintance properties and phenomenal properties and the relation between the phenomenal properties of experiences had by different (time-slices of) subjects. Does Fish provide an account of expert vision that accommodates both differences and commonalities in the acquaintance properties had by the respective experiences of the expert and e.g. an untutored child?

Recall that on Fish's view, what an experience's acquaintance properties are is a matter of what facts feature in that experience's presentational character. Accordingly, our question translates into the following one: does Fish provide an account of how the subject's conceptual capacities generate the presentational character of experience that accommodates both differences and commonalities in which facts co-constitute the presentational characters of the respective experiences of the expert and a child? As it stands, Fish's account is not developed enough to address the issue.

To bring out the problem, recall, first, that Fish thinks of facts as object-property couples. A natural claim for him to endorse is thus that for any two mind-independent facts, these facts will differ from one another iff there is a difference in the objects constituting them or in what properties these objects have or instantiate, and they will be the same facts otherwise. Also, recall that on Fish's construal, the facts of which the presentational character of a subject's experience is composed are constituted by, and thus identical with, some of the mind-independent facts that do obtain in the subject's environment.

Let us grant all of this and explore Fish's suggestion that differences in visual conceptual-recognition capacities can affect the presentational character of one's experience by governing which among the facts that in the perceiver's environment anyway obtain compose it. To begin with, note that Fish remains completely silent with respect to what he thinks properties are and also mostly silent as to what properties can in principle serve to co-compose the presentational character of a subject's visual experience. As for the latter, the only criterion implied is that the relevant properties must be such as to be possibly picked up by visual conceptual-recognition capacities, i.e. capacities that respond to facts that are recognizable by vision.

This criterion no doubt serves to rule out some properties. The property a neutrino may have of passing through me will hardly qualify, whereas a pink elephant's standing right in front of me (with nothing impeding or impairing my vision) probably should. But in many cases, Fish's criterion provides little help. Are the facts that a person is angry, sad, just, or bad at fixing a Mojito such that they can be picked up by vision? More pertinently, consider a trained physicist who observes a colored line appearing in a bubble chamber. Given what the physicist thinks and knows about electrons, bubble chambers, and about how electrons interact with the gaseous contents of such chambers, are we to say that the fact that a given electron has the property of passing through the bubble chamber features in the presentational character of the physicist's experience? And must we then also to say that it does not so feature in the corresponding presentational character of a 5th-grader?

One question that arises in the context of such an observation is whether we are entitled to the claim that it is indeed a *fact* that an electron is passing through the chamber. Scientific realists will want to affirm this, constructive empiricists or instrumentalists with respect to theoretical terms would not.¹⁶ But even as a scientific realist, one can doubt whether we should consider this alleged fact as one that can, given sufficient training, be picked up by vision, rather than inferred. What is needed,

¹⁶ Constructive Empiricism is the view that accepting a scientific theory does not involve a commitment to its truth – neither to its truth *simpliciter* nor to its approximate truth – but a commitment to its empirical adequacy, which is, roughly, the truth of the theory with respect to the observable phenomena (see van Fraassen 1980). As a constructive empiricist, one can accept a scientific theory and still remain agnostic regarding the question whether theoretical terms like 'electron' do in fact refer to worldly items. Instrumentalists go further in that they, unlike constructive empiricists, reject the idea that sentences containing theoretical terms have truth values.

patently, is an account of what the visual recognitional capacities are that human subjects can possess, what the properties are that they respond to, and to what extent the relevant capacities can be extended or modified by what subjects know. Without such an account, the question which facts can co-constitute the presentational character of experience lacks a clear answer.

In the examples he provides as he explicates his view, Fish typically refers to seemingly simple properties, such as a car's being red, a rope's being coiled up, or a coin's being elliptical. Also, he presupposes that kind properties such as *being a tomato*, *being a rope*, *being a snake*, or *being a cathode ray tube* can figure in the presentational character of one's experience and that their presence or absence makes a phenomenal difference. It is not obvious, I think, that the capacity to recognize kindhood of various sorts is to be construed as a *visual* capacity.¹⁷ But as I will argue next, even with respect to allegedly simple properties, difficult questions arise.

Let us consider an example: the visual capacity to recognize a certain shade of green—*green₂₃*, say. Presumably, being *green₂₃* is a determinate property objects can either have or lack. As per Fish's view, if one has the visual conceptual-recognitional capacity to pick up on an item's being *green₂₃* then in suitable perceptual circumstances in which one is acquainted with an item that is *green₂₃*, the very fact of that item's being *green₂₃* should be part of what composes the presentational character of one's experience. If, however, one lacks the relevant capacity, that property cannot co-constitute the presentational character of one's experience.

¹⁷ At the very least, the story to be told about what it is to have the visual conceptual-recognitional capacity to pick up facts involving kind properties and how having such a capacity may affect the phenomenal character of one's experience is, I think, a complicated one. At the very least, the capacity to recognize such properties—tomatohood, say—should be fallible. To illustrate, suppose you are confronted with two objects: a tomato that is sitting right next to a perfect tomato replica. You do not know which one is which. If you had an infallible capacity to pick up on tomatohood, the real tomato should look different from the perfect replica anyway. In other words, for someone who has the capacity to pick up on tomatohood, there could be no perfect replicas.

More plausibly perhaps, the situation as specified is such that in it, subjects cannot properly execute their capacity to recognize tomatohood—due to the presence of a ringer. But if being acquainted with the fact of an item's being a tomato is said to make a phenomenal difference, and if it is indeed a fact that can be picked up by vision, one might suspect that being told—by a supremely reliable source, say—that only the left one of the two (say) is indeed an actual tomato could suffice to lift the fact of it's being a tomato into the presentational character of one's experience. The tomato's property of being a tomato would then co-constitute the presentational character of one's experience so as to make it look different from the ringer (one might even be puzzled that one did not see it before). If this seems implausible, more needs to be said about how visual capacities to pick up on facts involving kind properties are to be specified and how they may affect the phenomenology of one's experience.

Let us contrast two different subjects: a professional painter and an untutored child. The painter, let us assume, has enjoyed a rigorous art education. Moreover, she looks back on a long career, which naturally involved countless experiences with different colors. Her experience as an artist has provided her with a profound understanding of the many relations that obtain between different colors in different contexts and with an extensive knowledge of such colors, including many details, e.g. about how they have been used in the history of art. In short, the painter knows a lot about *green*₂₃, certainly a lot more than the untutored child does. In ordinary lighting conditions, the latter fairly reliably distinguishes items that are *green*₂₃ from items that are not, and appropriately labels such items as *green*₂₃ (or withholds that label, as required). But apart from whatever this ability may require, let us assume that there is not much else the child knows about *green*₂₃.

At first blush, it may look as if we are facing just another ordinary case of expert vision. If so, Fish should be able to treat it just like the case of the cathode ray tube. Recall that according to Fish, in the latter case, the alleged difference between the presentational character of the expert's experience and that of the experience had by an untutored child is this: the former features the fact of the item's *being a cathode ray tube*, whereas the latter does not. Accordingly, both the expert and the child are acquainted with different sets of facts and the phenomenal characters of their respective experiences will (given **Identity***) or may (given **Supervenience**) differ as well. On the other hand, Fish holds that there are many properties that both the expert and the child pick up on, e.g. some basic facts involving color and shape properties, so that there is also a sense in which the phenomenal characters of their respective experiences are the same, since their presentational characters are alike with respect to the basic facts that co-constitute them.

Patently, this suggestion presupposes some notion of basic color and shape facts. Therefore, considering the hypothetical case of the painter is instructive. For in it, it is precisely the capacity to recognize a certain color of an object—one of the allegedly basic properties, that is—that is at issue. However, with respect to such a property, too, I contend, it could be that the presentational character of the expert's experience differs from that of the child's experience.

To get a sense of what expertise in this case may amount to, consider the following characterizations of the object of one's acquaintance *o*:

- A: *o is the exact same shade of green that Leonardo da Vinci used when painting some of the trees visible in the background of his Mona Lisa,*
- B: *o's color is the color that results (given some suitable set of standard conditions) from mixing two parts of yellow₁₇ and one part of blue₁₂, and*
- C: *o's color differs from yellow₁₅.*

Do *A*, *B*, and *C* attribute features to *o* that can figure in one's presentational character? Why not? After all, pending further arguments, it is hard to see why *being a tomato* or *being a cathode ray tube* should be properties whose instantiations in a given object constitute facts that can be recognized by vision, whereas those attributed to *o* in *A*, *B*, and *C* are not.

On Fish's view, the presentational character of an expert's experience is said to differ from the corresponding presentational character of the non-expert's experience precisely because the former possesses conceptual capacities that allow her to visually recognize properties that the latter cannot recognize. If the expert's and the untutored child's visual systems work in sufficiently similar ways, then presumably, the difference in these capacities will to a large part be a function of their prior experiences, and of what they believe and know. And since we are assuming that our professional painter has, throughout her career, achieved a profound understanding of colors, it seems rather plausible that the object *o*'s having features that are attributed to *o* by e.g. *A* or *B* would be exactly the kind of facts that she could recognize by looking at *green₂₃* items, facts that would feature in the presentational character of *her* experience, but not in the corresponding presentational character of the child's experience. (The child may know that *green₂₃* is not *yellow₁₅*, but perhaps not—it may lack the concept of *yellow₁₅*).

Suppose we accept this characterization and assume, like Fish, **Identity***. On this assumption, it then follows that the phenomenal properties of the painter's experience differ from that of the child's. We already noted that on the assumption of **Supervenience**, the corresponding inference no longer holds. For it could be that the property of an experience to have a certain phenomenal character supervenes on the facts featuring in one's presentational character in such a way that the painter and the child have experiences that do not differ with respect to their phenomenal properties. And even

if we were to stick with **Identity***—pending an account of what constrains when experiences are and are not of the same kind, the following is at least conceivable: while strictly speaking, what it is like to have the respective experiences of the painter and the child differs as a function of the differences in the presentational and (hence) phenomenal characters of their experiences, what it is like to have these two experiences is of the same kind. In such a case, the phenomenon of expert vision would be such that with respect both to the phenomenal characters of their experiences and to what it's like to have them, the expert and the child would differ—but this difference would manifest in a way that remains opaque to the subjects involved.¹⁸

For the sake of the argument, let us assume that features like the ones picked out by *A*, *B*, and *C* could be suitably multiplied so as to massively enrich the presentational character of the painter's experience. The more we enrich it, the more plausible it is that on any account Fish might propose of the relation between acquaintance properties and phenomenal properties, the differences between the presentational character of the painter's experience and that of the child's experience would generate phenomenal differences as well. And as soon as we allow that the properties featuring in the presentational characters of their respective experiences may differ, Fish's view is at least compatible with the possibility that in the case of the painter, too, expert vision may be reflected phenomenally.

How about Fish's further stipulation, then, i.e. the stipulation that the expert and the child have something perceptually in common? Can *it* be accommodated, too? Doing so would require that Fish specify which facts feature in the presentational characters of both the artist's and the child's experiences. So far, we have operated under the assumption that the expert has the visual conceptual capacities to recognize the presence of features—such as those attributed to the object by *A*, *B*, and perhaps *C*—that the child may lack and that this creates room for differences between their respective presentational characters. It is, however, an entirely open question how we should understand what happens to a person's extant capacities when her visual capacities to recognize various features expand.

¹⁸ Given the issues involved in understanding what intersubjective comparisons of experiences may amount to, we can imagine that the contrast is one between the professional artist and that very artist as a child.

With respect to the case at hand, we can ask, more specifically: as the painter acquires the visual conceptual capacities to recognize the object's falling under A , B , and C , should we take it that she acquires further and entirely distinct conceptual-recognitional capacities, while the capacity to visually recognize *green₂₃* remains unchanged? If so—if, that is, conceptual capacities are construed on the model of building blocks that one can freely combine and that do not change as one adds more blocks—the claim that the expert and the child share certain conceptual capacities and that their presentational characters feature some of the same properties could perhaps be defended.

However, it seems much more plausible that during the course of the painter's extensive training, the capacities she already possessed were transformed. But on a view, on which conceptual capacities, rather than being distinct and separable units, may affect, modify, and mutually shape each other—it is far less clear how to explicate the sense in which some of the painter's and the child's conceptual capacities are the same. Correspondingly, it is unclear how to cash out the claim that the presentational characters of their respective experiences are partly co-constituted by the same properties.

It may seem tempting to insist that both the child and the artist have the visual conceptual capacity to recognize an item's being *green₂₃*. After all, we stipulated that being *green₂₃* is a property objects can have or lack. Moreover, given how we described the situation, both the painter and the child possess some conceptual-recognitional capacity that allows them to reliably distinguish items that do from items that do not have that property. The problem is, however, that on Fish's view, the properties that feature in the presentational character of a subject's experience are taken to be lifted into that character by the subject's conceptual capacities. Accordingly, if subjects differ in their understanding of what it is for an item to be *green₂₃* and if that entails that their conceptual capacities differ, it is not obvious that what the artist and the child, in passively deploying their respective conceptual-recognitional capacities, lift into the presentational character of their respective experiences, are indeed the same facts.

To make this more vivid, suppose that from the perspective of the artist (but not from that of the child), something's being *green₂₃* involves having the (visually recognizable) feature attributed by B as well. *Green₂₃* just may be *the color that results (in suitably specified standard conditions) if one mixes two parts of*

*yellow*₁₇ and one part of *blue*₁₂, so that an item could not be *green*₂₃ unless it had the feature attributed by *B*. Moreover, suppose the artist insists that understanding what it is for something to be *green*₂₃ requires that one know that *green*₂₃ things also have the features attributed by *A*, *B*, and *C*. In other words, in the artist's cognitive architecture, the capacity to recognize *green*₂₃ things may be inextricably intertwined with the capacities to recognize features attributed by *A*, *B*, and *C*—so much so that the capacity to recognize all these features may well appear as part of one and the same capacity—a capacity sensitive to what appears to be a more determinate property, roughly, the property of *being green*₂₃ and, **as such**, also having features that are attributed by *A*, *B*, and *C*.

Consider, then, a case in which the child and the expert look at an object that is *green*₂₃. We will assume that being *green*₂₃ is a fully determinate way that things can be or fail to be. How are we to characterize what the child's and the artist's respective conceptual-recognitional capacities lift into the presentational characters of their respective experiences? Fish will respond that what the artist's presentational character features corresponds to the visual-conceptual capacities she passively deploys in her experience. And unless we accept a building block model of conceptual capacities, these capacities will in turn be shaped by the way they are connected, within the artist's cognitive architecture, with further capacities such as the visual capacity to recognize items as characterizable in terms of *A*, *B*, and *C* (where *A*, *B*, and *C* also attribute features that are visually recognizable).¹⁹

Likewise, Fish will say that what the presentational character of the child's experience features corresponds to the visual-conceptual capacities the child passively deploys in her experience. Again, if we reject the building block model of conceptual capacities, the child's capacities, too, will be shaped by the way they are connected, within her cognitive architecture, with further capacities. But in the child's case, these further capacities may well exclude the visual capacity to recognize items as characterizable in terms of *A*, *B*, and perhaps even *C*. The child may lack the relevant conceptual capacities or even believe, erroneously, that *green*₂₃ items does not or cannot have the properties attributed by *A* or *B*, which, again, to the knowledgeable expert form an essential part of the semantic

¹⁹ Arguably, the capacities will also be shaped by beliefs that concern features that are not visually recognizable. If so, this further aggravates the worry that the respective conceptual capacities of the painter and the child differ.

network that specifies what being *green₂₃* is. Finally, note that it may also well be that the conceptual capacities of neither the artist nor the child are such as to enable their bearers to fully bring the item's determinate property of being *green₂₃* into the presentational character of their experience. Understanding *green₂₃* fully, in its various connections with other properties, may exceed even the abilities of the expert.

Suppose, then, we think that each of them only partly succeeds in bringing the relevant property into the presentational character of their respective experiences. Even so, we still need an account of properties, of what it is to bring them into the presentational character of one's experience partly, how such parts are individuated, and in what sense the resulting facts that constitute the presentational character of one's experience are the same in the child and the expert, and of the sense in which how what has been lifted into the presentational character only partly can still be said to be identical with the mind-independent facts that populate the subject's environment.

Fish concedes that he has no satisfactory account of conceptual-recognitional capacities and that there are big explanatory questions in the wings (Fish 2009, p. 70). But without such an account, it remains that Fish's suggestion that experts and laypeople may have something perceptually in common is hard to evaluate. As we saw earlier, it is hard to evaluate if interpreted as a claim about the phenomenal properties of the two subjects' experiences. And as the discussion conducted in the previous paragraphs brought out, pending suitable accounts of how to individuate conceptual capacities and properties, it is also hard to evaluate if interpreted as a claim about the presentational characters of their respective experiences.²⁰

²⁰ We should note that Hanson, due to his broadly holistic account of (experiential) content, must be understood as rejecting the building block model. Moreover, he would claim that the sense in which the painter and the child see the same thing or property is to be understood not in terms of the phenomenology of experience, but in terms of the background beliefs they may share. On his account, recall, Tycho and Kepler both see the sun, but in what *seeing it as* the sun amounts to they differ. If they see the same, then only to the extent that the complements of the *seeing that* locution are the same. Strictly speaking, however, even this is not quite accurate. For the concepts that figure in these complements will be articulated in their respective background views in different ways and thus have a (perhaps slightly) different significance for each of them.

In light of these issues, I contend that at least in its current shape, Fish's account is too underdeveloped to enable us to understand how on it, the phenomenon of expert vision can be accommodated and how it can be squared with the idea that both the expert and the non-expert have something perceptually in common.

4.5 BASIC ACQUAINTANCE AND PROJECTION EFFECTS

Charitably put, the issues raised in the previous two sections could be construed as invitations for Fish to further elaborate on various aspects of his view so as to enable us to get a better sense of how he manages to accommodate certain varieties of phenomenal variation, notably expert vision. In this section, I show, first, that even if all these issues could be resolved, Fish's account is still at odds with a claim that at least some relationalists hold dear: **Basic Acquaintance** (4.5.1). Second, I argue that there are certain cases of doxastic phenomenal variation that Fish cannot accommodate in principle: **projection effects**. As I illustrate via the extended discussion of a specific empirical case, his account also lacks the resources to accommodate such cases in some alternative fashion (4.5.2).

4.5.1 Basic Acquaintance

As we saw, Fish's account of how to accommodate expert vision is problematic and must be developed further to be intelligible. At first blush, the idea seems clear enough: as an expert in a given area, one knows more about the pertinent facts. Over the course of one's becoming an expert, one develops visual recognitional conceptual capacities that are different from or more sophisticated than those of the layperson. This in turn makes one sensitive to additional or different facts. But if the presentational character of the expert's experience is generated by different conceptual capacities than that of the layperson, it may well contain different facts. And since the acquaintance properties, the phenomenal properties, and the phenomenal character of a subject's experience are said to strongly depend on

which facts the experience's presentational character contains, the phenomenal character of the expert's experience may well differ from that of the layperson's experience as well. It appears, thus, that on Fish's account, what one knows can very well affect the phenomenal character of one's experience.

In the previous two sections, I argued that what at first blush looks clear enough falls apart once we look at the details more closely. But suppose that all the issues previously raised could be satisfactorily resolved and that Fish's account turned out to accommodate expert vision and, thus, at least some cases of **Doxastically Variable Experiential Phenomenology**.²¹ Again, I take it that it would be a virtue of Fish's account if he succeeded in accommodating such effects. But I also contend that at least some relationalists should be wary of Fish's account, especially of his appeal to the possession of conceptual capacities as a necessary condition on a subject's having an experience with a presentational character in the first place. Recall that following Kirk 2005, Fish suggests that at least for some conceptual capacities, having the relevant capacity may not require that the subject possessing it be a language user. He is sympathetic to this view because he is hesitant to bind "our very ability to have conscious visual experiences to the possession of language" (Fish 2009, p. 74).

Engaging in a general inquiry into how concept possession and language may be connected would lead us too far afield. For the sake of the argument, I simply concede that having a language may not in general be necessary for one to have conceptual capacities, nor for one to have conscious (visual) experiences. For present purposes, what matters is something else: on Kirk's account, being a conscious perceiver requires the possession of conceptual capacities in the following sense: one must be able, *inter alia*, to acquire, retain, interpret, and use information, e.g. by way of assessing situations and choosing between alternative courses of action on the basis of such information (cf. Fish 2009, p. 73, citing Kirk 2005, p. 89). In the present context, the problem with this requirement is that it is hard to see how the relevant capacity to acquire, retain, interpret, and use information in such ways could

²¹ At least some of the issues raised in the last section depend on Fish's contention that one should be able to show that the expert and the layperson have something perceptually in common. His work might thus be significantly eased if this contention were dropped.

fail to rely on epistemic abilities, or indeed, how it could fail to *be* an epistemic capacity. But if one cannot characterize such an ability without referring to epistemic relations obtaining between the perceiver and his or her environment, then for Fish to endorse an account of the kind Kirk suggests would make it rather difficult for him to also accommodate a claim that at least some relationalists hold dear: **Basic Acquaintance**, the claim that acquaintance is independent of and more basic than *any* epistemic relation perceivers may stand in with their surroundings.²²

If Fish were to accommodate **Basic Acquaintance**, it would not be enough for him to show that on an account like Kirk's, we can understand at least some of the conceptual capacities one must have to get acquainted with facts as independent of the mastery of language. Rather, he would need to argue for the more ambitious claim that the relevant capacities can be characterized independently of the perceiver's standing in *any* kind of epistemic relation with the environment. For if acquaintance requires the possession of conceptual capacities and if such possession in turn requires that the possessing subject stand in epistemic relations with her environment, acquaintance simply cannot be more basic than, and independent of, epistemic relations.

For our purposes, it will be enough to simply note this tension of Fish's view with other relationalist accounts. Whether and in what sense relationalists must hold on to **Basic Acquaintance**, i.e. the idea that the acquaintance relation is more basic than epistemic relations, will very much depend on the role acquaintance is being assigned in their overall epistemological picture. In any event, these are issues that relationalists must sort out among themselves and since our guiding question is whether and to what extent relationalists can provide a helpful account of experiential phenomenology that also accommodates phenomena falling under **DVEP**, pursuing them would distract rather than assist us in our inquiry. Accordingly, in the following section, I return to our guiding question and argue that even if all the issues raised so far could somehow be resolved, there remains a clearly circumscribed class of conceivable cases Fish is in principle barred from accommodating: **projection effects**.

²² For an example, see again Brewer (2011), pp. 141-143.

4.5.2 Projection Effects

The following discussion will be structured around the discussion of an empirical experiment conducted in 2006 by Thorsten Hansen et al., which for simplicity I will refer to as *the banana case*. Though I will be relying on this specific example only, let me note that the current psychological literature is rife with studies that are like the banana case in the relevant respect: the explanation researchers provide for the effects under consideration relies on the idea that a subject's beliefs can have top-down effects that modify the phenomenal character of the various test subjects' experience directly.

For some of these experiments, alternative interpretations have been proposed and various methodological concerns have been raised. In some cases, follow-up experiments have been conducted that were intended to cast doubt on the initial interpretation, but that have in turn also been criticized. We cannot wait for the scientific community to reach a final verdict and must work with what is currently available. Possibly, as our understanding of the empirical issues involved improves, an alternative interpretation of the banana case may come to light and eventually come to be accepted. But I contend that the arguments I am offering in the next sections can be adjusted to apply to other empirical cases that are taken to involve top-down effects. Accordingly, my arguments should not be construed as standing or falling with the credentials of the specific experiment discussed. Rather, they should be taken as illustrating the claim that for relationalists like Fish, cases that are said to involve top-down effects from beliefs on experiential phenomenology pose a formidable challenge. This follows from a general fact about their view: on it, the relevant direct top-down modifications of the phenomenal character of a subject's experience simply cannot occur.

Given what we know about Fish's view, the argument for this latter claim can be made rather quickly. Recall, first, that on Fish's account, the presentational character is composed of facts, which are in turn construed as necessarily actual pieces of reality. Next, recall that acquaintance is said to be a relation that obtains only between subjects and facts so construed—one cannot be acquainted with anything that does not exist. Third, on Fish's view, the phenomenal properties of any given experience

are identical with (or, perhaps, supervene on) its acquaintance properties. Accordingly, they, too, depend on the existence of suitable mind-independent items. In other words, nothing but the presence of suitable facts in the environment of the perceiver can affect the phenomenal properties of the perceiver's experience.²³ However, that just means that on Fish's view, *projection effects*—effects, recall, in which the phenomenal character is modified to match what in light of our knowledge, our beliefs, and our prior experience we expect—must be impossible.²⁴

In what follows, I begin by introducing the banana case, highlighting that on the interpretation provided by the researchers who conducted it, it is an example of a projection effect, and showing that this particular interpretation is one that Fish cannot endorse (4.5.2.1). I then examine the accounts Fish provides for each of the three kinds of illusion he distinguishes—physical (4.5.2.2), cognitive

²³ Unless relationalists were to hold (which currently they do not) that the principle of composition governing **Phenomenal Character Composition** is independently sensitive to beliefs, the same would hold for the phenomenal character of experience as well.

²⁴ As Ori Beck has helpfully put it in a recent article, Fish defends a *selectionist* account. On such accounts, Beck stipulates, the subject's standpoint—a collective term for all the conditions constraining the objects of the perceptual relation—serves to select which of the many items in the subject's environment the subject perceives. Also, on such accounts, a perception has the phenomenology that it does *completely* in virtue of the items perceived in the perception. Cf. Beck 2018, pp. 4-5. Beck opposes selectionist accounts. Selectionists, Beck argues, cannot deal with differences in experiential phenomenology that rest on attentional variation or on variations in sex, race, and age. Drawing on empirical results that appear to indicate that similarities in phenomenal properties are well-correlated with similarities in the subject's neuro-computational properties, but only poorly correlated with similarities in the perceived properties, he suggests (following Pautz 2011, 2014, and 2017) that attending to the same object could result in different neuronal response patterns in different subjects. This, he surmises, might yield differences in the ways the respective subject's phenomenal similarity spaces are organized (cf. Beck 2018, pp. 6-7), which would in turn yield differences in what color, to the subjects involved, the object looks to be.

In response, recall that Fish explicitly includes the distribution of attentional resources in his characterization of what constrains the generation of the presentational character (*P*) of a subject's experience. Fish is thus likely to respond that differences in attention do affect which properties feature in *P*. If so, then *pave* Beck, cases of attentional variation need not provide counterexamples to Fish's view. The deeper problem in the vicinity, I think, is the one discussed in 4.4: on Fish's view, it remains unclear how to understand how and which mind-independent properties are brought into *P* and how such properties are individuated. Settling whether Beck's argument succeeds ultimately requires settling these issues first. The other two objections presuppose a notion of intersubjective comparability of experiential phenomenal properties. Making them stick thus requires an account of such a notion (which, as I noted in 4.3, Fish does not provide, and Beck does not provide one either). Finally, Fish argues (in Fish 2009, chapter 5) against the idea that the phenomenal properties of a subject's experience supervene on the neuronal patterns in the subject's brain in such a way that the latter are sufficient to yield the former. Accordingly, Fish might resist an assumption that underlies Beck's third kind of case, viz. that similarities and differences in neuronal response patterns correlate with phenomenal similarities and differences.

In sum, I contend that with respect to the putatively problematic cases Beck levels against Fish's view, matters are less straightforward than he lets on. I am sympathetic with Beck's conclusion that Fish's view fails to accommodate cases of phenomenal variation, so if Beck's arguments can be clarified and improved, I would welcome such a result. Until then, however, I prefer to rest my case against Fish's view on arguments that probe the internal intelligibility of Fish's notion of phenomenology in the first place and that show his (related) inability to accommodate putative cases of **DVEP**.

(4.5.2.3), and optical illusions (4.5.2.4.)—and show that the banana case cannot be adequately captured by any of them. The result is this: while accounts whose proponents, like Hanson, allow direct top-down effects beliefs may have on the phenomenal character of experience can easily accommodate the banana case, Fish's only hope is to accommodate such effects in some other way. However, his account currently lacks the resources to do so.

4.5.2.1 The Banana Case The psychological experiment I will draw on in what follows to illustrate the issues Fish faces with projection effects—*the banana case*, as I will call it—was conducted by Thorsten Hansen and his colleagues and published in a brief communication in *nature neuroscience* (Hansen et al. 2006). In the test condition, Hansen et al. presented subjects with digitized photographs of fruits against a uniform gray background (henceforth: *the banana object*²⁵). Subjects were then tasked to adjust the color of the banana object to an achromatic gray. In the control condition, subjects were asked to engage in the same kind of adjustment, but instead of the banana object, the item whose color was to be adjusted was either a uniform spot of light or a random noise patch. The interesting difference between what resulted in the two conditions concerned what color test subjects adjusted the item to. In the control condition, this color did not differ significantly from the neutral gray background against which the items were presented. In the test condition, however, subjects adjusted the color of the banana object not to an achromatic gray, but to a bluish hue. The difference was significant and called for an explanation. The explanation Hansen et al. suggested is this: the test subjects' knowledge that bananas are (stereo-)typically yellow affected the way the banana object appeared to them.

- (6) [S]ubjects adjusted the banana to a slightly bluish hue—its opponent color—in order for it to appear neutral gray. (Hansen et al. 2006, p. 1, emphasis added).

And further:

- (7) Our knowledge of the world affects our perception [...]. ...prior knowledge about the natural color of fruit objects [...] is used together with other local and global information about the scene to determine color appearance. This allows the visual

²⁵ The relevant effect was not limited to bananas, but was found for other natural fruit objects, too.

system to function and perform even under reduced conditions when only single objects are shown under an unknown illuminant, as in our experiments. (Hansen et al. 2006, p. 2)

On Hansen et al.'s interpretation, the banana case illustrates that the phenomenology of experience is doxastically variable; the subjects' background beliefs affect how things appear to them, which, it is suggested, is beneficial to the subject since it improves the function of the visual system. If Hansen et al. are correct, it is at least in part in virtue of the subjects' knowledge that bananas are (stereo-)typically yellow that the banana object, even if actually gray, still strikes them as yellowish. To compensate for this effect—*in order for* the banana object to appear natural gray, as Hansen et al. put it in passage (6)—subjects adjust the color of the banana object to a slightly bluish hue.

For Hansen et al., the banana case is thus an example of what in the discussion of Hanson's account I labeled *projection effects* (cf. 2.3.3). If so, the test subjects' experience of the banana object when it has been adjusted to an achromatic gray is such that the color that the banana object is *expected* to have—given their knowledge of, prior experience of, and appurtenant expectations concerning bananas—is *projected* onto it. As a result, the banana object appears to be a color that it is in fact not: though being gray, it appears to be slightly yellow. That subjects adjust uniform color spots and noise patches to what in fact is (close enough to) achromatic gray in turn suggests that these objects, in contrast to the banana object, do not strike subjects as yellowish. This is important to observe since between the two conditions, most of the constraints that govern the presentational character of the subject's experience, as Fish would put it, are held constant. More specifically, neither the subject's position vis-à-vis the object, nor the lighting conditions, the subject's visual acuity, nor the distribution of the subject's attentional resources seem to be factors one could draw on to explain the difference between the two conditions. The only potentially relevant factor, arguably, is the fact that in the test condition, the object presented is recognizably a depiction of a banana, so that in the two conditions, different conceptual-recognitional capacities are deployed.

Could it be, then, that somehow, the visual conceptual-recognitional capacities that are operative in the test condition, but not in the control condition, are responsible for the effect? This, of course,

would be an explanation that fits with the explanatory strategy offered by Hansen et al.²⁶ But as we saw above, to Fish, this strategy is not available. According to **No Acquaintance Without Conceptual Capacities**, a subject must have the relevant conceptual capacities to have the corresponding facts feature in the presentational character of her experience. Patently, the mere passive deployment of the relevant conceptual capacities in the subject cannot by itself affect which mind-independent facts populate the subject's environment. And since the phenomenal properties of a subject's experience are said to depend on which facts feature in the presentational character of the subject's experience, which in turn is constrained by which facts actually obtain in the subject's environment, the mere passive deployment of the relevant conceptual capacities cannot, on Fish's view, affect the phenomenal properties of the subject's experience either. After all, the banana object, once adjusted to an achromatic gray, simply does not have the relevant property. Accordingly, there is no way *any* conceptual capacity that test subjects could possess could make that property feature in the presentational character of their experiences. As a result, then, Fish must reject Hansen et al.'s proposed explanation. Given the constraints his account entails, he must reject as impossible the idea that to test subjects, the gray banana object could actually appear yellowish. Let us examine, then, what other options Fish may have available to accommodate the case.

4.5.2.2 Physical Illusions To begin with, let us ask whether the banana case could be characterized as what Fish calls a *physical illusion*. According to Fish, physical illusions are such that to subjects who undergo them, objects look “to be a shape and/or color other than the shape or color that it really is” (Fish 2009, p. 150). As a characterization of the banana case, this may sound promising.

²⁶ A study conducted by Olkkonen et al. (Olkkonen et al. 2008) adds some further details to the picture. According to their results, the effect is robust under varying illuminations, is strongest when the depiction of the banana is realistic, and decreases the less realistic the depiction is. Indeed, if subjects are only presented with a mere outline shape, the effect disappears. Since the main focus of Olkkonen et al.'s study is to bring out that the effect is stimulus-dependent, but illumination-independent, they do not commit to an explanation of the effect in terms of the subjects' background knowledge and only state that such an explanation cannot be ruled out. In the context of Hansen's proposed interpretation of the banana case in terms of the subjects' knowledge, the indication would be that for projection effects to occur, it is not enough for subjects to merely *recognize* what the item presented is a depiction of. Rather, for the subjects' background beliefs to yield a projection effect, color expectations must be strong enough, which in turn requires that the stimulus must sufficiently many characteristic visual features of bananas—shape, shading, and texture.

However, the cases Fish has in mind differ from the banana case. In them, subjects are located vis-à-vis the perceived objects in certain unusual ways, or non-standard lighting conditions obtain. It is these factors that are said to serve to explain why, for instance, round things can look elliptical or why red things can look orange, such as e.g. a red car parked below a street light, observed in the night.

Physical illusions, as Fish construes them, are special cases of veridical perceptions—veridical perceptions of colored or shaped objects that are had in non-standard circumstances.²⁷ With respect to color illusions in particular, he suggests that relationalists can accommodate them by assuming that an object’s color is a physical property that is defined not just by “the light reflected by the surface of the object (the color signal), but” co-determined by “the *ratio* of the different elements of this color signal to the corresponding elements of the color signal reflected from the surround” (Fish 2009, p. 153).

Drawing on such an account, Fish suggests, the relationalist can assert that “the color a particular has will differ according to its surroundings.” This, Fish points out, “is just what the [...] [relationalist] requires,” since

- (8) [o]n such a conception of color, as the lighting conditions and the reflectance properties of an object’s surround change, so would the color that the particular possesses. As the color changes, then so does the color *fact* that has the particular and that color property as constituents. Thus, the fact that the subject is acquainted with in experiencing the object will indeed change as the relevant viewing conditions change, and the relevant phenomenal property of the experience [...] will likewise change. (Fish 2009, p. 154)

Suppose we grant that the relational conception of color Fish sketches in passage (8) is indeed fit to explain why, if a red car in certain lighting conditions looks orange, our experience can still be said to acquaint us with the car’s actual color. Roughly: things that are and look red in certain viewing conditions look orange in others.²⁸ In the banana case, however, the lighting conditions, the reflectance properties of the surround, the subject’s perspective vis-à-vis the object, her visual acuity, etc.—all

²⁷ In the context of the relational view, the expression ‘veridical perception’ is somewhat misleading. Only what can be assessed for veridicality can possibly be or fail to be veridical—which to the phenomenology of experience cannot apply. Patently, what Fish has in mind are cases in which things look the way they in fact are.

²⁸ What this proposal shows is that on Fish’s view, lighting conditions do not just serve to *constrain* which facts can feature in the presentational character of one’s experience, but also play a role in generating some of the facts—here: color facts—that then feature in the presentational character of the subject’s experience in the first place.

these factors are held constant between the test condition and the control setting. Accordingly, it remains unclear which facts the relationalist could cite that can play the dual role of a) being causally responsible for the fact that the banana object looks yellowish, while b) lacking a corresponding effect on the subject's experience when the relevant object is a uniform color spot or a noise patch. Accordingly, there is no obvious way in which the account Fish draws on to accommodate the car case would enable us to accommodate the banana case. For why, one can ask, should the banana look yellowish, while the color spots and the noise patches do not, even though they are being presented in the exact same setting?

If Fish's current sketch of a relational view of color appears to be ill-suited to accommodate the banana case, perhaps one could improve on the relational account of color so as to specifically include texture and shade properties in what co-determines an object's color. Perhaps on such an account, for all the fruit items tested, the combination of their characteristic shade and texture properties with a gray background could be held to yield experiences with phenomenal properties regarding color that deviate from achromatic gray in the required ways, and independently of whether the subject recognizes the objects in question. Accordingly, if comparable significant differences with respect to the adjustment of the color of objects (if presented against a gray background) were found between a) suitably fruit-textured, yet not recognizably fruit-shaped items and b) differently-textured control items, such findings could serve as supporting evidence for such a hypothesis.

We can neither draw on Hansen et al. 2006 nor on Olkkonen et al. 2008 to settle the issue. After all, in their experimental settings, subjects *did* recognize what objects they were presented with. In general, the empirical evidence with respect to the influence of texture on color appearance is fairly mixed. On the one hand, it is clear that for texture detection, both luminance and color detection are relevant. Conversely, some results indicate that at least in certain cases, surface texture properties can affect color appearance (e.g. Amookht et al. 2014). Also, color and texture are not always processed completely independently in visual segmentation (see e.g. Saarela & Landy 2012). On the other hand, subjects can discount texture and shape properties in color matching tasks (see e.g. Giesel & Gegenfurtner 2010). Also, often, texture and color *are* processed separately (see Cavina-Pratesi et al.

2010). Moreover, while there is a lot of empirical work on how texture, color, and shape cues can serve as diagnostic tools in the context of object recognition tasks in various conditions, work on whether these properties may influence color appearance outside the contexts of such tasks is less prevalent.

To sum up, to argue that the banana case is a physical illusion, Fish cannot rely on the relational account of color he sketches since the factors that, on it, are said to account for changes in color appearance are held constant in the banana case.²⁹ Moreover, the empirical relations between texture, shade, and luminance properties, on the one hand, and color appearances on the other are not obviously as tight as he would need them to be for it to be possible to modify the relational account of color so as to accommodate the case. It is thus on Fish to show that an empirically adequate relational account of color is available, or possible, that enables him to accommodate the banana case.

Before we examine Fish's accounts of the two other kinds of illusions he distinguishes, let us step back and abstract from the details of the banana case. As I indicated earlier, there are numerous cases in the contemporary empirical literature of which it is claimed that beliefs—or cognitive states more generally, i.e. also e.g. desires, hopes, or fears—directly influence the phenomenal character of the respective subject's experience. It is worth emphasizing that since Fish cannot accommodate the idea that such effects are possible, he must insist that for each of these putative cases, some alternative explanation is true. Given the structure of his relational account, every such case poses a serious challenge for Fish. We may even say that the fate of Fish's account is tightly linked to whether he succeeds in addressing each of these cases so as to rule out projection effects. Since we cannot rule out in advance that finding alternative accounts for each of these cases is possible, the mere prevalence of such cases fails to show that Fish's relational view is false. Yet cases like the banana case exert a significant amount of pressure on Fish's relational view. This pressure does not affect proponents of

²⁹ Incidentally, it can also be doubted that Fish can easily help himself to any relational account of color. For at least on some such accounts (e.g. Matthen 2005), color identity for subjects is spelled out in part in terms of the epistemic practices the relevant subject engages in. However, if it is accepted that epistemic practices co-determine color identity, this would again seem to be at odds with the relationalist idea that acquaintance (including acquaintance with color properties) is more basic than epistemic relations. If Fish wants to rely on a relational view of color, it will thus be important for him to ensure that this view is not at odds with his broader relationalist commitments.

accounts on which projection effects are not ruled out in principle—such as, for instance, Hanson’s account that we discussed in chapter 2, but as we will see, also Siegel’s account (see chapter 7) or Gupta’s account (see chapter 9).

4.5.2.3 Cognitive Illusions The second kind of illusions Fish discusses, *cognitive illusions*, comprises cases of misclassification, in which we take something we see to be something that it is not, such as when someone who is afraid of snakes takes a coil of rope nestled under a log to be a snake. Such cases, Fish suggests, cannot plausibly be accommodated by making a move analogous to the one made in the case of physical color illusions. As we saw, with respect to the latter, Fish thinks that relationalists should draw on a relational account of color and propose that there is indeed a fact that in seeing e.g. a red car as orange the subject is acquainted with: in certain lighting conditions, the car’s being red just is to look like an orange car would in ordinary lighting conditions. In cases of cognitive illusions, however, there may well be no suitable fact available for the subject to be acquainted with—the environment in which a snake illusion occurs, for example, may be completely devoid of snake-involving facts. Thus, since the strategy Fish employs for addressing color illusions depends on the availability of suitable facts in the subject’s environment that can then be understood relationally, there is no obvious way to apply this strategy to cognitive illusions.

On Fish’s alternative proposal, a subject who upon seeing a rope suffers a snake illusion will typically be acquainted with many facts about that rope—its being brown, say, its being coiled, or its being nested under a log. Importantly, however, Fish insists that such a subject will not be acquainted with the rope’s property of *being a rope*. In line with his suggestion regarding expert vision that we discussed earlier, Fish claims that there is a phenomenal difference between the experience of a subject who sees and recognizes a rope as a rope and the experience of a subject who sees the rope, yet fails to recognize it. The reasons why no such recognition takes place can be various and may have to do with idiosyncratic facts about the subject and their history. It may for instance be that phobic subjects may suffer a snake illusion because they are, due to their fear of snakes, much more readily disposed to deploy the conceptual-recognitional capacities that would be appropriately deployed upon seeing

actual snakes than a non-phobic subject. For this is the last element in Fish's account of cognitive illusions: subjects who suffer such illusions deploy certain conceptual-recognitional capacities, but do so erroneously.

Recall, however, that on Fish's view, the erroneous deployment of such a capacity cannot change which mind-independent facts populate the tract of the environment the subject is looking at. In our example, the erroneous deployment of the conceptual capacity for recognizing snakes cannot bring about or make visible any snakeish facts that the subject could get acquainted with. But since for Fish, the phenomenal character of a subject's experience solely depends on what facts the subject's experience acquaints her with, it follows that the mere fact that some conceptual capacity is deployed erroneously will not alter the phenomenal properties of a subject's experience. Accordingly, Fish suggests that when a subject erroneously deploys the relevant conceptual capacity, she may, based on that deployment, come to *believe*, erroneously, that she does indeed see a snake and that she has an experience endowed with suitable phenomenal properties. In fact, having such beliefs *is* what having the illusion amounts to—it does not, emphatically, have in fact the kind of phenomenology that her experience would have if the subject were in fact acquainted with an actual snake.

A consequence of this account is that one cannot have a cognitive illusion of a snake without coming to believe that the object one sees is a snake (see Fish 2009, p. 171, where he acknowledges this explicitly). Again, according to Fish's version of **Constitution**, there simply cannot be anything snakeish in the phenomenology of the subject's experience unless an actual snake is in fact around and perceived. Instead, he thinks that the phenomenology of the phobic subject's experience of the snake illusion may be exactly like the phenomenology of the corresponding experience of someone who is a non-expert with respect to ropehood—of someone, that is, who looks at the rope in sufficiently similar conditions, picks up on various facts about the rope, but lacks the conceptual capacity to recognize the fact of its being a rope.

Can Fish utilize this account of cognitive illusions to accommodate the banana case? Might he not insist that upon seeing the banana object, and given their knowledge of what color bananas typically are, subjects are disposed to deploy the conceptual recognitional capacity that in the good

case picks up on an object's being yellow? Consider the specific situation in which the banana object has been adjusted to an achromatic gray. Could Fish not suggest that in such a context, the test subjects erroneously deploy the conceptual capacity for picking up on yellow(ish) things, thus come to believe that what they see is still yellow(ish), and respond to what the beliefs thus formed by adjusting the color of the banana object further towards a blueish hue?³⁰ By pursuing this explanatory strategy, it seems, Fish should be well-poised to account for the phenomena of the case.

There are, however, (at least) two related reasons to resist this strategy. Fish himself mentions one, when in the context of considering physical illusions he thinks about how to accommodate color illusions. He briefly considers and then rejects the following suggestion: when a subject has the illusory experience of a red car that under a street lamp looks orange, her experience simply lacks a phenomenal property that corresponds to the car's color. What happens is simply that the subject suffering the illusion erroneously deploys the conceptual capacity associated with picking up on something's being orange. As a result, the subject comes to believe both that the car is orange and that she has an experience with the appropriate phenomenal character (Fish 2009, p. 151).

Clearly, what Fish here considers and rejects is the strategy of interpreting the car case as a cognitive illusion. Why, then, does Fish oppose it? The reason pertinent to our discussion is this: according to him, we see the shape of the car under the streetlight in part by seeing the color it merely appears to be. On the proposed account, however, the subject does not become acquainted with the car's color at all. She just believes that she does. If so, however, then we are, Fish contends, left "without a plausible explanation of how it is we can nevertheless veridically see the car's shape given that we fail to see its color" (ibid., p. 115). If this counts as a reason to resist treating the car case as one in which the subject's experience has no phenomenal property corresponding to color, then by Fish's own lights, it should also work as a reason to resist treating the banana case as a cognitive

³⁰ In the snake case, Fish's paradigm example of a cognitive illusion, what is misrecognized is the kind of object one faces, not what further property that kind of object might instantiate. In the banana case, the misrecognition concerns not what kind of object it is, but another property: its color. While there is thus a slight disanalogy between the two cases, I do not see that this alone would prevent Fish from treating the banana case as a case of a cognitive illusion. For it is not obvious why Fish should have to think that cognitive illusions can only concern kind properties.

illusion. If, that is, seeing the shape of the banana object is as much a matter of seeing its apparent color as seeing the shape of the car is a matter of seeing its apparent color, then Fish can hardly suggest that subjects who look at the banana object when its color is adjusted to an achromatic gray do get acquainted with the object's shape, but fail to get acquainted with its color.

Suppose, however, we surmise, against Fish, that subjects need not detect an object's color properties to determine its shape—perhaps all that doing so requires is that they detect differences in luminance or texture (and that the required capacities are sufficiently independent of color detection). Even so, problems arise if we ask how, in treating the banana case as a cognitive illusion, we are to characterize what happens when subjects adjust the color of the banana object towards a bluish hue.

To see why, suppose first—*pace* Fish—that the test subjects' knowledge that bananas are typically yellow and the expectation that the object recognized as a banana is, too, can indeed co-determine the phenomenology of the subjects' experiences. Assume, further, with regard to whatever processes in the visual system may underpin a subject's capacity to have experiences with a specifically visual phenomenal character, that these processes are sensitive to both bottom-up and top-down information, where bottom-up information includes sensory input and top-down information cognitive states such as beliefs. The phenomenal character of a subject's experience, we may then surmise, reflects what results when information flowing from the different sources is factored in.³¹

On such a view, for subjects to adjust the stimulus material is to modify one of the various factors that jointly generate the phenomenology of their experience. And as they make such adjustments, the phenomenology of their respective experiences changes gradually, according to the specifics of whatever function takes all the relevant factors as input and outputs some experiential phenomenology. On this view, it is these gradual changes in the phenomenology of their experience that subjects keep responding to as they engage in a series of color adjustments until, eventually, the phenomenology of their experience is such that they judge that the banana object has now been adjusted to an achromatic gray.

³¹ See Clark (2013), Hohwy (2014), and Lupyan (2015) for accounts that emphasize the importance of top-down effects for the generation of percepts.

Contrast, next, how different the story to be told would be if one sought to treat the banana case as a cognitive illusion. To begin with, note that it is quite unclear on what grounds Fish would be able to claim that in the test condition, the erroneous deployment of whatever conceptual capacities may be required for the recognition of different shades of yellow is confined to some specific set of conditions or to some specific interval. Why, for instance, should it be limited to the time between the point in time at which the banana object's color has been adjusted to an achromatic gray, say, and the point in time at which it has been adjusted to the bluish hue where the adjustment terminates. For all we know, the cognitive illusion could be quite widespread, so that possibly, many (if not most) of the experiences test subjects undergo as they adjust the banana object's color would have to be classified as cognitive illusions. Consequently, at least to the extent that they concern the banana object, for many (if not most) of these experiences, it would follow that subjects would merely believe to have, but in fact lack experiences with a phenomenal character associated with the experience of different shades of yellow.

Clearly, as test subjects adjust the banana object's color, they modify the facts that obtain in their environment, viz. which color properties the banana object instantiates. However, unless Fish provides a reason for thinking that the extent of cognitive illusions involved is limited, he would have to concede that in many if not most experiences subjects undergo in the course of the test condition, the relevant color facts do not actually make it into the presentational character of their respective experiences. Accordingly, the test subjects would fail to get acquainted with these facts. Indeed, if between any two adjustments of the banana object's color, each adjustment involved was followed by a further cognitive illusion on the part of the subject, then on Fish's view, the actual phenomenology of that subject's experience would not change at all! But why, then, would they come to believe that it does? Relatedly, what would make them stop adjusting the color at some point?

These questions bring us face-to-face with the following fact: if Fish were to treat the banana case as a case of cognitive illusion, he would have to suggest that as subjects adjust the banana object's color, they somehow engage in a systematically connected series of erroneous deployments of the conceptual capacity (or capacities) that, if deployed appropriately, would make visible different degrees

of an item's being yellow. In tandem with the subsequent erroneous deployments of these capacities, Fish would have to insist, subjects come to believe that the phenomenal character of their subsequent experiences changes—erroneously, though, for in fact, according to Fish, no such change obtains. And this process would continue until, eventually, subjects would (somehow) deploy the conceptual capacity that in the good case picks up on an item's being gray—again erroneously—which would then lead them to believe that the banana object has now been suitably adjusted. As a result, they would cease to adjust its color any further.

The problem with this story should be obvious. Given that Fish would have to claim that nothing in the phenomenology of subject's experience changes, it remains mysterious how the test subjects' process of adjusting the banana object's color should be construed as a response to actual changes in that object's color properties. Also, we are left without an explanation of what should bring about the systematically connected series of erroneous deployments of conceptual capacities that Fish needs to draw on to make sense of the adjustment process and of the fact that it eventually terminates. By comparison, it seems much more plausible to say what Fish is barred from saying, i.e. that as subjects adjust the color of the banana object up to a certain point, they do so in response to actual differences in the phenomenal character of their subsequent experiences.

The situation is further aggravated by the following fact: when Fish discusses the case of the snake illusion, he contrasts the illusion as had by a cowardly phobic person with that had by a more courageous counterpart. Upon suffering the snake illusion, he stipulates, the coward flees the scene. Never revisiting it, the coward may remain forever convinced that what he saw was indeed a snake and thus hold on to what according to Fish is simply a false judgment about the coward's experience: that its phenomenal character contained suitably snakeish properties (though it did not).

The coward's more courageous counterpart, on the other hand, engages in further perceptual investigation and soon realizes the following fact: what she initially took to be a snake is nothing but a rope (or, if she lacks the concept of a rope: not a snake). As Fish suggests, further perceptual investigation “will often result in false judgments of this kind—and hence illusions of this kind—being swiftly overcome” (Fish 2009, p. 170). However, Fish also concedes that in some extraordinary

situations, the illusory effects are much more stable. Such may be situations that involve the ingestion of drugs, for example, or situations that involve mental illness. Returning to the banana case, observe that as they engage in their task, test subjects continuously attend to the object's color. Also, since there are no time constraints, they can take as much time as they need. Their situation is thus quite unlike the one that the cowardly snake phobic finds himself in and much more like that of his courageous counterpart. Accordingly, one should expect that if, upon looking at the banana object, test subjects were to suffer from some initial cognitive illusion, their subsequent perceptual investigation of the banana object should make it likely for that cognitive illusion to be swiftly overcome. If so, and on the plausible assumption that Hansen et al.'s test subjects neither suffered from effects of drug ingestion nor from mental illness, one should expect, on Fish's account, that the effect Hansen et al. found should not even occur.³²

In sum, the strategy of characterizing the banana case as a cognitive illusion holds little promise. As we will see shortly, the situation is not better if we try to characterize it as a case of the third kind of illusion Fish accommodates: as an optical illusion.

4.5.2.4 Optical Illusions According to Fish, in an optical illusion, certain features of the perceived scene function so as to trick or mislead our perceptual mechanisms (cf. Fish 2009, p. 173). This, Fish contends, is the case e.g. on Richard Gregory's interpretation of the Müller-Lyer illusion (cf. Gregory 1970, p. 91). According to it, the difference in the direction of the arrowheads on the ends of the two horizontal lines amounts to a difference in what perspective cues the respective arrangements provide, which in turn leads us to interpret the two horizontal lines involved as differing in length. The key point, as Fish has it, is that "because of the way the lines have been contrived to produce misleading perspective cues, *we cannot but* passively deploy an inappropriate conceptual-recognitional capacity [...]" (ibid., pp. 173-4, emphasis added). As in the case of cognitive illusions,

³² Though I have not emphasized the point, Fish stipulates that at least typically, cognitive illusions are due to idiosyncratic disturbances in the subject's doxastic state at the time of the experience. Accordingly, the default expectation should be that if cognitive illusions occur, they should be rare and not, as in Hansen et al.'s experiment, stable across a number of test subjects.

thus, in optical illusions, too, it is the erroneous deployment of conceptual-recognitional capacities that putatively explains why the subject endorses both the erroneous belief that the two lines differ in length and the erroneous belief that she has an experience that has a corresponding phenomenal character.

There is, however, a complication. For as most people familiar with the Müller-Lyer illusion will readily confirm, even subjects familiar with the illusion claim to experience it, even though they do not actually form the belief that the lines differ in length. However, Fish claims, while it is true that such subjects no longer come to believe that the lines actually differ in length, the relevant features of the experience still make people affirm that the lines *look* to be different in length. The explanation, according to Fish, is that the relevant conceptual-recognitional capacity operates at such a low level (presumably: of the subject's cognitive hierarchy) that it cannot be completely offset by higher cognitive factors. Since, given the right kind of cues, it cannot but be deployed, subjects come to believe, albeit erroneously, that they have an experience with the kind of phenomenal character their experience would have if the capacity had been deployed non-erroneously. At the same time, given what they know, they resist forming the belief that things are the way they take them to look.

With this characterization of optical illusions in hand, it is easy to see why the strategy of characterizing the banana case as an optical illusion is not promising either. Arguably, optical illusions, as Fish understand them, are very much like cognitive illusions. In contrast to the former, optical illusions are just more stable. They are hard-wired responses to certain features of the environment that inevitably trigger the deployment of certain conceptual capacities, even in cases in which such deployment is inappropriate and even though the subject may well know that deploying it will be inappropriate. Accordingly, if the banana case were to be treated as an optical illusion, one should certainly want to have an account specifying both why the effects Hansen et al. describe should have come to be hard-wired in the relevant way and why they occur in the test condition, but not in the control condition. Moreover, it remains that like above, to treat the banana case as an optical illusion would be to claim that many (if not all) of the experiences test subjects undergo in the test condition lack the phenomenal properties associated with the various shades of yellow that the banana object is

merely believed to be. Accordingly, the problems we raised for the attempt to characterize the banana case as a case of cognitive illusion would arise with equal force for the attempt to characterize that case as an optical illusion.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This concludes our discussion of Fish's view. In 4.3. and 4.4, I argued that Fish's account raises a number of pressing questions that he needs to address to show how his account of expert vision is supposed to work and how it can accommodate the intuition that experts and laypeople have something perceptually in common. In 4.5, I showed that even if all these questions could be addressed, Fish's account should still seem to be unattractive to relationalists who endorse **Basic Acquaintance** and thus think that the acquaintance relation is more basic than epistemic relations. Finally, I argued that there is a kind of effect beliefs may have on experiential phenomenology—**projection effects**—that Fish is in principle barred from accommodating. And as the extensive discussion of the so-called banana case illustrated, the resources his view currently makes available do not enable him to provide a satisfactory alternative way of explaining away such effects, either.

As for our guiding question, the result, briefly put, is that on Fish's view, the notion of phenomenology is intrinsically problematic for several reasons. Most importantly, perhaps, is the problem that it draws on the idea that conceptual capacities lift properties into the presentational character of experience, where it remains unclear on what notion of conceptual capacities and on what conception of properties this account could be based. With respect to the issue of doxastic variability, there is, on Fish's view, only very limited conceptual leeway for accommodating **Doxastically Variable Experiential Phenomenology**. Currently, his account of expert vision raises too many questions to allow a clear verdict. Moreover, for the reason sketched in 4.5.1, it may be unattractive to many relationalists anyway. Apart from these issues, projection effects pose a formidable challenge for Fish's view—one that at least currently, he has no resources for addressing. Such effects are

conceivable. And as the banana case illustrates, empirical researchers do draw on them to explain their findings. That Fish cannot accommodate them thus puts him at an additional disadvantage. For not just the banana case, but arguably any case that appears to involve projection effects must pose a comparable threat to Fish's relational view. As I show next, Brewer's version of the relational view improves on at least some of these issues. However, as we will see, it faces many problems of its own.

5.0 RELATIONALISM II: BREWER'S OBJECT VIEW

An alternative version of the relational view, developed by Bill Brewer, is the so-called *Object View* (OV). According to (OV),

- (1) [t]he most fundamental characterization of our perceptual relation with the physical world is to be given in terms of a relation of conscious acquaintance between perceiving subjects and the particular mind-independent physical objects that are presented to them in perception as genuine direct objects [...]. (Brewer 2011, p. 94)

Like Fish, Brewer, too, characterizes experience in terms of conscious acquaintance. Moreover, he, too, embraces a version of **Irreducibility**, claiming that “perceptual presentation irreducibly consists in conscious acquaintance with mind-independent physical objects” (ibid.).¹

Unlike Fish, however, and like Campbell, Brewer construes acquaintance not as a two-place, but as a three-place relation:

- (2) [P]erceptual experience is a matter of a person's conscious acquaintance with various mind-independent physical objects *from a given spatiotemporal point of view, in a particular sense modality, and in certain specific circumstances of perception (such as lighting conditions in the case of vision)*. These factors effectively conjoin to constitute a third relatum of the relation of conscious acquaintance that holds between perceivers and the mind-independent physical direct objects of their perceptual experience. (Brewer 2011, p. 96)

As passage (2) indicates, on Brewer's view, at least some of the factors that Fish takes to constrain which facts feature in the presentational character of a subject's experience appear as what jointly constitutes the third relatum—the location vis-à-vis the envioning items and lighting conditions, for

¹ See also Brewer 2018, p. 3: “Acquaintance is an unanalyzable conscious relation that we are enabled to stand in with such things [i.e. particular concrete worldly objects] by the normal functioning of our brains and perceptual systems.”

example. There are, however, some differences to Fish's view;² a few factors that Fish thinks govern the presentational character remain absent in Brewer's characterization—most pertinently, for our purposes: what conceptual-recognitional capacities the subject possesses.³ Also, whereas Fish talks about the phenomenal dimension of experience in terms of its *phenomenal properties*, its *phenomenal character*, and of *what it's like* to undergo an experience, Brewer generally prefers to talk in terms of how physical objects *look*. That said, for an object to look some way in a subject's experience of it, he maintains, is "a fully phenomenological fact about the subject's experience" (Brewer 2011, p. 120).

To determine the extent to which Brewer can accommodate **Doxastically Variable Experiential Phenomenology (DVEP)**, we must examine his conception of ways objects can look and ask to what extent such ways can be modified by what subjects believe. Here is how I proceed: I begin by briefly introducing Brewer's central distinction between the notions of thinly and thickly looking (5.1). Focusing on the former notion first, I examine the notion of visually relevant similarities on which it rests (5.2). I then discuss ways in which objects can thinly look the same, ask what a Brewerian notion of **Constitution** would look like, and uncover a constraint Brewer's account entails on the ways objects can thinly look (5.3). Next, I show how this constraint also affects the ways objects can thickly look some way (5.4) and compare Brewer's view with Fish's, suggesting that Brewer's view may appear to be better equipped to address at least some of the issues with which, as we saw, Fish struggles (5.5). However, I argue that appearances are misleading and that Brewer's account is problematic as well (5.6). I close by summing up the discussion (5.7).

² One obvious difference is that on Brewer's view, the mind-independent items that experience is said to acquaint the subject with are objects, not facts. Another difference that I will ignore in what follows is that Fish explicitly mentions the perceiver's visual acuity and the distribution of attentional resources as constraining what facts feature in the presentational character. On Brewer's account, deficiencies in visual acuity can be characterized as cases of degraded acquaintance (cf. Brewer 2011, p. 116), differences in attention may be construed as differences in which similarities between the objects perceived and paradigm exemplars become visually relevant or which ones will be registered (again, I will ignore this in what follows, but the terminology will become clearer shortly).

³ As indicated earlier, listing conceptual-recognitional capacities as part of what constitutes the third relatum would seem ill-advised. Plausibly, an account of conceptual capacities will involve the claim that for one to conceptually recognize something is, at least in many cases, to represent it (in some sense) as being a certain way. Listing such a capacity as part of the acquaintance relation would thus threaten to undermine the relationalists' anti-representationalist commitments.

5.1 THINLY AND THICKLY LOOKING OBJECTS

Objects, Brewer thinks, can *thinly* look some way, or *thickly*. Here is how he introduces the two notions:

- (3) [A]n object of acquaintance *o* thinly looks *F* iff *o* has, from the point of view and in the circumstances of perception in question, appropriate visually relevant similarities with paradigm examples of *F*. [...] [S]ome, but not all, of these thin looks will be salient to us in any particular case, for example, as we switch between the duck and rabbit looks of the duck-rabbit diagram. I say that an object, *o*, thickly looks *F* iff *o* thinly looks *F* and the subject registers its visually relevant similarities with paradigm exemplars of *F*. The paradigm case of registration as I understand it involves the active deployment of the concept of an *F*; but (OV) also recognizes a variety of significantly less demanding modes of registration, including those involved in systematic behavioral responses, such as simple sorting, and those involved in the noticing of various organizational, orientational, or other gestalt phenomena. (Brewer 2018, pp. 3-4)

As this passage reveals, at least paradigmatically, for objects to thickly look some way, e.g. *F*, to a subject, the subject must deploy the concept of an *F*. The characterization of thinly looking *F*, on the other hand, relies merely on the notion of visually relevant similarities. For things to look thinly some way, concepts, it appears, are not yet in play. Ultimately, it is in Brewer's account of thickly looking some way that we will see how, on his view, the conceptual and the phenomenal interact and the extent to which, he thinks, beliefs may influence the phenomenal aspect of experience. But as we see in passage (3), *thickly looking some way* is defined in terms of *thinly looking some way*. Accordingly, nothing can thickly look *F* unless it thinly looks *F*, too. Whatever may constrain how objects can thinly look on Brewer's view will thus constrain how objects may thickly look as well. As we will see shortly, Brewer's account of ways of thinly looking implies such a constraint—one, I will argue, that limits his capacity to accommodate **DVEP**.

5.2 WAYS OF THINLY LOOKING AND VISUALLY RELEVANT SIMILARITY RELATIONS

In passage (3) above, how an object of one's acquaintance thinly looks is characterized in terms of visually relevant similarities. What, then, are these similarity relations between objects and paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects?⁴ Qua relationalist, Brewer's anti-representationalist commitments clearly bar him from construing such similarity relations in representational terms. He cannot, that is, claim that the experiences of the objects in question are similar in how they represent things as being. How else are these relations to be understood, then? As he presents it, I contend, Brewer's alternative notion is ambiguous between two readings, each of which raises further questions.

As evidenced by passage (3) and many similar passages, the similarity relations that Brewer claims ground and explain⁵ the way things thinly look are thus said to obtain between mind-independent physical objects *themselves*—the various objects one is looking at, on the one hand, and suitable paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects (see Brewer 2011, p. 97 and *passim*) on the other. On this reading of the notion of the similarity relations in question, if an object *o* thinly looks *F*, it is thus *o itself* that has visually relevant similarities with paradigm exemplars of *F*. In a slogan that Brewer occasionally uses, “the way things *look* are the ways (perceptually presented) *things* look from that point of view in those circumstances” (Brewer 2011, p. 99 and *passim*).

As this last quote indicates, Brewer insists that what these similarities between objects and paradigm exemplars are, as well as which of them are visually relevant, is specific to the point of view

⁴ Brewer admits that he commits himself, without defense, to a controversial account of concept possession on which paradigm exemplars play an essential role in acquiring (at least very basic kinds of) concepts and applying them with understanding (cf. Brewer 2011, p. 105). Pending the specifics of such an account, making the notion of a paradigm exemplars more precise will be difficult, as will be any attempt to assess it. In what follows, I suppress discussion of the notion of a paradigm exemplars and focus instead on Brewer's notion of similarity relations, using only the assumption that (at least paradigmatically), paradigm exemplars will be mind-independent physical objects as well (special accommodations may be required with respect to concepts of mythical creatures such as unicorns, where paradigm exemplars may perhaps be construed as illustrations or sculptures, perhaps, as Brewer suggests, based on description, Brewer 2011, p. 104, fn. 9).

⁵ Brewer variously states that objects look some way *in virtue of* standing in such similarity relations (e.g. Brewer 2011, p. 95, p. 99) and that these similarities are what *grounds* and *explains* the various ways physical objects look (ibid., p. 103).

from which the object is perceived and to the circumstances of perception. This is a relativization not just to positions vis-a-vis the object and circumstances of perception, but also—tacitly—to kinds of observers. For presumably, the following holds: which similarities obtain between an object (in given circumstances) and paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects is a matter of independent facts. However, which of these similarity relations can be visually picked up by ants, bats, or eagles, say, from various points of view and in various perceptual circumstances will certainly differ at least in part—both among various non-human animals and between them and human beings (perhaps even among different human subjects)—just in virtue of the various ways in which visual systems of different species differ.

As Brewer admits, a lot more needs to be said than he does about what makes similarities visually relevant, which ones, and how. Answers to such questions, he takes it, “are many, varied, and largely empirical” (Brewer 2011, p. 102). But even given what little he says, the following view emerges: at any given time, any given object stands in various sets of similarity relations. Every object a subject is acquainted with through her experience will thus thinly look various ways to a subject, from that point of view, and in those specific circumstances of perception, and it will look various further ways from other points of views, and in other circumstances of perception, depending on the visually similarities that obtain between the object in question and paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects in those specific circumstances. Accordingly, the following seems possible: if viewed in suitable circumstances, numerically and qualitatively different objects may stand in at least some of the same similarity relations with various paradigm exemplars. If so, the way they thinly look may at least in part be the same.⁶

⁶ Some interpret Brewer’s account of how things look as fully externalist, claim that ways things look are features of mind-independent objects and that different objects can only look ways that are indistinguishable, but not identical (see e.g. Vuletić 2015, p. 57). Since Brewer claims that looks are grounded and explained by visually relevant similarity relations, I do not find this compelling (see 5.3 below for further discussion). What is correct, however, is this: Brewer will insist that on the fundamental theoretical characterization, phenomenally identical experiences of different objects are different experiential conditions—precisely because what he takes to be the theoretically fundamental characterization explicitly cites the specific objects the experience relates one with.

Before turning to the alternative interpretation of the similarity relations that ground Brewer's notion of looks, let us note that the reading just sketched has some intuitive appeal. First, whether a red ball that has been split in half, say, looks like an unsplit but otherwise identical red ball—which, for simplicity, we will assume to be a paradigm exemplar both for the concept *red* and the concept *ball*—will no doubt partly depend on our position vis-à-vis the split ball and on other circumstances of perception. Given suitable lighting conditions, for instance, the split ball will look as red to us as the paradigm exemplar would, whereas typically, it will not if lighting conditions are suitably different. Moreover, from certain positions vis-à-vis the split ball, it might look just the way the paradigm exemplar of an (unsplit) red ball would, but not so from others.

Second, it seems right that not all the similarities that may obtain between objects and paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects anyway need to be or become visually relevant, certainly not in every situation. The two objects from our toy example could be similar with respect to their interior structure or their weight. In some situations, such similarities could become visually relevant, too—in many others, however, they will not. Indeed, some similarities may never become visually relevant at all (nor, for that matter, relevant with respect to any other sensory mode).

Third, it is easy to see how similarities in how things look to us may rest on similarities in features of the objects themselves: in our toy example, the surface features of both the split ball and the unsplit one (at least for a part of the ball) are such that they reflect light in similar ways. Provided that the processes underlying the subject's capacity for vision operate in sufficiently similar ways, we thus may expect that the ways the two objects (thinly) look to the subject, given suitably similar points of view and perceptual circumstances, would be similar as well.

To sum up, on the proposed reading, visually relevant similarities are similarity relations that obtain between mind-independent physical objects and paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects, which are mind-independent physical objects as well. Such similarity relations obtain between the relevant objects anyway, albeit relative to points of view, circumstances of perception, and, presumably, the kind of observer involved. And if some mind-independent object *o* is in the vicinity of a suitable subject—an ordinary human observer with a normally functioning visual system, say—

the following can happen: the observer may become acquainted with o , through vision. According to the interpretation we are considering, it is in virtue of the similarity relations that o stands in anyway (in the relevant circumstances) with paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects and in virtue of the general set-up of the observer's visual system that o will thinly look various ways to the subject, relative to her specific point of view and the circumstances of perception.

Again, while thickly looking some way involves the deployment of conceptual activities, for an object o to thinly look F to a subject S , S need not have the concept of F . An object, Brewer thus holds, can look ducklike to a child even if the child lacks the concept of a duck (Brewer 2011, p. 121), remarkably even if nobody in the child's world possesses the concept of a duck (cf. *ibid.*, p. 130).⁷ Accordingly, on Brewer's view, facts concerning how an object thinly looks to a subject are facts about what similarity relations the object *de facto* stands in with other objects, given a point of view, perceptual circumstances, and the subject's visual system. And whether the object stands in such relations is completely independent of whether the subject—or anyone, really—possesses the relevant concepts, or any concepts at all.⁸

⁷ Can objects (thinly) look ducklike to subjects who live in a world in which no ducks exist? In other words: are the similarities that Brewer thinks ground the ways things (thinly) look anyway similarities between existing objects or do similarities with possible objects count as well? And if so, in what sense of "possible?" Brewer does not say, but I think that that his view may be compatible with various answers here. For one, he might be willing to multiply ways things thinly look so as to include relations with merely possible objects (this seems to be his view, as passage (7) below suggests) and then insist that what matters epistemologically is anyway not the number of similarity relations a given object *de facto* stands in, but which among them we actually register (which will also require that we have somehow acquired a sense of what a paradigm exemplar of the possible kind of object looks like). Even if it may well be that a given object is in some respect similar to Vorgon space ships (say) in some alternative possible world, and even if this similarity is one that our visual system might be able to detect, it would in all likelihood never become relevant. Alternatively, Brewer might be an antirealist with respect to possible worlds and claim that no similarity relations to non-existing objects can obtain. While the notion of similarity relations is thus not fully characterized with respect to the scope of these relations, there may be ways to develop the account in either direction.

⁸ What this suggests is that at least for the characterization of ways of thinly looking, the notion of paradigm exemplars should be dispensable. All Brewer appears to need to specify a notion of an object's looking some way is that the object stand in relations of similarity and dissimilarity with other objects that are such that the visual system of the kind of observer in question can pick up on them. Paradigm exemplars may be important on Brewer's account of concept acquisition that he does not provide. In the context of the specification of ways objects can thinly look, it seems, the notion of paradigm exemplars is primarily a convenient device that enables Brewer to refer more easily to specific ways things may look, such as "red," say, or "ducklike." But making such a move may not be innocuous. For by using this device in his characterization of thin looks, Brewer draws on a way of grouping ways things may look into kinds that is intelligible only in the context of conceptual abilities to classify things as being or looking some way, ducklike, say. And while we have seen that Brewer thinks that the relevant conceptual capacities need not necessarily be the subject's, one would think that they must be someone's. Whose capacities these are, however, and what accounts for the relevant grouping—these are questions Brewer does not address.

The interpretation just sketched, I think, is the one Brewer ultimately endorses. But at times, what he says pulls into a different direction. Consider the following passages:

- (4) [*V*]visually relevant similarities are similarities of the various kinds to which the physical processes enabling visual perception respond similarly, as a result of both their evolutionary design and their development over the course of our lives. (Brewer 2011, p. 118)

Also:

- (5) [*V*]visually relevant similarities [...] are similarities by the lights of the various processes enabling and subserving visual acquaintance: similarities in such things as the way in which light is reflected and transmitted from the objects in question and the way in which stimuli are handled by the visual system, given its evolutionary history and our shared training during development. (Brewer 2018, p. 3)

Remarkably, in both these passages, Brewer characterizes visually relevant similarities not in terms of the objects *themselves*, but in terms of the ways in which stimuli are handled by the subject's *visual system*, of how that system responds to objects. Now, it is one thing to construe the similarities that are said to ground the ways things look in terms of similarities that obtain between the objects themselves, and to then perhaps suggest that these similarities in turn ground and explain similarities in the ways these objects are processed by sensory systems of various kinds.⁹ It is quite another thing, however, to claim that the similarities that ground the way things look just are similarities that obtain at the level of visual processing.¹⁰ After all, the following two scenarios seem possible: first, it seems possible for a subject—on different occasions, say—to look at the same array of objects (that have the same features in both cases), from the same point of view and in sufficiently similar circumstances of perception, while the processes that occur in her visual system and the way things look to her differ.

⁹ This is the first interpretation, of course, on which the similarities are primarily similarities between the objects. It also seems to be in play when Brewer states that “[o]bjects have visually relevant similarities when they share sufficiently many common properties amongst those that have a significant involvement in the various processes underlying vision” (Brewer 2011, p. 103). Note especially that unlike the formulation Brewer uses in passage (4), this latter formulation does not imply that the processes underlying vision of objects that have visually relevant similarities are themselves similar.

¹⁰ This is probably too simplistic anyway. A complication arises, for instance, if we acknowledge that the same look may well be associated with different kinds of visual processes. I think Vuletić is right when he notes that a) it is far from clear that, given the various different ways in which differing stimuli are processed, the criterion for assessing similarity at the level of visual processing is not just a phenomenological one, and that b) Brewer would “not give much of an explanation of looks if it were to account for an object’s looking *F* in terms of the *phenomenological* similarity (if not identity) that obtains between the object’s looking *F* and other objects’ way[s] of looking” (Vuletić 2015, p. 62).

Second, it seems possible for a subject to look at objects that differ with regard to the similarity relations they stand in with other objects, while the same processes occur in her visual system in such a way that the objects look the same to her anyway. If so, similarities that obtain between mind-independent physical objects and similarities in the visual processes that occur in response to being suitably related to such objects and that ground similarities in the ways these objects (thinly) look can come apart. Accordingly, on the assumption that Brewer wants to characterize visually relevant similarities as similarities that obtain between mind-independent physical objects anyway, he should refrain from also specifying them in terms of similarities in visual processing. Again, he could of course try to argue for the further assumption that some of the similarities that obtain between objects anyway bring about corresponding similarities in visual processing. If, however, this is an assumption Brewer indeed relies on, he does not, unfortunately, provide an argument for it.

As we move on, let us frame our discussion in terms of the following question: can similarities between objects and similarities between processes in the visual system and (thin) looks come apart? In other words, let us ask to what extent Brewer's position affords the conceptual leeway to accommodate the two scenarios just mentioned. As I will show in the next two sections, with respect to both scenarios, that leeway is limited.

5.3 THINLY LOOKING THE SAME, NO DVEP FOR THIN LOOKS, BREWERIAN CONSTITUTION, AND THE GENERAL CONSTRAINT ON THIN LOOKS

Let us begin with the second of the two scenarios mentioned in the previous section. Our question, thus, is this: is it possible, on Brewer's view, for a subject S to look (on different occasions) at objects that differ regarding the (visually relevant) similarity relations they stand in with other objects, while the same processes occur in S 's visual system, such that the objects look the same to her anyway?

Let us observe, first, that on Brewer's view, qualitatively identical but numerically different objects— o_1 and o_2 , say—can look the same to a subject. If had in suitable circumstances, a given

subject S 's two metaphysically distinct experiences—one acquainting S with o_1 , the other acquainting S with o_2 —can be introspectively indistinguishable and have the same phenomenal character in the following sense: for every predicate φ , o_1 looks φ to S iff o_2 looks φ to S , too (cf. Brewer 2011, p. 101, relativization to S added). This should not be a surprising statement. After all, o_1 and o_2 are qualitatively identical. As such, each will stand in the same similarity relations with paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects as the other. Accordingly, with respect to each point of view and each set of perceptual circumstances, o_1 and o_2 will stand in the same visually relevant similarity relations. And if the latter are indeed said to ground and explain how a given object (thinly) looks, then one should expect that sameness with respect to these relations should yield sameness in the ways o_1 and o_2 look as well.

On Brewer's view, objects that differ in yet further ways can look the same as well. Two objects that differ in various ways can still both look F —two rather different plants, for example, will presumably both look plantlike and clearly, two otherwise very different objects can both look red, either because both *are* red or because the perceptual circumstances conspire in such a way that both objects *look* red, even if only one of them or neither is in fact red. For things can look F even though they are not F . A single coin, if looked at in suitable conditions, can look elliptical, a stick partly submerged in water can look bent, and a split ball can look like an unsplit ball one would.

Importantly, according to Brewer, each of the cases just mentioned, along with many kinds of illusions, is to be explained by reference to similarity relations that *de facto* obtain between the object, o , that the subject S is looking at and suitable paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects. As he states, “illusions come about in cases in which the direct objects of experience have [...] similarities with paradigm exemplars of kinds of which they are not in fact instances” (Brewer 2011, p. 102, also p. 146), relative to the point of view and the circumstances of perception in question. Accordingly, for two objects to look the same—either partly or completely—suitable similarity relations between the objects must obtain.

Incidentally, note that this explanation, too, is phrased in terms of similarity relations that obtain between paradigm exemplars and the direct objects of experience, i.e. the mind-independent physical objects themselves, and not between the processes that occur in the subject's visual system. Again,

one may suspect that to get from similarities between objects to similarities in how things look to the subject, Brewer will assume that similarities of the former kind ground similarities with respect to the kind of visual processing that occurs in subjects acquainted with such objects. Here is a rough sketch of how this assumption might be spelled out: the similarity relations σ stands in with paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects anyway (from the point of view and in the circumstances at hand) give rise to similarities between a) the stimuli σ provides to S , given S 's position and the circumstances at hand, and how these are processed in S 's visual system, and b) the stimuli the relevant paradigm exemplars would provide, and how those stimuli would be processed. Perhaps it is then in virtue of these processes that in the situation at hand, σ (thinly) looks the way it does to S .¹¹ A straight stick, if partly submerged in water, may thus look bent to me because it is, from where I stand and in my circumstances of perception, relevantly similar to a bent stick. The visual stimuli the partly submerged straight stick provides me with, situated as I am, are relevantly similar to those a paradigm bent stick that is not submerged in water would provide me with, and are handled by my visual system in correspondingly similar ways.

If the proposal just outlined is in fact what Brewer has in mind, he appears to assume the following: sameness of objects yields sameness of stimuli, which in turn yields sameness of visual processing and sameness of the way things (thinly) look, which, recall, is said to be a fully phenomenal fact about the subject's experience. In other words, he appears to assume that the phenomenology associated with how mind-independent physical objects thinly look—from a point of view, to a subject, and in certain perceptual circumstances—is (though perhaps via a series of intermediate steps) fully determined by the similarity relations that the objects one's experience relates one with *de facto* stand in with paradigm exemplars of various other kinds of objects. Moreover, for such a strong determination relation to hold, no other factor—such as e.g. what the subject believes—can play a role in determining the phenomenology associated with thin looks. For if it could, sameness of objects

¹¹ Brewer might also add that these visual processes need to be properly caused, i.e. by the subject's actually being related to suitable objects. Otherwise, visual processes would appear to screen off the objects as what (somehow) brings about the relevant looks. Even so, further complications would arise, e.g. the question if and how visual processes should be taken to be sensitive to what causes them when it comes to whether or not they give rise to certain looks.

and (thus) of the stimuli they provide, within some fixed set of perceptual conditions, might not bring about sameness of visual processing and sameness of the way things thinly look to the subject. In other words, if the interpretation suggested is accepted, then on Brewer's view, the phenomenology associated with ways thinly look is shielded from doxastic effects; with respect to ways objects thinly look, **DVEP** is false. The latter is indeed Brewer's view.¹² However, what precisely he thinks about the putative relations between objects, visually relevant similarities, visual processing, and ways things look remains unclear. Indeed, whether Brewer would agree with the rough sketch of the determination relation provided in the previous paragraph is an open question.

We can bring out the issue more sharply if we recall that relationalist views, as I suggested, characteristically involve a commitment to some version of **Constitution**. We already know that Brewer is committed to some version of **Acquaintance**. He is also clearly committed to **No Content**. What about **Constitution**? In contrast to Campbell and Fish, Brewer does not talk about the relation between similarities and looks in terms of constitution, but in terms of grounding and explaining. Nevertheless, I contend that to him, too, the following characterization should be acceptable:

Constitution_B:

If a subject *S* is acquainted with an object *o*, then among the similarity relations that *o* stands in with paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects, those that are visually relevant for *S* constitute the ways things (thinly) look to *S*, relative to *S*'s given point of view and the circumstances of perception at hand.

We should ask what sense could attach to the word 'constitution' as it appears in this characterization. Again, Brewer himself does not talk this way.¹³ Still, considering what a Brewerian version of **Constitution** would plausibly look like is useful. It is a way of bringing out that on his current view, the problem is not just how the visually relevant similarity relations that are said to ground and explain (thin) looks are to be specified, and at what level they are taken to obtain (presumably at the level of objects, but perhaps also at the level of proximal stimuli or visual

¹² See Brewer et al. 2018a, in which, prompted by my request, he confirms this.

¹³ Brewer does talk about constitution when he asserts that mind-independent physical objects, not appearances, constitute the direct objects of experience, claims that acquaintance with such objects constitutes a source of knowledge, and maintains that such objects constitute reasons for predications. These, however, are separate issues.

processes). Arguably, things are worse: on Brewer's view, the question how such similarities and ways things look relate has no clear answer, either. As we will see next, this is at least partly due to the fact that Brewer sends mixed signals with respect to the question what *ways things look* are.

Recall that on the one hand, Brewer insists that "the way things *look* are the way *things* look". In isolation, this quote reads as indicating that ways things look are properties of objects, not of experiences. On the other hand, Brewer insists that ways things look are "fully phenomenal fact[s] about the subject's experience." This statement invites a different interpretation: ways things look are properties of experiences (i.e. of the three-place relation Brewer takes experiences to be).

Suppose we emphasize the former quote and assume that ways things look are properties of objects. Suppose, further, that visually relevant similarity relations, too, are relations between objects. If so, Brewer could try to construe **Constitution_B** in terms of identity. Ways things look, he might suggest, are identical with visually relevant similarity relations between objects. If so, however, Brewer would also need to address the issue besetting Campbell's account: how properties of objects can be identical with the properties of the subject's experience (or, how first-order relational properties of objects can be identical with properties of the three-place relation Brewer takes experiences to be). If no such account is provided, the question how the relevant similarity relations and looks are related remains wide open.¹⁴

Suppose, however, we emphasize the second quote and take looks to be properties of experiences. Experience, Brewer maintains, acquaints us with mind-independent physical objects. Does experience also acquaint us with the visually relevant similarity relations these objects stand in with paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects? Might Brewer maintain, like Fish, that ways things look are identical (or supervene on) the acquaintance properties a subject's experience possesses? How else are we to understand Brewer's statement that visually relevant similarity relations "ground and explain"

¹⁴ Matters are further complicated by the fact that Brewer repeatedly indicates that he favors some version of resemblance nominalism with respect to properties (see e.g. Brewer 2011, p. 81, p. 142). As he himself acknowledges, the exact impact of resemblance nominalism on the Object View—whether the latter supports the former or *vice versa*—is a delicate issue. Since Brewer simply notes his commitment, but does not consider which implications his take on properties has on his notion of ways things look, I, too, will ignore such issues.

the ways things (thinly) look? The trouble, again, is that ways things (thinly) look are neither clearly associated with objects, nor with subjective experiences. Rather, Brewer vaguely associates them with both. And no matter how we phrase the question, whether we ask how ways things (thinly) look are *constituted*, how they are *grounded*, or how they are *explained* by objects and the similarity relations these are said to stand in—Brewer simply does not say. We are, thus, left without an account of what ways things look are. Clearly, this is a disappointing and unsatisfactory result. At the very least, it shows that Brewer needs to further develop his accounts both of visually relevant similarities and of thin looks. For as things stand, these accounts are not clear enough to provide us with a sense of what thin looks are and how they depend on the objects one's experience is taken to relate one with and the similarity relations in which these objects are said to stand.

With respect to our guiding question, however, i.e. the question whether Brewer's view provides a potentially helpful notion of phenomenology, which can also accommodate **DVEP**, we are left with a first response: first, since the notion of thin looks cannot be clearly placed, the notion of phenomenology remains unclear. Second, on Brewer's account, ways things (thinly) look are independent of the experiencing subject's concepts and beliefs. Whatever ways of thinly looking are, with respect to them, Brewer holds, **DVEP** is false.

Let us also put on the record the following general constraint on how, on Brewer's account, things can thinly look. Granted, we neither know how exactly Brewer thinks about visually relevant similarity relations, nor how he thinks ways of thinly looking depend on visually relevant similarity relations between objects and paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects. However, he clearly believes that the presence of suitable similarity relations is a necessary condition for things to (thinly) look certain ways. Accordingly, he endorses the following

General Constraint on Thin Looks:

For any predicate φ , any subject S , and any object o , o can thinly look φ to S only if a sufficient number of appropriate similarity relations between o and paradigm exemplars of objects that are φ do in fact obtain (from the point of view and in the circumstances of perception in question).

Having uncovered this constraint, let us move on to considering Brewer's notion of thickly looking some way. As we will already suspect, the constraint applies to it as well.

5.4 THICKLY LOOKING SOME WAY

Were Brewer's account of thinly looking some way all he provided, then on his view, the phenomenal dimension of a subject's experience would be exhausted by the ways thinly look to the subject (*S*) undergoing it. Moreover, that dimension would appear to be (somehow) fully constituted by the mind-independent physical objects in the environment that *S*'s experience acquaints her with, and the visually relevant similarity relations these objects stand in with other objects. Let us phrase this in terms of the two conceivable scenarios mentioned in 5.2.

As for the second scenario, the discussion in the previous section showed that according to Brewer, it is indeed possible for numerically and qualitatively different objects to (thinly) look the same. However, according to him, this possibility is contingent on, and thus constrained by, the existence of suitable similarity relations that obtain between these objects—or, rather, the identity of some suitable subset of the similarity relations each of them stands in with a suitable set of paradigm exemplars, from the respective points of view and in the perceptual circumstances at hand. In the absence of such an overlap in similarity relations, objects cannot (thinly) look the same. More generally, it is, according to the **General Constraint on Thin Looks** listed at the end of the previous section, impossible for any object *o* to thinly look some way—*F*, say—unless *o* is sufficiently similar to paradigm exemplars of the relevant sort, e.g. to paradigm exemplars of objects falling under *F*.

With respect to the other possible scenario mentioned in 5.2, i.e. that a subject—on different occasions, say—may look at the same array of objects from the same point of view and in sufficiently similar circumstances of perception, while the processes that occur in her visual system and the way things look to her differ, the result is this: on Brewer's view, as far as the ways objects thinly look to subjects are concerned, the scenario is impossible.

However, there is more to Brewer's account: thick looks. As he puts it, “[*o*] *thickly* looks *F* iff *o* thinly looks *F* and the subject recognizes it *as an F*, or registers its visually relevant similarities with paradigm exemplars of *F* in an active application of that very concept” (Brewer 2011, p. 121-122). Crucially, registering thin looks or seeing an object *as* the kind of thing the paradigm exemplar of

which it is sufficiently similar to—a duck, say—is, Brewer claims, “a further genuinely *phenomenological* affair associated with our conceptual classificatory engagement with what is directly presented to us in experience: that very *duck*, as we would now say” (Brewer 2011, p. 121, similarly: Brewer 2018, p. 11). This is important as it indicates the following: on the plausible assumption that the possession of conceptual capacities requires at least typically (or even just in some cases) that the subject (*S*) possessing them hold certain beliefs, Brewer’s view entails that *S*’s beliefs may affect the ways an object thickly looks to *S*. And since we just saw that according to Brewer, an object’s thickly looking some way is a genuinely phenomenological affair, it follows that what beliefs *S* holds may affect the phenomenology of *S*’s experience.

Initial appearances notwithstanding, Brewer thus does make room for the idea that a subject *S* may look, on different occasions, at the same array of objects from the same point of view and in identical circumstances of perception, while the processes that occur in her visual system (presumably) and the way things look to her differ overall. Again, on Brewer’s view, it is impossible, for there to be a difference between such occasions in how things *thinly* look. However, it is well possible for there to be differences with respect to which thin looks are being registered—i.e. to how things *thickly* look.

Note, however, that ways objects thickly look are defined in terms of ways they thinly look. Accordingly, the **General Constraint on Thin Looks** also constrains the former. The ways things can thickly look—relative to a point of view and circumstances of perception—remains, accordingly, limited. This will become important when, in 5.6, we return to the issue of what kinds of cases that fall under **DVEP** Brewer can accommodate. But first, I suggest, in the following section, that the distinction between thinly and thickly looking appears to allow Brewer to dodge a couple of issues that we saw beset Fish’s account.

5.5 FISH AND BREWER

For simplicity, and in line with the assumption that visually relevant similarities are indeed similarities that obtain between objects themselves anyway, we may think of the similarity relations that Brewer takes objects to stand in with paradigm exemplars of various kinds as structurally analogous to the facts that according to Fish populate the tract of the environment the subject looks at. Which facts populate that tract, Fish maintains, is a completely mind-independent matter and constrains what can feature in the presentational character of the subject's experience and, thus, what the phenomenal properties of her experience can be. Likewise, on Brewer's account (as I am interpreting it), which similarity relations objects stand in to other objects is a completely mind-independent affair. And just like Fish's facts constrain what a subject's experience can acquaint her with and what, accordingly, the phenomenal character of her experience could be, Brewer's similarity relations constrain the ways objects can look, both thinly and—since thick looks are defined in terms of thin ones—thickly, too.

As we saw, Fish is officially committed to **Identity***. **Identity***, recall, is the claim that a) the *phenomenal properties* of a subject *S*'s experience *e* are identical to *e*'s acquaintance properties, which in turn relate *S* to the individual facts that feature in *e*'s presentational character, and that b) *e*'s *phenomenal character* is identical with the property *e* has of acquainting *S* with *e*'s presentational character. Since on Fish's view, facts are object-property couples and thus individuated partly by which objects these couples contain, **Identity*** entails that experiences that involve being acquainted with different objects cannot have the same phenomenal character. This, we saw, is at odds with what seemed to be one motivation behind the characterization the phenomenal character of experience that Fish endorses, i.e. as that property which types experiences with respect to what it is like to have them—namely to have a way of talking about the subjective aspect of experience that is accessible to the subject. Likewise, it is at odds with what we said was one major motivation behind introducing talk of phenomenal properties in the first place, namely to have a way of talking about ways in which different experiences can be phenomenologically the same. And though Fish (in a footnote) introduces the notion of kinds of phenomenal character (and, presumably, kinds of phenomenal properties), we saw

that he leaves us without an account of how to understand and explain the existence of such kinds. Fish, I suggested, could modify his view and accept **Supervenience**, i.e. the idea that phenomenal properties and the phenomenal character of an experience *supervene* on the acquaintance properties experiences may have. Doing so, I said, could allow him to accommodate the idea that experiences of different object-property couples can be phenomenologically the same, though it would still require him to provide an account of the relevant supervenience relation.

On Brewer's view, let us observe, an analogous modification is unnecessary. For him, objects (thinly) look certain ways *in virtue of* standing in similarity relations with paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects, relative to a point of view and circumstances of perception. As we saw above, Brewer owes us an answer question how to understand the weight carried by the expression *in virtue of* (or its cognates). And though the details are far from clear, it is obvious that Brewer intends to characterize the phenomenal identity of a (thin) look, as it were, in terms of the position the object looked at occupies in a similarity space characterized by actual (and, perhaps: possible) paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects.

Suppose the problems concerning how similarities ground or constitute thin looks could somehow be resolved. Recall also that, as we discussed in 5.3, two different objects, looked at in suitable conditions, can overlap or even be identical with respect to what similarity relations they stand in with various paradigm exemplars. If so, then for Brewer, the idea that the experience of different objects can be characterized in terms of identical ways of thinly looking is comparatively easier to accommodate (cf. Brewer 2011, p. 99, p. 101).

Let us move on to the topic of expert vision. When discussing Fish's view, we observed that he remains silent as to which properties can feature in the presentational character of a subject's experience, how such properties are individuated, and how they relate to the mind-independent properties that actually populate the subject's environment. Pending such a story, it is difficult to assess the conceptual leeway his account affords for accommodating expert vision.

Brewer, on the other hand, does not think that the experiencing subject gets acquainted with facts that are co-composed of properties (though we suggested above that his account could be understood

that way). More importantly, he does not think that acquaintance with facts requires that the subject possess suitable (or, for that matter, *any*) conceptual-recognitional capacities. Accordingly, he can maintain that an object may thinly look to the layperson all the ways it may thinly (and thickly) look to an expert. Brewer, in contrast to Fish, thus does not locate differences between the expert's experience and that of the layperson at the level of acquaintance—which to him is the level of the ways objects thinly look. Instead, Brewer takes such differences to be a matter of which of the ways objects thinly look anyway subjects are able to register. Accordingly, the degree to which the expert's vision can diverge from that of the layperson will depend on whatever constraints govern which similarities between objects can be registered by suitably informed observers.

Brewer provides no account of what constraints may govern (visual) registration—no account that delineates and explains the ways things may thinly and thickly look. Can objects thinly and thickly look like a tomato or a snake? Presumably so. Can they thinly and thickly look like a cathode ray tube? Could a colored line that is forming, in certain specifiable conditions, in a bubble chamber thinly and thickly look like an electron passing by? Can a smoker's lung, examined via an x-ray scan, look cancerous? Brewer does not say. Pending such an account, his account of expert vision thus cannot be made very precise—in a similar way in which, pending an account of which properties can be conceptually picked up by vision, Fish's account cannot be made very precise either.

Suppose we bracket concerns that in one or other way apply to both Fish's and Brewer's accounts.¹⁵ There at, I think, least two reasons, I think, why relationalists should prefer Brewer's view that acquaintance does not presuppose the possession of conceptual capacities over Fish's account. First, recall our discussion in 4.5.1. As we saw there, Fish, if he were to defend the idea, popular among relationalists, that acquaintance is more basic than any or, perhaps, other epistemic relations (**Basic Acquaintance**), would have to show how this idea can be squared with his additional commitment to the thought that acquaintance requires the deployment of conceptual capacities. But, I contended, doing so is problematic even if such capacities are construed in a Kirkean de-sophisticated manner.

¹⁵ Similar questions arise for many accounts of experience, not just for Fish or Brewer, nor just for relationalist accounts.

Contrast Brewer. *Pace* Fish, he thinks that a child who lacks the concept of a duck can be acquainted with ducks. It is, he holds, simply in virtue of the duck's standing in similarity relations to paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects (notably ducks) *anyway* that the duck thinly looks ducklike to the child, even to one who lacks conceptual capacities altogether, lives in a world without concept-users, perhaps even lives in a world in which ducks do not exist.¹⁶ For present purposes, the relevant upshot is this: Brewer does not tie acquaintance to concept possession, he can easily accept **Basic Acquaintance**, the claim that acquaintance is more basic than any epistemic relation, without being saddled with the explanatory burden this assertion entails for Fish.¹⁷

To appreciate the second respect in which Brewer's view appears to improve on Fish's, we need to look more closely at Brewer's account of thick looks and the account of expert vision it makes available. As we already know, for Brewer, what conceptual-recognitional capacities a subject *S* possesses is irrelevant to the ways objects can thinly look to *S*. However, like on Fish's view, on Brewer's account, too, what conceptual capacities *S* possesses does play an important role with respect to the phenomenology of *S*'s experience overall. Again, on Fish's view, the crucial function of conceptual-recognitional capacities is to bring into the presentational character of the *S*'s experience facts that anyway populate the tract of the environment that *S* is looking at. His account left many questions unanswered. But the general idea underlying it was straightforward enough: the more conceptual recognitional capacities the *S* possesses and passively deploys in her experience *e*, the more facts feature in *e*'s presentational character. Deploying more capacities in undergoing *e* means that there are more facts in *e*'s presentational character that *S* is acquainted with, which will (or, if we favor **Supervenience over Identity***: *may*) in turn enrich the phenomenal properties that compose *e*'s phenomenal character.

On Brewer's view, a subject *S*'s experience *e* acquaints *S* with all the objects in the tract of the environment that *S* is looking at and that *S*'s visual system can (given its current state, position, and circumstances of perception) process. If *S* is acquainted with a given set of objects, these objects then

¹⁶ Again, cf. Brewer 2011, p. 121, p. 130, also p. 145.

¹⁷ Brewer explicitly embraces **Basic Acquaintance** in Brewer 2011, p. 141.

thinly look all sorts of ways to S , which is purely a matter of their *de facto* standing in visually relevant similarity relations with paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects, from the point of view and in the circumstances of perception in question. Again, at this stage, no beliefs or concepts are involved, which is why thin looks are non-conceptual looks (cf. Brewer 2011, p. 135) and “belief-independent [...] O may thinly look F to S even though S does not believe that o is F , or perhaps cannot do so because she does not have the concept ‘ F ’” (ibid., p. 136). Conceptual capacities come in only as the subject registers the relevant similarities that the objects she faces stand in with paradigm exemplars of various and thus (at least paradigmatically) applies the relevant concepts.¹⁸ Such registration yields thick or *conceptual* looks. For our purposes, what matters is the following: Brewer claims that registration, or categorization, is accompanied by a phenomenological change. Here is how he puts the point:

- (6) Both before and after any categorization using the colour concept ‘navy’ the carpet thinly looks navy; and this is a matter of *constant* visual phenomenology. After conceptual registration of its visually relevant similarities with paradigms of navy blue it also thickly looks navy; and this is a phenomenological *change*. Any problem arises only on the assumption that there is a *single* uncontroversial notion of visual phenomenology on which it makes perfectly good sense to ask, and it is always possible to answer, whether two experiential conditions are phenomenologically identical *tout court*. The whole point of the thin vs. thick looks distinction is precisely to deny that assumption. [...] Recognition—of a cloud as shaped like a bull, or of a doodle as a distorted name, say—is *both* classificatory and phenomenological. In one sense it changes the way the thing in question looks; in another sense the shape it looks is unchanged. (Brewer 2011, p. 123)

First off, this passage attests again to the familiar fact that on Brewer’s view, the possession of concepts and—to the extent that concept possession requires holding certain beliefs—holding certain

¹⁸ Fish insists that in generating the presentational character of experience, the subject’s conceptual capacities are deployed *passively*. Brewer, on the other hand, thinks of such deployment as an activity (as e.g. passage (3) shows). Fish, as we saw, construes the possession conceptual capacities as a necessary requirement for acquaintance. Moreover, he wants to do justice to the idea that in experience, we are simply saddled with a presentational (and, subsequently, a phenomenal) character. And since it seems patently odd to say that for any experience with a phenomenal character, there is something the subject must actively *do* to have it, Fish is sympathetic to the idea that in experience, the relevant capacities are being deployed passively. Brewer, on the other hand, grants that subjects may be induced to conceptually register similarities between objects they are acquainted with and suitable paradigm exemplars of various kinds relatively automatically (cf. Brewer 2011, p. 145). In such cases, he might agree, the relevant capacities are, in a sense, deployed passively. But since Brewer separates acquaintance from the deployment of conceptual capacities, he, unlike Fish, does not need any commitment to the effect that in every instance of a subject’s being acquainted with an object, such capacities are in fact passively deployed. Accordingly, for him, in standard cases, conceptual capacities are deployed actively.

beliefs can make a phenomenal difference. Accordingly, I suggest we read this passage as providing the resources for a Brewerian account of accommodating cases of **DVEP** that fall under the label of **expert vision**. Here it is: since experts hold knowledgeable beliefs and possess conceptual recognitional capacities that laypersons lack, the former can conceptually register visually relevant similarities between the object they face and paradigm exemplars of certain kinds of objects that the latter cannot register. On the one hand, Brewer insists that such registration makes a phenomenal difference. And yet, in the following sense, things look the same to both the expert and the layperson: provided that their respective point of views and the circumstances of perception are sufficiently similar, the relevant objects thinly look the same. And to the extent that the conceptual capacities that the layperson and the expert possess are the same, things thickly look the same as well. To the extent that these capacities differ, however, things thickly look different.

Unlike Fish's account—and this is the second respect in which Brewer's account may appear preferable to Fish's—Brewer's account thus seems to provide the resources for accommodating both the phenomenon of expert vision and the idea that the expert and the layperson have something perceptually in common: things thinly (and perhaps, to some extent, thickly) look the same to them.¹⁹ On Fish's account, recall, the worry arose whether differences in sophistication of a subject's background view and accompanying differences in her conceptual capacities could modify what properties the relevant capacity makes visible, how facts and properties are presented in the presentational character of a subject's experience, and how the facts brought into the presentational character can be identical with the enviroing facts. This in turn made us wonder how to characterize the sense in which experts and laypersons might have something in common.

None of these difficulties appear to arise for Brewer. Via his notion of thinly looking, he provides a notion of phenomenology that, as he puts it in passage (6), remains constant across changes in beliefs. At the same time, his notion of thickly looking provides room for phenomenological changes

¹⁹ Whether thinly looking *F* is the same phenomenological state in different (time-slices of) subjects is still an open question—for both Fish and Brewer. It will remain elusive as long as we lack identity criteria for phenomenal states that enable us to compare them independently of any reference to the way they are said to be brought about.

that are due to the possession of conceptual capacities. Accordingly, unlike Fish, Brewer appears to be able to deal with the case of the painter: to both the painter and the child, he can insist, an object *o* that is *green*₂₃ thinly looks the same, relative to a certain point of view and perceptual circumstances. This is due simply to *o*'s *de facto* standing in visually relevant similarity relations with suitable paradigm exemplars of various kinds, which may well include the color Leonardo da Vinci used when painting some of the trees visible in the background of his Mona Lisa, say, or the color one gets if one mixes certain other colors in specific ways. And it may well be that visually relevant similarities like these are known and can be registered only by the painter, not by the layperson, which presumably yields a change in the phenomenology of the experience of the former in a way that has no counterpart in the phenomenology of the experience of the latter.

5.6 MULTIPLE PHENOMENOLOGIES AND (AGAIN) THE BANANA CASE

Given the issues just outlined, it is tempting to think that Brewer's view is better placed than Fish's when it comes to accommodating **DVEP**, at least with respect to cases of expert vision. I think, however, that this temptation must be resisted. For as I will argue next, like Fish's account, Brewer's account—at least in its current *gestalt*—cannot accommodate projection effects, either.

To begin with, recall that Fish's view gave rise to a number of unresolved questions with respect to the identity conditions of phenomenal properties and phenomenal character—questions that come to the fore once we insist that room should be made for the thought that experiences of different facts can be identical with respect to their phenomenology, or the same in kind. The issue, in a nutshell, was that given Fish's commitment to **Constitution**, **Irreducibility**, and **Identity***, phenomenal properties are individuated along with specific facts, construed as composed of particular objects and properties (or instantiations thereof). Accordingly, accommodating a notion of phenomenal identity across different facts was impossible. Modifying Fish's account, however, e.g. by accepting **Supervenience** instead of **Identity*** or by introducing an (as of yet unexplained) notion of sameness

in phenomenal kind involved loosening the ties between mind-independent items and phenomenal properties. As a result, we lost what grip on the identity conditions of phenomenal properties these ties were supposed to provide. Worse even, we noted that it is unclear how to think about the facts Fish takes to constitute the presentational character. What troubled us was that they are said to be both identical with the mind-independent facts that populate the subject's environment and at the same time made visible by the subject's conceptual-recognitional capacities, which may be imperfect in various ways and differ across subjects. Pending suitable accounts of how properties and conceptual capacities are to be individuated, we are thus left in the dark as to how the experience of an expert could, as Fish insists, both differ from that of a layperson and yet have something in common with it.

As I showed in 5.3, Brewer's view, too, lacks a proper account of **Constitution**. Partly, I argued, the issue is that instead of unambiguously classifying ways of thinly looking some way as either the one or the other, Brewer vaguely associates thin looks both with objects ("the way *things* look") and with experiences ("fully phenomenal facts about the subject's experience"). As a result, ways of thinly looking are neither here nor there. What they are supposed to be—properties of objects, of experiences, or perhaps (as Campbell seems to say) both—remains unclear. Plainly, Brewer takes ways of thinly looking to ultimately depend on the existence of visually relevant similarity relations that obtain (presumably) between the objects that the subject's experience acquaints her with and suitable paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects. But we lack an account of the nature of this dependence and with conflicting statements about the level at which these relations obtain.

In the previous section, I floated the suggestion that Brewer's view may appear to improve on Fish's view by affording a conceptual space for a notion of phenomenal identity—via the sameness of similarity relations. However, the crucial problem remains: like Fish, Brewer, too, owes us a proper account of the phenomenal dimension of experience, of what it is and of how it is grounded, constituted, or explained by the mind-independent items in the subject's environment—be these characterized as physical objects, object-property couples, or as similarity relations that obtain between objects. In other words, while one can appreciate that Brewer's idea of sameness of visually relevant similarities may promise to provide the resources for accommodating a notion of looks-identity, at

least currently, his account is simply not developed enough to show how this promise can be kept. With respect to the other part of our guiding question, i.e. whether relational accounts can accommodate **DVEP**, we saw that in virtue of his distinction between (nonconceptual) ways of thinly looking that remain constant across different doxastic contexts and thick (conceptual) looks that may vary along with such contexts, Brewer's account appears to succeed where Fish's account of expert vision struggles. Unlike Fish, it seems, Brewer can hold both that the phenomenology of the expert's experience differs from that of the layperson and that there is also something perceptually that the expert and the layperson have in common. To establish the former claim, Brewer can draw on the idea that experts and laypersons differ in which visually relevant similarities they register. To establish the latter, he can point to similarities in the ways things thinly—and perhaps to some extent thickly—look to them, respectively.

Here is, in a nutshell, the problem with this account: if it is already unclear how to understand ways of thinly looking and in what sense they constitute the phenomenal dimension of experience, things do not get any clearer if yet another layer of phenomenology is thrown into the mix. Unfortunately, Brewer does not provide much of an account of this second putative layer of experiential phenomenology—the phenomenology associated with thick looks. Instead, he contents himself with making a few cursory remarks. Registering visually relevant similarity relations (whatever such registration may come to)²⁰, Brewer holds, will leave these relations unchanged. They could not, one surmises, both change and yet ground a layer of phenomenology that remains constant across different doxastic settings, in which different ways of thinly looking are being registered. If so, then presumably, the phenomenological change registration is said to entail must be construed as an *addition* of some distinct phenomenal aspect or layer, as I will say, to the otherwise constant phenomenology constituted by ways things thinly look. Moreover, the change in phenomenology will plausibly be a

²⁰ There may, Brewer suggests, be several modes of registration of visual similarities, some of which do not draw upon fully conceptual categorization and are, in that sense, less demanding (cf. Brewer 2011, p. 121-2, footnotes 24 & 25). He does not say whether various modes would differ with respect to their phenomenal effects. Moreover, he also takes the notion of conceptual registration as irreducibly primitive (Brewer 2011, p. 145). Accordingly, it appears that an account of conceptual registration that could explain its putative effects on the phenomenology is not forthcoming.

matter of the deployment of suitable conceptual capacities. In line with this, and with his contention that *thick looks* are *conceptual looks*, Brewer thus occasionally characterizes what is added as *conceptual phenomenology* (Brewer 2011, p. 122) or as a phenomenology that is associated with “the categorization of what is presented” (ibid., p. 124). He insists, however, that this additional layer of phenomenology cannot occur in isolation. Thick looks, recall, are defined in terms of thin looks, so that nothing can thickly look some way unless it thinly looks that way as well.

The idea, then, is this: only if suitable thin looks are available, the subject can register them, which is said to be a matter of “actively and intelligibly subsuming the particular presented as the direct object of experience under that concept, in virtue of its evident similarities with the paradigms central to our understanding of that concept” (ibid., p. 122). On Brewer’s view, the deployment of the conceptual capacities that are involved in registration is thus necessary for the relevant phenomenological change to occur, but not sufficient. It must occur in conjunction with the presence of suitable thin looks.

What this indicates, thus, is that like thin looks, thick looks, too, are taken to strongly depend on the presence of mind-independent items that, from the point of view and in the perceptual circumstances at hand, stand in suitable similarity relations with paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects. Yet if it is already unclear what the nature of this dependence is in case of thin looks, it is not any clearer in the case of thick looks. How the phenomenal change is triggered and what such a change amounts remains completely open.

Furthermore, one can ask whether Brewer’s theoretical distinction between ways of thinly looking and ways of thickly looking does in fact pick out a distinction that is phenomenologically relevant. One may doubt—like e.g. Hanson—that upon facing some set of objects in certain perceptual circumstances, there is, or must be, a layer of perceptual phenomenology that remains constant across experiences that occur in different doxastic settings. Part of the point of Hanson’s discussion of reversible figures was precisely this: that there is a neutral phenomenal layer, a conscious awareness of objects that is available to us anyway and on which we then, second, clamp an interpretation, as it were, is neither phenomenologically convincing nor obligatory. If we can see such figures in a neutral way at all, Hanson insists, i.e. not already *as* something or other, doing so requires tremendous effort.

If, as he maintains, this is true for all ordinary cases of seeing, why then should we assume that ways of thinly looking various ways form a proper part of our ordinary experience in the first place?

Even if such concerns are bracketed, another one arises: what, we can ask, is the relation supposed to be between the two putative layers of phenomenology? As evidenced by passage (6), Brewer rejects the idea that there is a single uncontroversial notion of visual phenomenology on which it makes perfectly good sense to ask, and it is always possible to answer, whether two experiential conditions are phenomenologically identical *tout court*. I must confess that it is not clear to me why Brewer feels the need to make such a claim. Why not assert that the total visual phenomenology of experience comprises both ways of thinly looking and ways of thickly looking some ways? One way in which experiences can differ in their total phenomenology, he could say, is that they are the same with respect to the ways of thinly looking, yet different with respect to the ways of thickly looking they involve.

If he thinks that this way of characterizing the phenomenal dimension of experience would be problematic, Brewer does not say why. His alternative characterization, however, is problematic. Again, Brewer suggests that the question whether two experiences are the same *tout court* may not always be meaningful or may not always have a determinate answer. If this is taken seriously, then according to Brewer, for the phenomenal dimension of experience, identity conditions that determine similarity and difference of overall phenomenal states can either not be had (or not always) or do not exist. Surely, this must be an unsatisfactory result in and by itself. Also, it remains mysterious how an account on which we may be unable to say—or even meaningfully ask—whether the phenomenologies associated with two given experiences differ could be an illuminating account of expert vision. And finally, giving up the idea that the phenomenal dimension of experience is governed by determinate identity conditions certainly does not help alleviate the worry we already harbored with respect to ways of thinly looking, viz. that Brewer fails to provide a clear account of what the phenomenal dimension of experience is. As in Fish's case, in Brewer's case, too, the account is underdeveloped—so much so that the question whether Brewer can accommodate cases of **DVEP** that fall under the heading of expert vision is impossible to assess. Too many questions about the account remain open, issues that would need to be addressed to yield a proper understanding of it.

As we did in Fish's case, let us nevertheless assume that all these issues could somehow be resolved and ask how Brewer's account fares with respect to *projection effects*. More specifically, let us ask whether Brewer's account provides the resources to accommodate the *banana case*.²¹ As per the **General Constraint on Thin Looks** stated in 5.3, there is no way an object can look some way, e.g. *F*, unless it stands in a sufficient number of visual similarity relations with paradigm exemplars of the relevant kind, e.g. *F*s. Clearly, the banana object, once adjusted to an achromatic gray, is not yellowish. But could it thinly (and thus thickly) look yellowish anyway? After all, the banana object is a realistic depiction of a banana. It looks like one. Suppose bananas were to count as paradigm exemplars of yellow or yellowish objects. If so, the case could be made that the banana object stands in a sufficient number of visually relevant similarity relations with paradigm exemplars of yellowish objects—bananas. It could look yellowish even though it is not. In that case, Brewer might be able to endorse one of Hansen et al.'s central interpretive claims: the banana object, once it has been adjusted to an achromatic gray, still looks yellowish to subjects.

If this proposal were viable, Brewer would of course still have to partly disagree with Hansen et al.: he would have to resist their interpretation that it is the test subjects' *knowledge* that bananas are typically yellow(ish) that makes the banana object look that way. In other words, Brewer would resist the interpretation of the banana case as an instance of projection effects. Instead, he would suggest that what makes the banana object look yellow(ish) is, as usual, the fact that visually relevant similarity relations obtain between the banana object and suitable paradigm exemplars. Moreover, he would claim that in the banana case, too, concepts, beliefs, and knowledge are involved in just the usual way—i.e. the way they are always involved when visually relevant similarities are being registered.

Despite its initial plausibility, the proposal must be rejected. On it, looks-grounding similarities would simply be too easy to come by. If the proposal were acceptable, the following should be, too: suppose ravens counted as paradigm exemplars of black objects. If so, every black object would thinly

²¹ I will assume that readers are by now familiar with the case and anyway invite them to refresh their memory by looking back at 4.5.2.1.

look like a raven—an absurd consequence. More examples like this can be produced *ad libitum*, which would lead to a massive inflation of similarities and, consequently, ways things thinly and thickly look.

In fact, Brewer opposes the proposal, too. In this context, the following passage is instructive:

- (7) [S]uppose that all the actual exemplars of red are round. That is, everything that is actually red happens also to be round. Presumably this entails that all the paradigm exemplars of red are round. So if a person is visually acquainted with a blue round object, then this has visually relevant similarities with paradigm exemplars of red. Thus, according to the (OV) account of looks, it looks red, at least thinly. This is surely false: except in abnormal illusory circumstances, a blue round object would not look red in this situation.

Supporters of (OV) should in my view deny the move from the hypothesis that all the actual exemplars of red are round to the claim that all paradigm exemplars of red are therefore also round. Paradigms are not simply a subset of actual exemplars. [...] [A]lthough a blue round direct object of perception has visually relevant similarities with every actual exemplar of red, it does not have visually relevant similarities with paradigm exemplars of red, for these also include, at least potentially as it were, possible but non-actual non-round red things. (Brewer 2011, p. 128)

Patently, Brewer's example is structurally analogous to the raven and the banana example. Applied to the these, we get the following statements: even if every raven were black, and every black object were a raven, that would not make every black object thinly look like a raven, because not all possible paradigm exemplars of black objects are ravens. Likewise, even if every yellow(ish) object were a banana, and every banana were yellow(ish), that would not make every banana object thinly look yellow(ish), because not all possible paradigm exemplars of bananas are yellowish.

Of course, the banana object, once adjusted to an achromatic gray, is more similar to bananas, which are often yellow, than the objects that test subjects face in the control condition. But that neither makes the banana object yellowish, nor necessarily more similar to paradigm exemplars of yellowish objects than the objects in the control condition, and certainly not sufficiently similar to paradigm exemplars of yellowish objects to make it (thinly) look yellowish. Thus clarified, on Brewer's view, the **General Constraint on Thin Looks** rules out Hansen et al.'s interpretation of the banana case. The banana object, if adjusted to an achromatic gray, lacks sufficiently many visually relevant similarities with paradigm exemplars of yellowish objects. It thus cannot look yellowish, neither thinly nor thickly.

At this point, we may wonder what other options Brewer might have to accommodate the case. As we think about the experiences test subjects undergo as they look at the banana object, adjusted to an achromatic gray, it is clear that on Brewer's view, those experiences acquaint the test subjects with

the banana object. And as they are acquainted with it, there will be visually relevant similarities that will (somehow) ground ways the banana object thinly looks to them. And to the extent that the test subjects register them, the banana object will thickly look to them these ways as well.

Does the banana object stand in visually relevant similarity relations with paradigm exemplars of gray objects? Brewer, I suppose, has two options to respond. First, he could claim that the banana object, from the point of view and in the perceptual circumstances in which the test subjects find themselves, simply does not stand in such similarity relations. If so, the banana object would not even thinly look gray to the subjects. Alternatively, Brewer could claim the following: even though the banana object does stand in visually relevant similarity relations with paradigm exemplars of gray objects, and thus thinly looks gray to the test subjects, they fail to register these similarities.

Both these strategies are problematic. The first one is problematic if we assume that the perceptual circumstances and the points of view of the test subjects in the test condition and the control condition do not differ significantly. On that assumption, Brewer would need to provide an explanation why similarities with paradigm exemplars of gray objects become visually relevant in the control condition, but not in the test condition. Suppose such an explanation was offered. Even then, the question would remain what color Brewer thinks the banana object thinly looks to be.

As we saw above, the **General Constraint on Thin Looks** rules out that the banana object can thinly look yellowish. But note that the same will be true of every other color. It will be true of everything except achromatic gray, which on our current set of assumptions is ruled out. The **General Constraint on Thin Looks** would thus saddle Brewer with the conclusion that there is no color the banana thinly looks to be—nor any shade of white, black, or gray. As a result, Brewer faces the exact same questions that we saw would arise for Fish if he decided to treat the banana case as a cognitive illusion (compare 4.5.2.3 above). For one, if it is true, as Fish suggests, that shape perception depends on color perception, Brewer lacks an adequate account of how test subjects can see the banana object's shape, while remaining oblivious to its color.²² And even if this issue is bracketed, one must wonder

²² As we saw, Fish thinks that subjects who suffer from cognitive illusions believe (inaccurately) that the banana object is (or, as in optical illusions: *looks*) still yellow(ish) and that they have an experience with an appropriate

how far the test subjects' putative inability to see the banana object's color extends over the course of the experiment and how Brewer can explain what it is that test subjects, as they keep adjusting the object's color, respond to and why they eventually stop adjusting.

The second strategy is problematic as it requires that Brewer provide an explanation why test subjects do not register the relevant similarities with paradigm exemplars of gray objects. If they cannot register the object's color and since there cannot, by the **General Constraint on Thin Looks**, be any other color or shade of white, black, or gray that the banana object can thinly look, there cannot, accordingly, be any color the object thickly looks, either. Again, then, one must wonder how the banana object can thinly look gray to the subject, as it must, how this can be a matter of the subject's being consciously acquainted with the object, and how it is yet the case that even though the test subjects' explicit task is to focus on and adjust the object's color, they cannot register that it is gray.

It seems to me that the simplest and most straightforward way to dodge these problems is to side with Hansen et al. and accept that the banana object does indeed look yellow(ish) to the test subjects once it has been adjusted to an achromatic gray, and that their experiences do have the relevant phenomenal properties. Brewer's view, however, makes pursuing this strategy impossible.

Again, Brewer accepts the **General Constraint on Thin Looks** and since thick looks are defined in terms of thin looks, it applies to thick looks as well. As we saw, he also holds that the conceptual phenomenology constitutive of thick looks cannot occur in isolation. Like Fish, Brewer is thus barred from suggesting that an erroneous deployment of conceptual capacities—e.g. of capacities associated with the ability to recognize yellowish items—may be that which gives rise to a phenomenology associated with yellowish looks. For him, the only way to side with Hansen et al. would be to introduce a *third* layer of phenomenology. However, doing so would be at odds with his insistence that the way things *look* is the way *things* look. Moreover, it would undermine the motivation underlying **Constitution** since in contrast to the first and second layer of phenomenology, i.e. the layers

phenomenology. Brewer does not discuss illusions of that kind, but could adopt Fish's general strategy. After all, without such beliefs in place, the test subjects whose task it is, after all, to adjust the banana object's color, would surely have to face the fact that—oddly enough—they cannot see the banana object's color.

corresponding to thin and thick looks, this layer of phenomenology would not depend on the presents of suitable mind-independent items. Finally, if it is already unclear how to understand ways of thinly looking and in what sense they constitute the phenomenal dimension of experience, things do not get any clearer if yet another layer of phenomenology is thrown into the mix—let alone two!

5.7 CONCLUSION

Like Fish, Brewer, too, seeks to understand the notion of experiential phenomenology in terms of the subject's being acquainted with mind-independent objects. Ultimately, both thin and thick looks depend on the presence of such objects, and on the similarity relations they are said to stand in with various further kinds of objects. But like Fish's account, Brewer's account, too, left us with many unresolved questions. Importantly, neither provides an account of **Constitution** that allows us to understand how exactly experiential phenomenal is taken to depend on mind-independent items and what the identity conditions are that govern experiential phenomenology.

With respect to the other part of our guiding question, i.e. the question whether relationalist views can accommodate various phenomena that instantiate the **Doxastic Variability of Experiential Phenomenology (DVEP)**, so far, our result is sobering. Both Fish and Brewer assign a prominent role to conceptual capacities (and the beliefs having which the possession of such capacities may require) when it comes to explaining the phenomenal properties or ways things (thickly) look. The former takes it that conceptual capacities enable acquaintance and, thus, for experiences to have phenomenal properties in the first place. The latter takes it that conceptual capacities enable registration of visually relevant similarities, which in turn is said to be a phenomenal matter. However, initial appearances notwithstanding, on neither Fish's nor Brewer's account, the role these capacities are supposed to play is clear enough to yield a satisfactory account of expert vision. Moreover, as the discussion of the banana case brought out, neither of them can accommodate projection effects, nor do they provide resources that are sufficient for offering an alternative way of dealing with such cases.

For Brewer, like for Fish, the banana case—and cases like it—thus pose formidable challenges, challenges that their respective accounts are currently unable to meet. To conclude our consideration of relationalist accounts, I turn, in the next chapter, to a last variant of the relationalist view—James Genone’s Property View.

6.0 RELATIONALISM III: GENONE'S PROPERTY VIEW

One of the main aims James Genone sets for himself is to show that the relational view, if suitably developed, can deal with misleading appearances. In this chapter, I show that like the other relationalists whose accounts we looked at, Genone, too, lacks a convincing account of experiential phenomenology. His account of misleading appearances, however, is structurally interesting. The resources it affords, I argue, are more powerful than even Genone himself realizes. More specifically, I suggest that if a suitable account of experiential phenomenology were available, Genone's account of misleading appearances could be developed in such a way as to accommodate expert vision. The account also seems well-suited to improve over Fish's and Brewer's accounts in the following important respect: it might serve to explain away putative projection effects in a relationalist-friendly fashion.

To get a sense of Genone's relationalist commitments, consider the following passage:

- (1) According to these philosophers [i.e. proponents of the relational view], perception is a relation of direct awareness to objects in the surrounding environment such that objects and their properties are constitutive of perceptual experience, and allowing this fact to play its explanatory role is incompatible with representationalism. (Genone 2014, p. 341)

Moreover, and similarly:

- (2) [Proponents of the relational view insist] on the idea that the epistemological and phenomenological features of perception should be explained entirely in terms of perceivers standing in a relation of direct sensory awareness to mind-independent objects and their properties. This approach pursues a broadly empiricist line of thinking, which holds that perceptual experience must be understood as a psychological state that is in important respects more primitive than states such as belief, imagination, and memory, if central features of these latter states are to be explained as deriving from perception. (Genone 2014, p. 345)

Finally:

- (3) [T]he relational view does not obviously possess the resources to account for experiences in which perceived objects do not have the properties they appear to have (illusions), or in which we do not perceive any objects at all (hallucinations). After all, if perception is just a relation of direct awareness to objects and their properties, how could it involve these sorts of errors? (Genone 2014, p. 342)

The first two passages reflect commitments to each of the three claims that I suggested are characteristic of the relational view: **Acquaintance**, **No Content**, and **Constitution** (cf. 3.1). **Acquaintance** shows up in passages (1) and (2) as the idea that experience is a conscious relation of direct sensory awareness of mind-independent objects in the perceiver's environment and (particular instantiations of) the properties they possess (cf. also: Genone 2014, p. 349). This relation, Genone contends, is epistemically more basic than propositional knowledge of that object, where, as he puts it, "*sensory* awareness contrasts with the sort of cognitive, propositional awareness one might have of an object on the basis of testimony" (ibid., p. 346).

If we assume that he endorses the relational view that he presents, Genone, like Brewer, thus appears to endorse a version of **Basic Acquaintance**.¹ He also joins both Brewer and Campbell in including the subject's point of view among the relata of the perceptual relation. Like Fish and Campbell, he maintains that besides mind-independent objects, the mind-independent relata of the acquaintance relation also include properties. And finally, he, too, holds that which objects and properties enter the perceptual relation, and how these objects appear to the subject, is co-determined by the distribution of the subject's attentional resources.²

¹ In contrast to Brewer, Genone appears to think of acquaintance as an epistemic relation, but as the most basic one (for a pertinent characterization, see Genone 2016, p. 6).

² The way attention comes in slightly differs between Fish's and Brewer's accounts. On the former, attention constrains which facts enter the presentational character of the subject's experience. On the latter, attention becomes relevant in two different ways: for one, it co-determines which of the surrounding objects the subject is acquainted with in the first place. For another, attentional processes will be part of what governs which thin looks that these objects are said to have the subject subsequently registers. That said, Fish, too, might assign additional roles to attention downstream of the selection of presentational facts, such as the role of highlighting particular aspects of one's experience's overall phenomenology. As I will suggest below, attention may play an important role in Genone's account of expert vision.

A rather general version of **Constitution** shows up explicitly in passage (1) as the claim that objects and their properties are constitutive of perceptual experience. Also, **Constitution** is presumably what undergirds a claim issued in passage (2):

Explanatory Completeness

All epistemological and phenomenological features of perception should be explained entirely in terms of the acquaintance relation.

No Content, finally, appears implicitly in both passage (1) and passage (2) as the rejection of representationalism. It naturally goes hand in hand with the relationalist commitment to **Explanatory Completeness**. For to endorse **Explanatory Completeness** is to believe that there is no explanatory role some putative content of perceptual states could play. Accordingly, it is natural for relationalists to suggest that we eschew the idea that it has such content entirely.³

We need not dwell on **No Content** any further. For our guiding question, i.e. the question whether Genone provides a potentially helpful account of experiential phenomenology and whether his account manages to accommodate **DVEP**, it is of no particular importance. But as our previous discussion brought out, relationalists differ significantly in how they construe **Acquaintance** (and the mind-independent relata of the acquaintance relation) and **Constitution**. Indeed, looking at a relationalist's take on these two claims is arguably a good way of bringing out what is distinctive of his or her respective view. Importantly, these two claims form an essential part of what, on the view under consideration, the notion of phenomenology amounts to. Acquiring a sense of what individual relationalists think about **Acquaintance** and **Constitution** is thus a crucial prerequisite for understanding their respective notion of experiential phenomenology. Hence, it is also a prerequisite for assessing the extent to which their respective positions may allow accommodating putative cases of **DVEP**, as is taking note of their respective accounts of illusion and hallucination.

As for the latter, note that in passage (3), Genone concedes that at least *prima facie*, relationalism is ill-poised to provide such an account. And though he sets aside total hallucinations, he acknowledges

³ It is compatible with endorsing **Explanatory Completeness** to hold on to the idea that perceptual experience has content anyway. However, on such a view perceptual contents could not be construed as serving any explanatory role—such as accounting for the ways things appear. Accordingly, since it would be unclear what these contents should be and what role they could play (cf. Genone 2014, p. 350), applying Occam's razor would seem appropriate.

that it is a major criterion of adequacy for relationalist accounts that they provide an account of illusion. The following passage contains two claims that indicate Genone's view on what shape such an account should take:

- (4) [A]pppearances are not properties of psychological states, but rather are mind-independent properties instantiated by objects in the surrounding environment. [...] [P]erceptual illusions can be understood as experiences that tend to produce false judgments. (Genone 2014, p. 340)

In our discussion of Brewer's account, we wondered how to place his notion of looks. Are looks properties of experiences, we asked, or of objects, or—somehow—of both? As the first sentence of passage (4) indicates, Genone clearly positions himself with respect to what he takes appearances to be: mind-independent properties instantiated by specific objects in the subject's environment. This assertion is refreshingly straightforward. I discuss it in 6.1, where I take a closer look at his notion of appearances.

The most pressing issues arise in the context of the question what role appearances may play in a Genonean account of **Constitution**. Given the relationalist commitment to **Explanatory Completeness**, the ability to provide such an account should be an important criterion of adequacy for any relationalist view. I focus on this issue in 6.2. However, the discussion there will be brief; unfortunately, there is very little Genone offers in this regard.⁴

In 6.3, I turn to his account of misleading appearances. I will argue that it is interesting in its own right and that it would provide powerful resources that might allow relationalists to deal with putative cases of **DVEP** if a suitable notion of experiential phenomenology were available. That said, I also show that the account is currently underdeveloped and leaves many important questions unaddressed, so that developing it further is something relationalists should seriously consider.

⁴ Genone's account is much less developed than the accounts discussed previously. As Genone puts it, it is "by no means exhaustive, but [...] provides a starting point for addressing the various different kinds of cases of misleading appearances" (Genone 2014, p. 362). Ultimately, I think that even this modest statement is too optimistic. As I argue below, his account of misleading appearances contains features that are structurally interesting. But as I will also argue, pending fuller accounts of **Constitution** and of how judgments can be based on one's being acquainted with appearances, it remains unclear how being related to appearances puts us in a position to issue judgments—misleading or not—about how things are.

In 6.4, I sum up the discussion of the relationalist positions. Let us turn next to Genone's account of appearances.⁵ As I will suggest, the notion gives rise to a number of clarificatory questions that would need to be answered in order to make it fully intelligible.

6.1 APPEARANCES AS MIND-INDEPENDENT PROPERTIES

Qua relationalist, Genone maintains that through perceptual experience, subjects are acquainted with mind-independent objects and with the properties they instantiate. Curiously enough, he provides no account of what he takes the specific role of acquaintance with objects to be. For all one can determine, objects, on his account, merely serve as the bearers of properties.⁶ But patently, Genone assigns a special importance to the perception of what he calls *appearance properties* or, for short, *appearances*. As we saw in passage (3) above, he maintains that appearances are not properties of psychological states, but entirely mind-independent properties of objects.⁷ Moreover, he insists that appearances are not individuated in terms of experiences or any other mental state they may (typically) cause in subjects that are perceptually related to them. Accordingly, Genone rejects a position suggested by Sidney

⁵ A very different relationalist notion of appearance properties has recently been suggested at by Ori Beck. According to him, appearance properties are properties of *subjects*, viz. the property of being appeared to in a certain way, which in turn are completely determined by the subject's neuro-computational properties (cf. Beck 2018, pp. 18-19).

Appearance properties, Beck suggests, do not completely determine perceptual phenomenology. Instead, the latter is fixed by instantiations of the appearance relation, schematically: *x perceptually appears W to S* relation, where *x* is a variable satisfied by for a mind-independent object and *W* a predicate associated with a suitable appearance property (cf. *ibid.*, p. 20). I cannot discuss Beck's view here, not least because he, too, offers it only as a sketch. Instead, I simply note the following: Beck claims that if two experiences e_1 and e_2 are such that they involve the same appearance properties, but only one of them is a perception, e_1 and e_2 differ phenomenologically. But he provides no explanation of how this phenomenal difference is to be construed. More generally, Beck, just like all the relationalists whose views we have analyzed, owes us an account of what the phenomenology of experience is so that appearance properties and the subject's standing in certain appearance relations can be said to co-constitute it.

⁶ This marks a difference to Fish's account. For Fish, recall, the identity of phenomenal properties depends in part on which specific objects constitute the presentational character of the perceiving subject's experience.

⁷ Patently, Genone presupposes a pre-theoretical understanding of what appearances are and then suggests that whatever he takes to be antecedently understood needs to be characterized in a novel way: as mind-independent properties of objects. Arguably, most problems with his account trace back to the fact that he never spells out what that antecedent understanding is. This fact, combined with his way of characterizing what it is for appearances to be mind-independent that I will discuss shortly, makes it hard to see what the appearance properties his account so heavily relies on are supposed to be.

Shoemaker, who construes appearances as dispositions objects may possess to cause various kinds of experiences in perceivers (Shoemaker 2006). Instead, Genone offers the following suggestion:

- (5) [A]pppearances are [relational] properties of objects they possess in virtue of their intrinsic properties, properties such as shape, size, and (as I will assume for present purposes) colour [...] [,] and various environmental conditions such as illumination or the medium of light transmission. [...] [A]pppearances are not themselves dispositions, they are the *manifestations* of dispositions, and part of what is involved in an object possessing certain intrinsic properties is being disposed to appear various ways in various conditions. (Genone 2014, p. 357)

According to Genone, appearances, thus, are entirely mind-independent relational properties of objects, manifestations of dispositions to appear various ways in various environmental conditions that objects have anyway, which in turn is a matter of their having certain intrinsic properties. And since they are entirely mind-independent, he claims that “which appearances an object has is entirely independent of the discriminative capacities of perceivers or their inclinations to make judgments about the intrinsic properties of an object on the basis of its appearances” (Genone 2014, p. 358).

Let us add two further data points. First, Genone claims that subjects may fail to discriminate between two different appearances (Genone 2014, p. 358). Such indiscriminability, he suggests, can be due to facts about the subjects’ sensory physiology. Presumably, it can also rest on the distribution of subjects’ attentional resources while perceiving the relevant objects and the appearance properties they anyway have. Second, Genone asserts that numerically distinct objects can be the same with respect to their (intrinsic) observable properties. If so, he holds, the two objects will be the same with respect to their appearance properties also (*ibid.*, fn. 26). On his view, thus, sameness of (intrinsic) observable properties apparently is, or yields, sameness with respect to appearances.

At this point, various questions arise. Consider, first, the claim that appearances are entirely mind-independent relational properties that objects manifest, in certain circumstance, in virtue of the intrinsic properties they possess. What kind of property is an appearance?⁸ And what is it for an object

⁸ Note that the first sentence in passage (5) is somewhat ambiguous. On one reading, size, shape, and color *are* examples of appearance properties. On another reading—which, I assume, is the one Genone intends—size, shape, and color are examples of intrinsic properties of objects in virtue of which, Genone claims, objects possess (or instantiate, or manifest) their appearances. On the first reading, appearances could just be observable properties of objects. If the second reading is right, appearances could be properties objects manifest in virtue of having certain observable properties (which leaves it still unclear what kind or properties appearances are).

to manifest one? Also, which environing circumstances serve as the stimulus conditions in which objects manifest appearances? For an object, *o*, to appear some way or other—must there be some observer around that *o* appears *to*? Genone holds that we should distinguish between an object *having* a particular appearance, and a subject *perceiving* the object's appearance on a given occasion (Genone 2014, p. 358). This can be read as the suggestion that objects can have (or manifest) their appearances regardless of whether they are perceived or not. If so, then it seems that part of what it is for appearance properties of objects to be entirely mind-independent is for the objects to simply manifest these properties in suitable circumstances, where the latter may include illumination and the medium of light transmission, say, but not the presence of suitably equipped or positioned observers.

To bring out this out more sharply, we can ask how Genone would have us think about objects in worlds in which no observers exist. Suppose, for instance, some universe-wide catastrophe wiped out all life in the universe and made the development of life in it impossible for all time to come. After the catastrophic event, would objects stop manifesting their appearance properties? Or would Genone insist that they keep manifesting them—unperturbed, as it were, by the current and future absence of observers? In a parallel fashion, we can consider a very early state of the universe that is impossible for us (or anyone else) to observe. Did objects manifest appearance properties then? If so, would they have manifested them if observers had, for contingent reasons, never developed or if it had been impossible for observers to ever develop?

The following response seems perfectly intuitive: the objects figuring in such hypothetical scenarios *would* manifest certain appearances if—*per impossibile*—suitably equipped and positioned observers were around (and, arguably, different appearances if the observers were equipped and/or positioned differently) and attended to these objects. Note, however, that on this intuitive view, the presence of suitable observers is among the stimulus conditions that govern the manifestation of the disposition that objects are said to anyway have to appear in various ways: objects thus cannot manifest the relevant appearances unless suitable observers are around. Arguably, stimulus conditions are part of the identity conditions of dispositions and, as such of what individuates an object's disposition to

appear in certain ways.⁹ But if so, then so does the kind of observer listed among those conditions—and, presumably, the kind of mental state caused in them as they perceptually relate to the respective objects. And if what appearance an object manifests depends on the kind of observer that is present, the relevant appearance property, too, is individuated at least in part by reference to the kind of observer involved, and, presumably, to the kind of mental state caused in them as they perceptually relate to the object.

Genone, however, must resist this intuitive view. After all, he insists that for objects to have or manifest an appearance is one thing, for an observer to perceive it quite another. Apparently, he wants to reject that there are conceptual ties between the notions of an appearance and that of (kinds of) observers completely. The problem, however, is this: if these ties are indeed severed, it becomes somewhat mysterious what the appearances are that Genone is talking about. It seems, for instance, quite consistent with the view as we have reconstructed it that objects permanently manifest appearances that would and indeed could not appear to anyone. However, without any reference to (possible) observers and some psychological or phenomenal states that their being appeared to brings about, it remains unclear what such appearances, or appearances generally, should be. Relatedly, it remains mysterious how to distinguish properties that are appearances from properties that are not.

Pending an account that shows how Genone thinks what appearances are and how to distinguish them from other properties, I contend, we should treat his claim that appearances are entirely mind-independent with caution. At the very least, it remains open to us to claim that if objects can manifest properties that are properly labelled *appearances*, the presence of a suitable observer should be listed among the stimulus conditions that trigger the relevant dispositions, i.e. the dispositions to appear various ways (to observers that are both suitably equipped and positioned) in various circumstances.

⁹ The question how to characterize the identity conditions and how to individuate properties, especially dispositions, is, of course, a vexed one and I cannot here fully engage with it (nor does Genone). That said, note that a common distinction between kinds of properties is the distinction between pure and impure properties, where the identity of latter, but not the former, is fixed by reference to a particular. With respect to appearance properties, one can thus wonder whether they are supposed to be pure or impure properties in this sense. Genone remains silent about this issue. But since he wants to accommodate the idea that different objects can have the same appearance property, it stands to argue that Genone must take appearance properties to be pure properties. Presumably, thus, an appearance property will be a *property of appearing [some way]* and not *[some specific object]'s property of appearing [some way]*.

A further question is how we are to understand the relation Genone thinks obtains between the entirely mind-independent appearance properties that objects are said to manifest in certain environmental conditions and the ways things look to (certain kinds of) subjects. Again, to say that appearances are properties of objects, manifestations of dispositions to appear various ways, and to construe such manifestations in terms of objects' presenting certain looks to suitably equipped and positioned subjects seems at odds with the idea that appearances are individuated independently of how objects look to (certain kinds of) subjects. But if we suggest that appearances manifest as ways things look to perceivers, appearances again appear to be properties of experiences, not of objects.

The first upshot of our discussion, then, is that Genone leaves us without a fully satisfactory account of what appearances are. And without an account of **Constitution**, we have no sense of how the mind-independent appearances that objects anyway manifest are supposed to determine or constitute *ways things look to subjects*. The problem we are facing is thus one that is familiar from our brief discussion of Campbell's view: it is simply not obvious how appearances, construed as entirely mind-independent properties that objects anyway manifest, relative to certain environing conditions, could also be properties of experiences—if that is what *ways things look to subjects* are. For if we take seriously what Genone insists on, i.e. that appearances of objects are not individuated in terms of psychological states of perceivers, it remains an open question how appearances, so construed, relate to such states. If so, it also remains unclear how considerations about such states—i.e. considerations pertaining to *how objects look to subjects* as subjects are acquainted with these objects and the appearances they anyway manifest—have any bearing on whether appearances and observable intrinsic properties of objects are distinct, as Genone seems to suggest.

Further questions abound. What, for example, determines which of the appearances that objects anyway manifest a subject's experience relates her to? As we saw above, Genone appears to credit attention with some role: he claims that which objects and properties enter the perceptual relation, and how these objects appear to the subject, is co-determined by the distribution of the subject's attentional resources. Presumably, then, Genone thinks that which among the appearance properties that an object anyway manifests a given subject's experience relates her to depends on what she attends

to. That attention selects which features of an object enter the perceptual relation, and how, and that this may in turn affect the way the object appears to the subject can readily be granted. But again, as things stand, it is unclear how the notion of an object's appearing, or looking, *to a subject* is to be construed. Accordingly, what exactly the role is that Genone thinks attention plays in generating how objects appear or look to subjects remains an open question as well.

Another question, one directly pertinent to our guiding question, is this: could what the subject *S* believes or knows and what conceptual capacities *S* possesses play a role, too, in settling which among the appearance properties that an object *o* anyway manifest *S*'s experience of *o* relates *S* to? Could an object—an x-ray tube, say—manifest certain appearance properties (anyway) that are discriminable only to experts? Could false beliefs about the perceived object, or the actualization of inappropriate conceptual capacities, prevent observers from being acquainted with appearance properties that if being perceived might put them under some rational pressure to revise their beliefs? On the assumption of **Explanatory Completeness**, a subject's beliefs cannot, on Genone's view, affect the phenomenal features of perception directly—whatever the account of such features may be. Rather, such features would have to be explained entirely in terms of the acquaintance relation. The only way for knowledgeable beliefs to affect the phenomenology of experience would thus be in a way that is mediated via the acquaintance relation.

Suppose Genone allowed that such effects are possible. If so, his account would appear to have some similarities with Fish's account, on which conceptual capacities enable environing facts to feature in the presentational character of the subject's experience.¹⁰ On Genone's account, the role attributed to such capacities would then be to govern which of the appearances objects anyway manifest can enter the perceptual relation.

Recall, however, that Genone endorses **Basic Acquaintance**. If so, one may doubt that the idea is available to him that for subjects to sometimes—let alone generally—be acquainted with appearance properties requires (either sometimes or generally) the possession of certain conceptual capacities—

¹⁰ By the same token, it would differ from Brewer's account, since on it, thin looks are considered belief-independent.

and thus what subjects know or whatever epistemic abilities possessing the relevant conceptual capacities may in turn require. If so, however, then it may also be doubtful that he can accommodate the phenomenon of *expert vision*.¹¹

Before I discuss what little Genone has to say about the **Constitution** of perceptual experience in 6.2, let me briefly return to one of the data points listed above. Recall that according to Genone, objects that are identical with respect to their observable properties instantiate the same appearances in the same environmental conditions.¹² Next, consider two objects— o_1 and o_2 —and two subjects— S_1 and S_2 —whose sensory physiologies differ. More specifically, let us stipulate that relative to the sensory physiology of S_1 , o_1 and o_2 have the same observable properties, while relative to the sensory physiology of S_2 , they do not. Suppose both S_1 and S_2 undergo experiences that perceptually relate them to o_1 and o_2 in identical environmental conditions. Now let us ask: are the appearances that o_1 and o_2 manifest, respectively, the same or different in both cases?

Pretheoretically, a tempting response might be this: o_1 and o_2 manifest the same appearances to S_1 , but different ones to S_2 . Unfortunately, Genone's contention that identity in observable properties yields identity in appearance properties falls far short of constituting a full account of how observable properties and appearance properties are related. Without further restriction, the contention is for instance consistent with the idea that objects that differ in what observable properties they have may nevertheless manifest the same appearances.¹³ Either way, observability is surely a property objects have relative not just to enviroing conditions, but also to kinds of observers. And if what observable properties an object possesses at least co-determines what appearance properties an object manifests, then what appearance properties an object manifests will also be relative to kinds of observers. If so,

¹¹ The situation need not be hopeless. I return to the issue in 6.3.2.

¹² In the context of the issues discussed earlier, this claim provides some evidence that Genone thinks that objects have their appearance properties (somehow) in virtue of their observable intrinsic properties after all. If so, then perhaps, his dropping the qualification 'observable' in passage (6) above is just an oversight. Even then, however, it remains still open what exactly appearance properties are, how they are supposed to be grounded in an object's intrinsic properties—observable or not—, and how they relate to how things look to (certain kinds of) subjects.

¹³ In other words, the appearance properties an object manifests could supervene on its intrinsic properties (observable or not) in such a way that a difference in appearance properties of two objects entails a difference in their intrinsic properties, while a difference in their intrinsic properties does not, or not always, necessitate a difference in their appearance properties.

however, then on an assumption relationalists will surely endorse—namely that features of objects that are observable for a certain kind of subject are those features that tend to bring about certain psychological states in that kind of subject (given suitable circumstances)—it appears, yet again, that *pace* Genone, appearance properties, so construed, would be individuated relative to psychological states of (kinds of) perceivers after all.

Presumably, however, Genone is more likely to insist that o_1 and o_2 differ in what appearances they anyway manifest. He might e.g. suggest the following: o_1 and o_2 differ in what intrinsic properties they have in such a way that they differ in which observable properties they have relative to different observers. Let an object's *overall observability* be characterized in terms of the set of all the observable properties the object possesses relative to all different kinds of possible observers. On that assumption, o_1 and o_2 differ in their overall observability. If we assume again that an object's observable properties co-determine its appearance properties, then o_1 and o_2 could well differ in what appearances they manifest overall.

This suggestion, note, fits Genone's stipulation that objects that differ in what appearances they manifest can be indiscriminable to perceivers. Applied to the present case, Genone could thus suggest that S_1 's sensory physiology is not as sensitive as the corresponding physiology of S_2 . Accordingly, S_1 does less well when it comes to discriminating various appearances that objects anyway manifest than S_2 . Hence, to S_1 , o_1 and o_2 look the same, though their appearances differ, whereas to S_2 , they do not.

However, note that on this proposal, too, the appearance properties an object manifests are still relative to the observable properties it possesses relative to kinds of possible observers. Assuming, again, that features of objects that are observable for a certain kind of subject just are those very features that tend to bring about a certain set of psychological states in that kind of subject, appearance properties are thus still individuated relative to psychological states of (kinds of) perceivers.

In sum, Genone's contention that sameness in observable properties is sameness in appearance properties is suggestive as it indicates that he thinks that there is some tight link between these kinds of properties. If, however, we take this suggestion seriously, we are again face-to-face with the question what the entirely mind-independent appearance properties are supposed to be.

I do not purport to have knock-down arguments against Genone's notion of appearance properties. Perhaps he can clarify the notion further, shed light on the relation between appearances and observable intrinsic properties, and on the way appearances determine how things look to (certain kinds of) subjects. Perhaps he will suggest that both an object's observable properties and its appearance properties depend on its intrinsic properties, and spell this out in such a way that the appearance properties do not truly depend on observable properties. Even so, I contend that at least currently, his notion of entirely mind-independent appearances remains less than fully clear. Moreover, even if we grant that appearances are in some interesting sense entirely mind-independent, the question remains how such objective properties relate to how things look to subjects, i.e. to the phenomenology of the subject's experience. I turn to this issue next.¹⁴

6.2 GENONE'S (MISSING) ACCOUNT OF CONSTITUTION

Recall Campbell's claim that mind-independent qualitative features of objects constitute the phenomenal features of experience. Given that he appears to understand constitution in terms of identity, we wondered (with Fish and others—relationalists and representationalists alike) how the qualitative features of objects could possibly *be* (the phenomenal) properties of experiences. Genone sometimes appears to equate the appearance properties an object manifests with *ways things look to subjects*. And though it is tempting to construe the expression '*ways things look to subjects*' as a way of characterizing the subject's experiential phenomenology, such a view, if Genone endorsed it, would raise the same question as Campbell's.

But Genone repeatedly denies that appearances are properties of experiences and keeps insisting that they are objective, mind-independent properties of objects. Further, they are said to be

¹⁴ If Genone's account of appearances is unclear already, this should strongly constrain how intelligible his account of experiential phenomenology can possibly be that such appearances are said to constitute. It is quite striking that though Genone accepts **Explanatory Completeness**, he has so little to say about **Constitution**, which is why I decided to devote a brief and frustratingly confusing section to the topic.

manifestation of dispositions that objects anyway have, properties objects *display* in suitable enviroing circumstances (Genone 2014, p. 357), properties of objects subjects may (fail to) *perceive* (ibid., p. 358, p. 364, and *passim*) or *experience* (ibid., p. 366, fn. 34), properties subjects can *attend to* (or not) (ibid., p. 366), and that perceivers may (fail to) be able to *discriminate* or *tell apart* from each other (ibid., p. 363).

Either way, if appearances are not properties of experience, but properties of mind-independent objects, the question how they give rise to the phenomenal features of experience becomes pressing. Given Genone's professed commitment to **Explanatory Completeness**, we should expect him to provide some relationalist account that shows how the phenomenology of perception can be explained entirely by reference to acquaintance relations subjects stand in with mind-independent items. Unfortunately, it is hard to get a fix on Genone's view on this issue, as a quick survey brings out of the passages in which he touches upon it. As we saw in passage (1), he endorses the general claim that perceptual experience is constituted by mind-independent objects and properties. He also makes the following more specific claims about appearances: appearances, he suggests, "are partly constitutive of" the phenomenology of experience (Genone 2014, p. 343), which, as he puts it, "is [generally] constituted by the phenomena encountered therein" (ibid.; also: Genone 2016, p. 13).¹⁵ Suppose the phenomena one encounters in a given perceptual experience, including appearances, constitute or co-constitute that experience's phenomenology. If so, how are we to think about constitution and about what is thus constituted? If appearances are not themselves properties of experience, is it fair to think about the phenomenology of an experience in terms of properties it

¹⁵ This latter claim is a statement about the phenomenology of *experience*, not of *perception*, where 'perception' may be taken to refer to the successful case, while 'experience' may also refer to cases of illusion and hallucination (sometimes Genone makes this distinction explicit, e.g. in Genone 2016, p.16). In other words, Genone's claim that appearances are partly constitutive of the phenomenology of *experience* is compatible with the idea that acquaintance with appearance properties is fully constitutive of *perceptual* phenomenology. Sometimes that is what he seems to say, e.g. when he asserts, without qualification, that the appearance properties an object manifests "constitute the way the object appears in those environmental conditions" (Genone 2014, p. 366). Sometimes, however, he adds qualifications, e.g. when he claims that "perceptual experience [but not, or at least not explicitly, its phenomenology] is [only] partly constituted by awareness of particular appearances" (Genone 2014, p. 358, fn. 28), which may indicate that he thinks that other factors are in play after all. Given **Explanatory Completeness**, I think that he should *want* to assert that the phenomenology of perception (but not of experience more broadly construed) is indeed fully constituted by the appearance properties the subject's experience relates her to. Unfortunately, he never does.

possesses? If so, how do appearances constitute such properties?¹⁶ Perceptual experience, on Genone’s relational view, is a relation with mind-independent objects. But is it also a psychological state? On the one hand, one may think that affirming the latter resonates with Genone’s (somewhat obscure) remark that “appearances *figure in* the psychological states of perceivers” (ibid., p. 358, emphasis added). On the other hand, it is not obvious how a relation that is partly constituted by mind-independent objects could also be a psychological state of a subject.

Sometimes Genone expresses the view that the traditional notion of the phenomenology of experience—if construed as the phenomenal character of experience, or in terms of the property of what experience is like—is problematic. It fails, he asserts, to capture the putative fact that mind-independent objects and properties are experienced as immediately present (Genone 2016, p. 13). Of course, without a clearer sense of how to think about that traditional notion of phenomenology, this charge is hard to assess. But even if it had force—even, that is, if Genone were right that the notion of phenomenal character is “descriptively flawed when it comes to characterizing the phenomenology of perception” (ibid.)—we are still completely in the dark as to what Genone’s relational alternative account of experiential phenomenology is supposed to be.¹⁷

Some passages support the contention that according to Genone, experiential phenomenology is not—or perhaps not just—a psychological state. For one, Genone states that he rejects “the idea that phenomenology by definition encompasses only psychological phenomena” (ibid., p. 356, fn. 23). For another, he claims that “[a]n explanation of the total phenomenology of experience can constitutively

¹⁶ Note that if Genone thinks about the phenomenology of experience as being constituted by the mind-independent appearance properties that one encounters in that experience, on his view, like on Fish’s, it may be difficult to accommodate a notion of phenomenal identity, i.e. a notion on which two experiences that involve relations to different appearance properties can be phenomenally the same.

¹⁷ As Genone indicates, his concern about the traditional notion rests on issues having to do with transparency, i.e., roughly, the idea that as we try to attend to features of our experience, all we seem to be able to focus on are the properties of what is experienced, whereas the putative properties of experience themselves remain transparent (the claim that experience is transparent has been coined by, and is often attributed to, Moore 1959; see Gupta 2019, chapter 5, for an argument to the effect that Moore did not endorse it). As Genone concedes, it is unclear that the introspective impression one may have that one’s experience is transparent distinguishes veridical from illusory or hallucinatory experiences, which are, arguably, constituted in a way that differs from the way perceptual experiences are constituted. Regardless of whether the phenomenon of transparency is taken to cast doubt on the traditional notion of experience, however, it remains the case that as long as the relationalist alternative is not fully on the table, one cannot assess whether it is any more convincing.

(as opposed to causally) involve elements independent of the subject's mind." (ibid., p. 368, fn. 36). Presumably, these passages are supposed to make room for the thought that experiential phenomenology may encompass appearances and may be explained in a way that constitutively involves them, though they are not themselves psychological phenomena.¹⁸ But unfortunately, Genone's claims are hardly more than promissory notes of an account. For again, in absence of an account of **Constitution** and of how to think about the phenomenology of experience so constituted, the claim that appearances are (partly) constitutive of the phenomenology of experience remains opaque, as does the contention that the phenomenology of experience can be explained in a way that constitutively involves appearances.¹⁹

The situation is thus at least mildly frustrating, but structurally similar to the one we encountered when discussing Fish's and Brewer's respective views. Fish left us without a clear account of how properties and conceptual capacities are to be individuated in a way that enables them to play the role he thinks they do. Brewer left us without a clear account of the similarity relations that are said to obtain between objects and paradigm exemplars of various (possible) kinds of objects. And Genone, too, leaves us without an entirely clear notion of entirely mind-independent appearance properties. Likewise, Fish leaves us in the dark as to how acquaintance with facts relates and grounds phenomenal properties (across different individuals, and in a way that respects the idea that experiences of different objects can share phenomenal properties). Brewer leaves us in the dark as to how similarity relations are supposed to ground thin looks (and what these are). And Genone, too, leaves us without an account of how appearances, perhaps in conjunction with other factors, constitute the phenomenology of perception and/or experience.

¹⁸ In a different context, Genone asserts the following: "How things appear to a perceiving subject, however, is another way of talking about an experience's phenomenology" (Genone 2016, p. 9). Presumably, what he means to say is that *talk about* how things appear to subjects is talk about phenomenology. But as long as we have no idea how to get from a notion of mind-independent appearances to a notion of how things appear *to subjects*, this assertion remains uninformative.

¹⁹ Nor does changing the imagery help. For when Genone suggests that the phenomenology of experience might *encompass* appearances, or that appearances can *figure in* subjects' psychological states, what exactly is being asserted is not any clearer.

Given Genone's explicit commitment to **Explanatory Completeness**, this is a highly unsatisfactory result. The dissatisfaction, however, is not limited to Genone's account. Instead, it carries over to the competing relationalist accounts of experiential phenomenology, too.

At the outset of this chapter, I noted that one of Genone's main aims is to show that relationalists are in a good position to accommodate misleading appearances. Given the worries raised so far, we are, in effect, without a fully satisfactory account of what appearances are, of how they can be properties of objects, and how they can be at the same time something that is somehow available to the subject and that could serve any of the epistemic or semantic roles that Genone might wish to attribute to them. Genone's relationalist account, in sum, is incomplete at best. As it stands, it can neither be fully assessed nor accepted.

Despite these misgivings, I think that his account of misleading appearances is structurally interesting. In what follows, I will assume—for the sake of the argument—that some relationalist notion of appearances and some notion of experiential phenomenology is available. I will assume, that is, that there are phenomenally distinct ways of being aware of various mind-independent appearances that jointly ground a notion of experiential phenomenology. Up to now, none of the relationalists whose views we considered has been able to provide such an account, including Genone. Nevertheless, I think that looking at Genone's account of misleading appearances is instructive. It affords a novel strategy of how, as a relationalist, one could seek to accommodate phenomena putatively falling under **DVEP**—a strategy, curiously, that Genone himself overlooks.

In the following section, I argue for the following conditional claim: if a coherent relationalist account of appearances and the phenomenology of experience *were* available, the structural features of Genone's account of misleading appearances might provide relationalists with a way to accommodate not just cases of expert vision, but also with resources powerful enough to achieve a remarkable feat, *viz.* to devise a strategy for explaining away projection effects.

6.3 MISLEADING APPEARANCES AND DVEP

In perceptual experience, Genone holds, the world always is the way it appears to the subject as being. As we saw in the previous two sections, Genone takes appearances to be entirely mind-independent relational properties of objects, properties they manifest given certain environing conditions. Of course, if appearances are indeed entirely mind-independent properties of objects, and thus form part of what the world is anyway, the claim that the world always is the way it appears is rather unsurprising. As I argued in 6.1, Genone's account of mind-independent appearances remains obscure. Moreover, given the survey conducted in the previous section, that the world always is the way it appears *to subjects* is an even less perspicuous claim, at least as long as an account of the constitutive relation between appearance properties of objects and ways things appear *to subjects* that entails it is pending.

These issues are serious, and to repeat, I do not think that Genone's account can be accepted unless they are resolved. That said, as indicated, in this section, I shall bracket them and simply suppose that they can somehow be addressed. What, then, are we to make of Genone's claim that perceptual experience, as the relationalist construes it, can involve misleading appearances?

6.3.1 Misleading Appearances

Qua relationalist, Genone cannot accommodate the idea of misleading appearances by accepting the thought that such appearances involve inaccurate representations. He develops his alternative account by way of considering doxastic approaches to perception. On such approaches, Genone reports, appearances—misleading or not—are to be explained “in terms of the propensity to cause various beliefs,” in terms of “*the way one is inclined to judge things to be* on the base of experience,” or in terms of “the judgments one would make on the basis of perceptual experience” (Genone 2014, p. 253). From Genone's point of view, the appeal of doxastic accounts rests on the following fact: proponents of such views can assert that appearances can be misleading—by way of causing or inclining one to issue false beliefs or judgments—and at the same time reject that the idea that the property appearances can

have of being misleading must rest on some property appearances also possess: that of representing things as being some way they are not. For all that proponents of doxastic accounts claim is that appearances have the propensity to (somehow) bring about states that have representational content in the perceiving subject. But this claim is perfectly compatible with the idea that appearances themselves have no representational content at all.

As Genone points out, doxastic accounts face counter-examples. As e.g. the phenomenon of known illusion shows, appearances cannot simply be explained in terms of the judgments we would make on the basis of the experience involving them. For illusions, once recognized, incline subjects to making different judgments than they did prior to their being so recognized. But if appearances were explained in terms of the judgments we would make on the basis of the experience involving them, it seems that illusions, once known, should acquire a different appearance. Given that many illusions are fairly robust, this consequence is counterintuitive. And though defenders of doxastic approaches are not entirely without resources to address such cases, Genone ultimately rejects such accounts for a different reason, albeit one that we have already encountered: he wants to keep the individuation of appearances independent of facts about what psychological states they may (typically) cause in suitable perceivers. Whether he succeeds in doing so is of course an issue we have already raised. Either way, since clearly, on doxastic accounts, appearances are individuated in terms of beliefs, judgments, or propensities to cause them, doxastic approaches are at odds with Genone's insistence on the idea that appearance properties are entirely mind-independent.

That said, Genone suggests that one can simply drop the claim that appearance properties are *individuated* by the mental states they tend to cause, while holding on to the idea that for perceiving subjects to perceive certain kinds of appearance properties may lead them to form certain beliefs or judgments.

The idea, apparently, is roughly the following: if a subject S 's experience relates S to a given object, o , that has certain kinds of appearance properties, then S may²⁰ judge, on the basis of her perception of these properties, that things are a certain way. In this context, the following passage is instructive:

- (6) [W]hat determines whether or not a subject can judge accurately on the basis of an experience is her implicit understanding of the relationship between appearances and the intrinsic properties of objects in various environmental conditions. [...] Perceptual experiences are misleading when we are insufficiently familiar with the environmental conditions surrounding the objects we are perceiving, such that their appearances lead us to draw false conclusions. We need not be misled, however, if we are attuned to the relations between the appearances of objects and their intrinsic properties. [...] What I am proposing is that whether or not a perceived appearance is misleading depends on the subject's understanding of the relationship between appearances and intrinsic properties in different contexts. (Genone 2014, pp. 363-4).

Patently, Genone thinks that whether subjects lack or possess the capacity to issue accurate perceptual judgments in response to their experience depends on their implicit understanding of how the appearances an object o manifests in various circumstances relate to o 's intrinsic properties.²¹ Whether the perceptual judgments one can issue in response to a given experience are correct thus depends, in a broad sense, on whether the beliefs are correct that form the set of one's (implicit and explicit) doxastic context. This dependence on background beliefs is a crucial and, I think, powerful feature of Genone's account. It is powerful because it allows him to accommodate the idea that the same appearance, if encountered by subjects who differ with respect to what they believe, can lead them to endorse different beliefs and judgments.

To bring this out, let us briefly consider an example that Genone discusses as well—the Müller-Lyer illusion. Suppose you are unfamiliar with it. If so, you might be misled upon seeing an instance of it by taking the way things look to you as indicating that the two horizontal lines the illusion involves differ in length.²² In such a case, the appearance you perceive is misleading in the following sense: as you form a judgment or a belief on the basis of perceiving it, your judgment or belief is false.

²⁰ How the modality involved here is to be understood points to an issue I will return to below.

²¹ Again, in this subsection I take it that appearances are something that subjects are phenomenally aware of.

²² Surely, something must be said about what it is for an appearance to indicate something. That appearances 'might seem to indicate' something—presumably the obtaining of certain facts—is an expression Genone himself employs in his discussion of the Müller-Lyer (Genone 2014, p. 363). Unfortunately, he does not explain it. I return to this and related issues below.

Conversely, suppose you know the illusion. If so, you may still concede that the appearance the two lines manifest is such that things look to you such that in other contexts, you might be misled so as to form, on the basis of your experience, the false judgment or belief that the lines differ in length. However, given that you are familiar with the illusion, you will, in the context at hand and on the basis of your experience, judge correctly that the lines are of equal length. In this case, your background beliefs are such that upon perceiving the appearance, you are (somehow) enabled to form, on the basis of perceiving it, judgments that are correct. In the context of a background view that is sufficiently correct, the appearance is no longer misleading.

But let us also note the following: that appearances are not misleading in the sense specified does not entail that the correct judgments that subjects may form based on perceiving them will be properly justified. Relatedly, for an appearance not to be misleading in the sense specified does not require the background view to be correct. This comes out once we acknowledge that false and irrational background beliefs can conspire in such a way as to yield true perceptual judgments. Suppose, for example, one erroneously believed that today is Tuesday and also held the irrational belief that only on Tuesdays, the appearance manifested by the Müller-Lyer illusion (in the circumstances at hand) is an appearance of two lines that are equal in length. A subject *S* who currently holds these beliefs and who perceives the appearance manifested by the Müller-Lyer may well be led, on the basis of her experience, to issue what we, too, would endorse as a true perceptual judgment, i.e. that the two lines are equal in length. But arguably, its justificatory status is deficient. It is ill-justified or—as we may perhaps say—ill-founded. For it arises because *S*'s background view, which governs how the perception of various appearances relates to perceptual judgments that *S* is inclined to issue in response to her experience, involves false and irrational beliefs.

For present purposes, the crucial upshot is this: the claim that what judgments subjects issue on the basis of their experience depends on their background beliefs allows Genone to accommodate the

following idea: perceptual experience itself is never erroneous.²³ Perceptual error, he holds, is never a matter of perception itself, but always the result of some mistaken background beliefs—beliefs about what the objects are like in one’s environment that give rise to the appearance one perceives.

Such mistakes, let us note, may come in various flavors. One can be mistaken about which appearances objects that possess certain intrinsic properties are disposed to manifest in various enviroing circumstances, including the circumstances one finds oneself in. As a result, one may, upon perceiving a given appearance, issue a mistaken judgment about what kind of object the appearance one perceives is an appearance *of*. Similarly, one can be correct about which appearances certain objects are disposed to manifest in certain conditions, but unaware that other objects can exhibit such appearances as well. Alternatively, one can be wrong about the enviroing conditions one finds oneself in. Further, one could be right about all of the above, but attend to the appearances the objects one faces manifest in a suboptimal way so as to mistake what appearance one perceives for another one.

The kind of error mentioned last may seem to differ from the previous ones. For while committing it, the fault appears to rest at least in part on the fact that one’s perception is, as it were, degraded. However, even cases in which perception is for some reason or other degraded are such that the judgments one bases on them can be correct (or at least not false). One could, for instance, know that while having the relevant perceptual experience, one’s attention is suboptimal and consequently refrain from endorsing any potentially false judgments, perhaps even issue a correct judgment as to what the degraded perception may have been an experience of. In other words, perception that is in one way or other degraded in and of itself need not lead to perceptual error—if it does, the reason is that in issuing one’s perceptual belief, one (perhaps implicitly) relies on false beliefs, e.g. on beliefs about whether or not one’s current perceptual experience is degraded.

²³ Indeed, their commitment to **No Content** and their ability to accommodate the idea that experience itself is never erroneous are the two main respects in which Genone takes relationalist to differ from representationalist accounts (cf. Genone 2014, p. 345).

With Genone's account of misleading appearances on the table, let us ask, next, whether it affords the resources to deal with putative cases of **DVEP**. As I will argue in 6.3.4, in its current shape, the account of misleading appearances is underdeveloped in various ways. Even so, the prospects it affords for accommodating putative cases of **DVEP** are quite promising.

6.3.2 Genonean Expert Vision

Let us stay with the idea we just discussed: what judgments subjects issue on the basis of perceiving a given appearance can vary with what they believe. Consequently, if our beliefs change in a suitable way, illusions can cease to mislead us—as the Müller-Lyer example illustrated.²⁴ Likewise, acquiring new beliefs can make subjects prone to have new illusions. It is a common phenomenon that when one is excited about a fact one has just recently discovered, or a belief one has acquired, one tends to see it everywhere. Consider, for instance, a scientist who has just discovered that a certain set of phenomena can be neatly accounted for in a certain way. He might become so excited about this discovery that he begins to apply his explanatory strategy to various other phenomena as well.²⁵ Doing so can be very productive. However, his excitement may also get the better of him. Upon perceiving appearances that mistakenly strike him as sufficiently similar to the ones his account allows him to successfully explain, he may be inclined to issue false judgments—which prior to his discovery, he would not have done.

There is nothing in this example Genone should object to. He would insist, however, that as far as perceptual experience is concerned, changes in one's background view and, accordingly, in what judgments one might accordingly issue based on one's experience, cannot affect what appearances objects anyway manifest. And if appearances (somehow) constitute how things look to subjects, such changes cannot, at least not *eo ipso*, change how things look to subjects, either. As far as the case of

²⁴ Again, the views such changes yield need not be correct or justified.

²⁵ Similarly, if one somehow acquires the belief that an alien race of shape-shifting reptilians secretly runs the world, one can become prone to see them at work everywhere.

the overly excited scientist is concerned, what changes, thus, is just which judgments he is inclined to make upon perceiving the appearance, not what appearances he perceives. As the appearances he perceives come to be misleading, they do not thereby change.²⁶

In 6.1, I indicated that the feature just mentioned may seem to make it difficult for Genone to accommodate cases of expert vision. As we focus on cases of expert vision, let us recall, first, the idea expressed in passage (6), i.e. that the relation between appearances and what perceptual judgments a subject may make on the basis of perceiving them can be modified along with changes in the subject's background view. It is this idea that allows Genone to easily accommodate cases that have the following two features: a) there are no phenomenological differences between the respective perceptions of an expert and a layperson, and b) the expert and the layperson differ in what judgments they may make or in which beliefs they may form upon perceiving a certain appearance.²⁷ For if the perception of appearances can be hooked up with different judgments, it is perfectly conceivable—if not to be expected—that one and the same perceptual experience may give rise to different judgments in the expert and the layperson, respectively.

Upon seeing, say, a colored line appear in a bubble chamber, all the layperson may be able to report is just that: “Look, a colored line is just now appearing in the bubble chamber!” Contrast the expert: due to her training and due to what she knows, upon perceiving the same appearance, she may well be in a position to issue, maybe almost automatically, a judgment to the effect that there is currently an electron passing through the bubble chamber. The expert, if asked, would not reject the layperson's judgment. But the way perceived appearances are hooked up with the expert's set of beliefs may well be such that upon perceiving the appearance the bubble chamber manifests to her, the

²⁶ We may feel some resistance against characterizing the scientist's post-discovery perceptions as illusory. At least pretheoretically, we may think that in illusions, things do not appear the way they are. Genone, however, cannot accommodate this pretheoretical intuition and must indeed reject it as mistaken. For again, on his account, things *always* appear the way they are. Unless further criteria are introduced that show how illusions involve more than one's being led to issue false judgments on the basis of perceiving an appearance, the case of the scientist should qualify as a case of illusion as well.

²⁷ For simplicity, I am assuming that the sensory physiologies of the expert and the layperson are relevantly similar and that on the account of **Constitution** Genone would endorse, this would entail that upon perceiving the same appearances, the phenomenology of their respective experiences will be the same. If one is suspicious of intersubjective comparisons of experiential phenomenologies, one may assume that the expert just is the layperson, but 20 years in, say.

layperson's judgment is not the first one that comes to her mind. Indeed, unless she is suitably prompted, it may not come to her mind at all—due to her training, she might jump to the judgment to the effect that an electron is passing by directly.

As we have both described this case and the excited scientist's case, the difference in background beliefs does not yield phenomenological changes. It is helpful to distinguish cases that do not involve such changes from cases that do. Call the former cases of **expert judgment**, while only cases of the latter kind are **cases of expert vision proper**. Given what we just said about the bubble chamber case, Genone can easily accommodate cases of expert judgment. How about cases of expert vision proper?

Suppose that which among the appearance properties that a given object anyway manifests a perceiving subject's experience relates her to depends in part on the perceiving subject's distribution of attention. Take reversible pictures as an example. Presumably, Genone will hold that in any given set of enviroing circumstances, there is a determinate set of appearance properties that an object, e.g. the depiction of a duck-rabbit, will manifest. Here are two ways Genone could treat such cases. First, like Brewer, who thinks that the depiction thinly looks both like a rabbit and like a duck, Genone could suggest that the depiction manifests several appearances at the same time—one that, if attended to by a suitable observer, is likely to prompt the judgment that she sees a depiction of a rabbit, and another one that, if attended to by a suitable observer, is likely to prompt the judgment that she is facing a depiction of a duck. Alternatively, Genone could hold that in the given circumstances of perception, there is only one appearance the depiction of the duck-rabbit manifests and that the way in which the subject attends to this appearance plays a crucial role in constituting the phenomenology of her experience.²⁸

Obviously, such details will depend on the shape of Genone's account of **Constitution**, which we presently lack. However, suppose he accepts either of the two strategies suggested. If so, Genone

²⁸ Genone would probably insist that we should not individuate mind-independent appearances with respect to what mental states they cause in the observer. But while he may thus resist the idea that reversible figures manifest several appearances and pursue the alternative option, he could also defend that while such figures do manifest several appearances, these are to be individuated in some other way.

could easily accept that there is a phenomenological difference between perceiving what appearances the depiction of the duck-rabbit manifests in a way that leads to the judgment that it depicts a duck and perceiving them in a way that leads to the judgment that it depicts a rabbit.

This approach could be extended to cover cases of expert vision more generally. If so, Genone could also suggest that what accounts for the difference between the phenomenology of the experiences of the expert and the layperson is not primarily a matter of what conceptual capacities the subject possesses. Instead, he could insist that the difference is ultimately one of attention, one accounted for by *which* of the multiple appearances that an object anyway manifests the subject attends to—or, in line with the alternative strategy, by the *way* in which the subject attends to the appearance that the object anyway manifests. If it were then argued, further, that a subject's ability to attend to objects in certain ways is in principle independent of what concepts the subject possesses, Genone would seem to be in a good position to accommodate cases of expert vision without giving up on **Basic Acquaintance**. He could of course grant that certain attentional patterns which serve to acquaint subjects with certain appearance properties—or with one appearance property, in a specific way—are more likely to be exhibited by experts who know what and how to attend to the objects of their expertise. At the same time, Genone could insist that in principle, laypersons, too, may exhibit these patterns, even if they may in fact do so less frequently, or just as a matter of coincidence. They, too, that is, could perceive like the expert, even if typically, they may not.

Let us take stock: to develop a relationalist account that can accommodate both cases of expert judgment and cases of expert vision proper, the fundamental issues Genone needs to address remain. First and foremost, he must provide an account of appearances. Given the options we discussed, such an account should also settle whether in a given set of circumstances, a given object can manifest different appearances at the same time, some of which, perhaps, only experts can perceive. Moreover, Genone needs to provide an account of **Constitution**. Again, given our discussion, to accommodate cases of expert vision proper, developing such an account may require that Genone specify the role attention is said to play in constituting the perceiving subject's experiential phenomenology. However, if such accounts were developed, accommodating both phenomena that involve expert judgment and

phenomena that involve expert vision proper could well be within reach. If we abstract from the specifics of Genone's view and look back on the discussion of the various relationalist proposals we examined, it appears that relationalists should generally be optimistic with respect to providing an account of expert vision (proper). Experts, relationalists will say, simply relate differently to what is there anyway. As such, they are able to get acquainted with special facts (Fish), register similarity relations not everyone can detect (Brewer), or attend to appearance properties laypersons may not be able to regularly or easily attend to—or perhaps attend to them in ways characteristic for experts (Genone). What makes the idea that expert vision might involve effects on the subject's phenomenology in principle palatable to relationalists is precisely this: these effects could in principle be accounted for by way of referring to some suitable (aspects of) mind-independent items which at least typically, experts, but not laypeople, are able to latch on to. Of course, on close inspection, each of the accounts we examined turned out to be at best underdeveloped. But largely, the problems we encountered arose in the context of a more general difficulty relationalists have with specifying the mind-independent items experience is said to relate subjects to and with giving an account of experiential phenomenology.

Looking at the accounts through the lens of the question whether they could accommodate phenomena of **DVEP** proved useful in bringing these issues into focus. But if the more general difficulty just mentioned could somehow be addressed, there is no principled reason for relationalists to think that the phenomenon of expert vision could not be accommodated. For importantly, it does not collide with one of the relationalists' most central tenets—the claim that the role of experience is to relate us to environing mind-independent items.

With respect to projection effects, however, the situation is fundamentally different. *Ex hypothesi*, in such cases, no mind-independent fact, similarity relation, or appearance property is available that could serve to account for the relevant effects on the subject's experiential phenomenology. The presence, even the possibility of such effects, thus threatens to undermine the account of the role relationalists assign to experience, the account of what experience *is*. Accordingly, their default response to putative cases of projection effects is likely to contrast with their default response to cases

of expert vision: instead of being generally optimistic with respect to accommodating such effects, relationalists should be inclined to try and explain them away. As we continue our discussion of Genone's view and ask how he might deal with projection effects—illustrated, as before, by the banana case—let us thus explicitly note the following: like Fish and Brewer, Genone, too, will be barred from claiming that in the banana case, there could be any actual modification to the subject's perceptual phenomenology that rests on the perception of appearance properties and that would serve to explain why the banana object, once adjusted to an achromatic gray, still looks yellowish to the test subjects.

Again, according to Genone, appearance properties are entirely mind-independent. And whatever that comes to exactly, it is surely intended to entail that what the perceiving subject believes cannot modify these appearances. Moreover, given Genone's commitment to **Explanatory Completeness**, on any account of **Constitution** Genone could possibly endorse, the phenomenology of perceptual experience must be explained entirely in terms of the subject's standing in acquaintance relations with appearances. With respect to putative projection effects, there are, accordingly, only two options Genone could pursue. First, he could deny that projection effects occur and develop an account that explains them away. Second, he could accept that they do occur and try to accommodate them in a different way. In the next two sections, I focus on these two options, considering them in reverse.

6.3.3 The Banana Case—Strategy 1: Phenomenal Pluralism

Near the end of 5.6 I indicated that Brewer could suggest the following: he could hold that the total phenomenology of a subject *S*'s experience may not be exhausted by perceptual phenomenology. An experience's total phenomenology, so construed, could thus contain aspects that are not and cannot be accounted for by *S*'s standing in a perceptual relation to suitable mind-independent objects. If Brewer made room for an extra layer of experiential phenomenology, he could account for the kind of phenomenological effects that Hansen et al. think explains how in the banana case, test subjects adjust the banana object's color. Genone makes a similar suggestion. He thinks that to accommodate clinical conditions such as schizophrenia, damage to the visual system, and perceptual impairment due

to sleep deprivation or drugs, an account on which the phenomenology of (total) experience is (somehow) just constituted by mind-independent appearances does not suffice (Genone 2014, p. 368). In drug-induced illusions, for example, objects might appear distorted in shape or color as the subject's visual system is impaired. Experiences of subjects suffering such illusions may well relate them to objects in the environment. However, such experiences, Genone suggests, may also involve qualities that must be attributed to the subject's awareness of properties that are not properties of objects, but properties of the experience itself. Here is what Genone says:

- (7) [Properties of experience itself] [...] may in some cases be mistaken for properties of objects in the environment. In such cases, the phenomenology of experience may be accounted for partly in terms of the appearances of perceived objects, and partly in terms of properties of the experience itself. [footnote about blurry vision omitted] Nevertheless, error in judgment resulting from such experiences will not be perceptual errors. What is presented to a subject as a result of perceptual awareness will simply be objects and properties in the surrounding environment. Although additional cognitive and physiological factors may influence the subject's overall experience, these influences will not impact the basic structure of perception. (Genone 2014, pp. 368-9)²⁹

When elsewhere, he briefly discusses top-down effects cognitive states may have on perception,³⁰ Genone makes a similar suggestion:

- (8) Naïve realists [including relationalists] can distinguish between a subject's total experiential state, which might include contributions from various sources, from the contributions that are provided strictly by perception. Such a view would amount to a sort of *phenomenal pluralism*, holding that what an experience is like can be determined by both perceptual and cognitive influences, where this is distinct from how perception is characterized independently. (Genone 2016, p. 16)

For our purposes, these two passages are particularly interesting: in passage (7), the list Genone offers of possible factors that may influence the subject's overall experience is not limited to the physiological factors that are plausibly involved in explanations of the clinical conditions mentioned above. Instead, he accepts that "additional cognitive factors" may be at play as well. In passage (8), his suggestion as to how relationalists could accommodate top-down effects from cognitive states is

²⁹ This passage also serves to illustrate Genone's commitment to the idea discussed near the end of 6.3.1: that even in cases of degraded perception, perceptual error is a matter of mistaken judgment.

³⁰ Genone concedes that the relational view "offers no clear framework for integrating cognitive influences with perceptual phenomenology" (Genone 2016, p. 15).

explicitly phrased in terms of experiential phenomenology: relationalists, Genone maintains, could endorse a sort of *phenomenal pluralism*.³¹ In making this concession, Genone goes well beyond both Fish and Brewer. On Fish's view, recall, the phenomenology of a subject *S*'s experience *e* is solely constituted by *S*'s being acquainted with the facts that feature in *e*'s presentational character. And while Fish grants that *S*'s conceptual capacities—and thus, in many cases, what *S* believes—will co-determine what these facts are, he refuses to allow that cognitive states can affect or bring about any aspect of the subject's experiential phenomenology directly, i.e. without being mediated via the subject's being acquainted with facts that do in fact obtain. Indeed, it is a central feature of Fish's account of hallucinations—one also at work in his account of cognitive and optical illusions—that hallucinations (and cognitive and optical illusions) do not actually have a phenomenology that corresponds to what subjects believe they see. Instead, Fish takes it that as subjects hallucinate (or suffer a cognitive or optical illusion), they merely believe, albeit erroneously, that they are in a state whose phenomenology matches the phenomenology of an experience they *would* have if their experience did in fact acquaint them with the kind of facts of which they only believe, as they are hallucinating, that they do obtain. Again, on Fish's view, hallucinating just *is* having mistaken beliefs of this peculiar sort. In short: for Fish, the presence of experiential phenomenology requires that the subject be perceptually related to suitable facts. Regarding Genone's suggestion that a subject's total experience could involve a layer of phenomenology that does not meet that requirement, Fish would thus have to demur.

By comparison, Brewer's view is somewhat more liberal. To accommodate expert vision, recall, he allows that registering thin looks—which, he thinks, gives rise to thick looks—yields an additional layer of phenomenology. As we saw, it remains unclear how this second phenomenological layer is supposed to be construed—let alone how it combines with the alleged phenomenology of thin looks. Yet crucially, on Brewer's view, this additional layer of phenomenology, too, is governed by what I

³¹ Note that Genone here uncritically employs the characterization of experiential phenomenology in terms of *what the experience is like*. This is surprising, since in the same paper, he also offers the reservations with respect to this traditional and allegedly flawed way of characterizing experiential phenomenology that we already noted above (cf. 6.2).

dubbed the **Constraint on Thin Looks**: no mind-independent object can look some way (thinly or thickly) unless it stands in visually relevant similarity relations with suitable paradigm exemplars. Ultimately, thus, Brewer's second phenomenological layer, too, remains crucially tied to the presence of suitable and suitably propertied mind-independent items. Without the presence of such items, the corresponding phenomenology cannot occur.

Genone's suggestion that the phenomenology of experience may be affected by cognitive states thus stands in square opposition to Fish's view. Moreover, given Brewer's insistence on the claim that the way things *look* is the way *things* look, Genone's suggestion to introduce ways of looking that do not depend on how ways things in fact are is also at odds with Brewer's view and opposed to the spirit that motivates his **Constraint on Thin Looks**. Nevertheless, for Genone to accept phenomenal pluralism would appear to yield the following advantage: for one, it would enable him to insist that in the banana case, too, whatever part of the test subjects' total experiential phenomenology is due to their being perceptually related to the banana object's appearance properties remains unaffected. Crucially, phenomenal pluralism allows that the total phenomenology of a subject's experience need not be exhausted by the perceptual phenomenology involved. Instead, it may in part be accounted for by drawing on influences on the subject's experiential phenomenology that are due to cognitive states, including (perhaps even knowledgeable) beliefs about what color bananas typically are. Accordingly, Genone can side with the explanation of the effect provided by Hansen et al. He can, that is, accept that test subjects adjust the color of the banana object not to an achromatic gray, but to a slightly bluish hue, precisely because the phenomenology of their experience is shifted in the requisite kind of way.

Does Genone's account offer a satisfactory relationalist strategy of accommodating the banana case, then? There are at least three considerations that speak against pursuing it. The first rests on what I mentioned at the end of the previous subsection: relationalists hold that the role of experience is fundamentally to relate its subjects to mind-independent items in the world—this is, after all, what experience *is*, according to them: a relation to such items. Therefore, for them to accept items that cannot serve this role into their account of experiential phenomenology undermines that account of

the role of experience. In response, Genone could insist—as he does e.g. in passage (7)—that allowing additional influences on experience does not change the fundamental structure of *perception*. And indeed, if we take the term ‘perception’ to be reserved for the good case, in which the subject’s experience does in fact relate her to suitable mind-independent items, this can be granted. However, enriching the notion of experiential phenomenology in the way Genone suggests is likely to constrain the ways in which experience can serve whatever epistemic and semantic purposes relationalists may wish to assign it—particularly given that at least typically, with respect to any given feature of the total experiential phenomenology, its causal pedigree is not obvious.

Plainly, the extent to which introducing such constraints is indeed problematic will depend on the details of the relationalist proposal under consideration. Discussing these issues here would lead us too far astray. But even if such potential issues are bracketed and if we grant also that accommodating cognitive effects does not alter the fundamental structure of perception itself, the following second issue arises. For such cognitive effects, if they were to occur, would seem to affect the test subject’s perception of the banana object in a rather puzzling way.

Consider the appearance property that on Genone’s account, the banana object actually manifests—i.e. whatever it is that, if perceived, would lead subjects in other contexts (such as the context provided by the control condition) lead to judge that the object they face is e.g. gray. On the account of the banana case that we are considering, i.e. an account that draws on phenomenal pluralism, the perception of this appearance property appears to play absolutely no role in the constitution of the subject’s experiential phenomenology at all. However, recall that as per the experimental set-up, the test subjects’ primary task is precisely to attend to the banana object’s color and to then adjust it. In such a context, it should be particularly puzzling if the subjects were said to somehow fail to direct their attention to the relevant appearance property the banana object anyway manifests, in such a way as to prevent that property from being perceived.

Perhaps it could be suggested that test subjects *do* attend and perceive the banana object’s appearance property, but that the perceptual phenomenology such perception would ordinarily give rise to is somehow masked out, overwritten, or outweighed by effects that arise due to the influence

of the test subjects' cognitive states. But even if so, we face the (familiar) third issue: we are left without an account of how this would go. It would be a virtue of Genone's account if it managed to allow that the phenomenology of experience can be partly accounted for by influences of cognitive states. Moreover, perhaps there are ways to resolve the vexed issue of how a relationalist endorsement of phenomenal pluralism can be squared with the epistemic and semantic roles they may wish to attribute to experience (or perhaps: just to *perception*). However, as it stands, Genone's suggestion to endorse phenomenal pluralism is unsatisfactory for the same reason it would have been unsatisfactory to add yet another layer of phenomenology to Brewer's account. After all, on Genone's view, both the notion of perceptual phenomenology and the notion of the appearance properties that he thinks constitute it are unclear already. The suggestion that relationalists should endorse phenomenal pluralism does not help make things any clearer. Instead, it just serves to add further questions that need to be answered—e.g. questions about how these different strata of phenomenology combine, compare, interact in case of conflict, etc. Briefly put: since Genone owes us a clear account of perceptual phenomenology anyway, throwing in another notion of phenomenology only makes things worse.

Of course, neither the resistance Genone must expect from fellow relationalists nor the considerations just presented speak decisively against the strategy to adopt phenomenal pluralism. Still, I content that these considerations suffice to establish the following: whether relationalists can and should endorse phenomenal pluralism is far from obvious. Thus, if relationalists wish to pursue such a strategy, the burden is on them to develop an account of the phenomenology of experience that shows how it can be done.

6.3.4 The Banana Case—Strategy 2: Appearance-Judgment Relations Shifted

At the outset of this chapter, I claimed that Genone's account of misleading appearances is interesting and may be more powerful than even Genone himself realizes. It earns these epithets, I think, because in the absence of further constraints, the account appears to afford unlimited flexibility with respect to how perceived appearances and perceptual judgments can be related or, as it were, *hooked up* with

one another. Interestingly, this feature of the account is not just crucial to the alternative strategy I will suggest Genone can pursue to address the banana case. It also marks a striking parallel between Genone's view and Hanson's: for on both, how the phenomenal and the conceptual hook up can be modified with changes in the background view.

To illustrate, consider again the case of Tycho and Kepler. Imagine that they are looking at the sun at dawn in sufficiently similar circumstances. Further, let us suppose that their experiences are phenomenally identical (after all, the drawings they would produce of what they see are congruent) and that accordingly, there is no difference between their experiences that would make the scenario count as a case of expert vision proper.³² As we saw, Hanson insists that what Tycho and Kepler *see* the sun *as* differs, as well as which judgments they thus issue on the basis of their respective experiences. More specifically, these things will differ along with differences in what beliefs and expectations they hold, respectively, about what the thing they believe they face. In other words, to the extent that upon having a phenomenally identical experience they differ in what judgments they are inclined to issue on the basis of undergoing it, there must be a difference in how, in their respective background views, the phenomenology of their experience hooks up with such judgments.³³

Genone could characterize the case in a largely analogous way. Given his account of appearances as mind-independent, he would most certainly insist that the appearances that the sun anyway manifests and that both Tycho and Kepler perceive are the same. And given the current assumption, i.e. that the case does not count as a case of expert vision proper, Genone is also likely to grant that perceiving these appearances constitutes the same perceptual phenomenology in both: the sunrise, briefly put, looks the same to both. Genone, too, will have an explanation as to why both scientists will, on the basis of their respective experience, be inclined to issue different judgments. The case is a

³² Given the possibility of e.g. differences in how the elements of their respective fields pull together, this need not be so. Presently, we will assume that it is.

³³ Differences between background views of two observers may also occur further removed from the judgments they would issue on the basis of their experience. More specifically, two observers could be very much alike in what judgments they are inclined to issue on the basis of undergoing their phenomenally identical experiences and yet differ (to some extent) in what else, given their further beliefs, they do, should, or may (not) believe in virtue of issuing these judgments. I return to such issues in chapter 8.

simple case of **expert judgment**. Tycho and Kepler differ in what they believe (and know). Thus, they also differ in what judgments they are likely to issue on the basis of their respective experience. For like Hanson, Genone, too, will maintain that the difference in their judgments is to be explained in terms of differences in their respective background views, which (somehow) yield a difference in how possible perceived appearances and perceptual judgments are hooked up.³⁴

Note also that Genone's account can be interpreted as accommodating one of Hanson's fundamental tenets: for experience to be epistemically significant, concepts must be involved. Remarkably, he does so while at the same time eschewing an idea that is central to Hanson's favored proposal as to how concepts come in: **Content**.³⁵ As a relationalist, Genone endorses **No Content** and thus hooks up judgments not with the actualizations of concepts that are involved in episodes of *seeing as* and that are (somehow) amalgamated with the phenomenal dimension of experience. Instead, he hooks up judgments directly with appearances, or rather, with ways things look to subjects as they perceive such appearances.³⁶ Of course, Genone owes us a clear account of what appearances are—but so does Hanson. Relatedly, recall that Hanson leaves us in the dark as to how, in experience, the alleged amalgamation of the phenomenal and the conceptual comes about, and how it can be altered. As I will suggest in 6.4, Genone's and Hanson's views are similar in this regard as well: Genone faces an analogous problem.

³⁴ If the case is characterized as one that involves **expert vision** proper, the situation is more complicated because in that case, the assumption must be dropped that the experiential phenomenology of Tycho and Kepler is (sufficiently) similar. But even in such a case, both Hanson and Genone might well endorse the following counterfactual: if either Tycho or Kepler were to have an experience with a phenomenology that matches that of the experience of the respective other, the judgments each would be inclined to issue on the basis of their experience might well differ precisely because the differences in their respective background views also encompass differences in how the phenomenology of experience and perceptual judgments are linked.

³⁵ Incidentally, Hanson can also agree that at least as far as the phenomenal aspect of experience is concerned, it is never erroneous. The possibility of error requires that concepts be involved. Furthermore, since the *seeing as* locution does not form sentences, it does not have truth values. Accordingly, Hanson, too, can agree that experiences, though they have content, have no truth values. One can of course see something as what it is not, but this can happen for all sorts of reasons and, crucially, while being fully aware of the fact that things are not what one sees them as—playfully, as when we see a cloud as a horse, or when one cannot but wince upon seeing a 3D-image of a tiger jumping at one. *Seeing* something *as* what it is not may occasionally be characterized as inaccurate seeing. Still, it is only in endorsing that things are as one sees them that error enters the scene.

³⁶ In this respect, Genone's view is very similar to the one Gupta proposes (cf. chapter 9).

Returning to the account of misleading appearances, let us ask: could this account serve to accommodate the relationalist intuition that putative cognitive effects on the phenomenology of experience such as the banana effect ought not be accepted as real, but rather be explained away? Remarkably, Genone never entertains a suggestion of this shape. As we saw in the previous section, in response to the task of accommodating putative effects cognitive states such as e.g. the subject *S*'s beliefs may have on the phenomenology of *S*'s experience, Genone is ready to endorse phenomenal pluralism. However, I think that in doing so, he overlooks a potent alternative strategy, one that exploits the flexibility his account of misleading appearances already affords with respect to how perceived appearances and judgments can be hooked up with one another.

More specifically, I contend that Genone could address the banana case as follows. First, he could insist that throughout the test condition, subjects do indeed perceive nothing but whatever appearance properties the banana object actually and anyway manifests. Doing so, note, straight away removes a problem that we saw besets Genone's preferred strategy: viz. that it is puzzling how in a context in which subjects are explicitly tasked to attend to a given object's color, they nevertheless consistently fail to do so. Second, and relatedly, phenomenal pluralism could be rejected. Accordingly, the total phenomenology of the subjects' experience may well be exhausted by its perceptual phenomenology. Plainly, rejecting phenomenal pluralism renders moot all the questions that would arise with respect to how one is to think about the constitution of a total experiential phenomenology which comprises phenomenal elements or layers that differ in how they come about—though questions pertaining to the constitution of perceptual phenomenology itself remain of course pressing.

On the view we are now considering, when the color of the banana object has been modified to an achromatic gray; it still has the appearance properties objects anyway have in the relevant conditions—properties that if perceived, are typically associated with judgments to the effect that the object is gray. To adopt this strategy is thus to fully resist the idea that an explanation of what subjects do in the test condition must draw on some alleged modification of the phenomenology of the test subjects' experiences. Rather, and this is the crucial step, the central suggestion is that something else is modified: in the test condition—but not in the control condition—the way perceived appearances

are hooked up with perceptual judgments that test subjects are inclined to make on the basis of perceiving them is systematically shifted.

Consider the specific appearance property, A , that objects, let us assume, have in virtue of having a specific color. Now assume that ordinarily—e.g. in the control condition—the perception of A serves as the basis for the test subjects' judgments to the effect that the perceived object is gray. In the test condition, however, the way perceived appearances and judgments are hooked up, is systematically shifted. As a result, in the test condition, the perception of A is hooked up with a different judgment, viz. the judgment that the object is (slightly) yellowish. Similarly, while the perception of another specific appearance property, B , would ordinarily—e.g. in the control condition—serve as the basis for the subject's judgment that the relevant object is slightly blue, in the test condition, it leads to the judgment that the object is gray. Plainly, this explanatory strategy can be applied to each perception of the banana object for which, on Genone's preferred strategy, some extra phenomenal element would have to be introduced. It invites us to accept that shifts in the relation between perceived appearances and judgments can occur. However, as we saw in 6.3.1, this idea is a crucial element of Genone's account of misleading appearances anyway. Indeed, the banana case, on the proposed account, is a case in which due to some factor, the appearance properties the banana object possesses in virtue of its color properties, become misleading. Presumably, the explanation is, roughly, that test subjects recognize the object as a banana. Accordingly, their firm background belief that bananas are yellow is particularly salient. This in turn gives rise not only to certain expectations as to what they see, but, the idea goes, indeed shifts the way how perceived appearance properties and judgments hook up.

To apply this strategy broadly, i.e. to all putative projection effects, allows relationalists to deny that projection effects are possible. More modestly put, it allows them to insist that one need not assume that such effects exist to be able to explain what subjects do in cases in which projection effects seem to occur.

Moreover, at least in principle, this strategy is more likely to be palatable to Genone's fellow relationalists. Recall that Fish's and Brewer's accounts lacked the resources to deal with the banana

case. Like Genone, they insist that no suitable mind-independent items are available that could possibly explain why the banana object, once adjusted to an achromatic gray, might still look yellowish to the test subjects. But in the context of both Fish's and Brewer's view, the subsequent denial that the banana object looks yellowish had an odd consequence. For Fish, recall, the banana object's property of being e.g. gray could not make it into the presentational character of the subject's experience. For in the relevant perceptual situation, the conceptual capacity that would have to be (passively) deployed to bring the relevant fact into the presentational character was not in play. Similarly, Brewer was forced to say that throughout what are quite possibly large chunks of the test condition, the test subjects (somehow) fail to register the thin looks (somehow) corresponding to the banana object's actual color. On both views, it thus seemed to follow, oddly, that throughout what are quite possibly large chunks of the test condition, the test subjects' experiences of the banana object lack a (consciously available) phenomenological aspect associated with color altogether. This in turn left it mysterious what test subjects could be responding to while adjusting the banana object's color, and what might account for the fact that eventually, they stop.

On the proposal under consideration, a corresponding problem does not arise. Again, on this view, the experiences subjects undergo as they adjust the banana object's color *do* have a phenomenology associated with judgments related to the object's color. As in every other perception, this phenomenology is (somehow) fully constituted by the subjects' perception of the mind-independent appearance properties that the banana object, in the context at hand, anyway manifests. Throughout the entire test condition, there is thus something that subjects can be taken to be responding to as they adjust the banana object's color: the various appearance properties the banana object subsequently and anyway manifests. But since in the test condition, on the proposal we are considering, the way judgments and perceived appearances are hooked up has been shifted in a systematic fashion, the resulting response pattern is such that test subjects adjust the object's color not to an achromatic gray, but to a slightly bluish hue.

Again, Genone never considers pursuing this strategy as a response to putative cognitive effects on the phenomenology of experience. But arguably, given the flexibility his account of misleading

appearances already provides, it is the most conservative strategy for him to pursue. Also, pursuing it would give him an advantage over competing relationalist accounts that cannot accommodate such effects, without having to enrich his account of the phenomenology of experience in ways that his fellow relationalists are likely to frown upon. However, as I will discuss in the next section, for Genone to pursue this strategy, further questions need to be addressed. For currently, though promising and potentially powerful, his account of misleading appearances is underdeveloped in various respects.

6.4 OPEN QUESTIONS

As I have emphasized throughout, for Genone to be able to make any of the accounts sketched in 6.3 work requires that he resolve the issues versions of which, as we saw, each relationalist faces: he needs a) a clear account of the mind-independent items that he takes experience relates subjects to and b) an account of how these in turn constitute the phenomenology of the subject's experience. These are fundamental challenges. Arguably, if relationalists cannot address them, their views are doomed. But suppose Genone could somehow address them. Moreover, suppose that he accepted the strategy to deal with the banana case I suggested in 6.3.4. Even then, I contend, at least three further issues arise: first, phenomenal pluralism may still be an option relationalists must consider (6.4.1). Second, the flexibility Genone's account of misleading appearance affords may be in tension with the epistemic role relationalists assign to acquaintance (6.4.2), and third—relatedly—an account is needed of how, on Genone's view of misleading appearances, judgments and perceived appearances are supposed to be hooked up (6.4.3).

6.4.1 Phenomenal Pluralism After All?

Note that it could well be that whereas the strategy discussed in 6.3.4 has some plausibility with respect to the banana case, it is less plausible in other cases in which cognitive states such as the relevant

subjects' beliefs are taken to affect the phenomenology of their experience. The empirical literature is rife with such cases.³⁷ With respect to each of these other cases, it may well be an open question whether the claim central to the strategy I suggested Genone could pursue to address the banana case—i.e. that in it the phenomenology of the test subjects' experience remains unaltered—is plausible for them as well. Moreover, and plainly, the strategy I suggested Genone might pursue needs to be fleshed out and developed further. At the very least, one would like to have an explanation of how it is that some set of beliefs—the belief that bananas are typically yellow, say—can bring about the relevant shift in the relation between perceived appearances and judgments that the strategy presupposes occurs. In general, we need an account of how to think about such shifts—ideally, one that allows predictions as to when such shifts should be expected. The advantage of having such a view should be clear: it might allow one to expect and counteract such shifts where necessary, just like in the case of the Müller-Lyer, and as such to reduce the number of misleading appearances overall.³⁸

If relationalists were able support the strategy suggested by providing such an account of what these shifts are and how they come about, this would certainly be an impressive achievement. Similarly, it would be quite an achievement for someone who pursued Genone's own favored strategy to provide an account of how the putative extra phenomenal elements are supposed to occur and why. Of course, neither is currently available. But for aspiring relationalists, I suggest, developing either of these accounts further may be worth attempting.

Incidentally, the following is also conceivable: suppose rationalists employed the strategy suggested to explain away every single putative doxastic effect on experiential phenomenology in the literature. Even then, there might still be some residual pressure to accommodate an additional layer of the subject's total phenomenology—pressure that arises from the need to accommodate the clinical

³⁷ See Scholl & Firestone (2016) for a (critical) overview.

³⁸ Some of the pertinent cases discussed in the literature fall under the category of implicit bias and concern e.g. judgments subjects are inclined to issue on the basis of seeing facial expressions of people whose faces bear features strongly associated with race or gender. Accordingly, an account of how differences in one's background views—and perhaps more broadly: in one's various cognitive and affective background states—may lead to shifts in how the perception of such features and judgments are related might also be particularly helpful in addressing the question how to counteract implicit bias.

conditions that Genone refers to when motivating phenomenal pluralism in the first place. Consider, for instance, drug-induced distortions of how things look to subjects, or reports people issue about their experience of living through schizophrenic episodes. With respect to either, one may well doubt, like Genone, that they can be fully accounted for by characterizing what happens in terms of shifts of what judgments, beliefs, and conclusions people are inclined to endorse on the basis of perceiving the mind-independent appearances objects anyway manifest.

From a relationalist perspective, it would be no small feat to be able to explain the banana case—and similar cases of putative cognitive effects—without having to postulate the existence of some additional layer of phenomenology. However, given these other cases, postulating the existence of such an additional layer may still be necessary. If so, questions as to how the total phenomenology of experience is constituted and how the different layers of experiential phenomenology interact would still be pressing.³⁹

6.4.2 Flexibility—an Epistemic Downside?

Some relationalists hold that acquaintance provides, is, or is a source of, a kind of *knowledge* of mind-independent objects or properties. Depending on how this commitment is spelled out, relationalists may be uncomfortable with the importance that according to the strategy suggested in 6.3.4 is assigned to the background view. To see why, let us note, first, that at least as far as that strategy has been presented, it is indeed just the background view that ultimately determines how perceived appearances and judgments are hooked up. But background views can vary strongly—both inter- and, over time, intrasubjectively. Accordingly, there appears to be unlimited flexibility in how the relations between perceived appearances and judgments could be set up.

³⁹ If phenomenal pluralism is accepted as what is required to address some cases, so that hard questions pertaining to the constitution of total phenomenology would have to be addressed anyway, relationalists of course may well decide on a case-by-case basis whether accepting an explanation of putative cases of cognitive effects on experience in terms of additional phenomenology is called for. Accordingly, even for relationalists who do not reject phenomenal pluralism, the strategy of explaining cases in terms of temporary shifts in how perceived appearances and judgments are hooked up might be a useful addition to their explanatory toolkit.

So far, this flexibility has been characterized as one of the view's decisive strengths. For one, it is this flexibility that creates the conceptual leeway Genone needs to accommodate **misleading appearances** (see 6.3.1), It is also this feature of the view that allows it to easily accommodate cases of **expert judgment** (see 6.3.2). Likewise, this flexibility is what brings into view the possibility that with respect to how perceived appearances and judgments hook up, the kinds of **shifts** may occur which in turn would allow Genone to explain away projection effects (see 6.3.4). In what sense, then, is the very same feature of the view also be potentially problematic?

Consider any given appearance property. Can perceiving it be hooked up with *any* conceivable judgment? Or are there restrictions? If so, how do they arise? One can see why implementing restrictions might be desirable once one acknowledges that there is only a very restricted set of circumstances in which perceiving an appearance \mathcal{A} will lead to knowledgeable judgments. Among the countless possible combinations of \mathcal{A} with judgments that, in the context of some background view, subjects might issue based on perceiving \mathcal{A} , only a select few will be true. Moreover, as we saw in 6.3.1, the following is possible: background views that contain false or irrational beliefs can be combined with perceived appearances such that the latter are not, in Genone's sense, misleading and yet lead to beliefs or judgments that, while true, are ill-founded. For arguably, true judgments may arise at least in part due to false or irrational beliefs in one's background view that (somehow) govern how perceived appearances and judgments are hooked up with one another. Plainly, true judgments that result in such circumstances cannot qualify as knowledgeable. Accordingly, among the true judgments that subjects could base on perceiving a given appearance (given some background view), only some will also be knowledgeable, while others will not.

Importantly, thus, on the view under consideration, whether or not the perception of appearance properties leads to beliefs or judgments that are not just true, but knowledgeable, depends heavily on the status of the beliefs that co-constitute the background view.⁴⁰ More specifically, for the judgements a subject may issue on the basis of her experience to be both true and knowledgeable, the background

⁴⁰ A background view may contain more than just beliefs. For now, I ignore this complication, but flag that it will become rather important in the chapter 9.2.

view must be such that in it, perceived appearances and judgments are hooked up in just the right kind of way. Consequently, on the view under consideration, knowledge may seem hard to come by unless some restrictions are put in place—restrictions that limit the ways in which the perception of appearance properties and judgments that can be made on the basis of such perception can be combined or, perhaps, restrictions that limit the ways in which the relevant relations can be brought about or altered.

Note that having no such restrictions in place may be acceptable to relationalists who merely insist on the rather modest claim that acquaintance with mind-independent items *can* be a source of knowledge. For such relationalists could accept that acquaintance leads to knowledge only when the perceiving subject's background view meets certain conditions, i.e. by being sufficiently correct. However, relationalists who want to defend a stronger view, e.g. that acquaintance *does* provide knowledge, at least typically, or that it *is* a kind of knowledge—perhaps one that is in an important sense more basic than propositional knowledge—need to provide a story as to how this is to be understood, and how perceived appearances and judgments are, or get to be, hooked up in such a way to yield their desired account.

Summing up the second issue, the worry is this: the flexibility Genone's account of misleading appearances affords with respect to the relation between perceived appearances and judgments that subjects may issue based on perceiving them gives rise to the question how it is that appearances and judgments get (and remain) to be hooked up in the right kind of way so as to fit the relationalists' commitments with respect to the role they think acquaintance plays in acquiring knowledge. Depending on what precise epistemic role relationalists attribute to acquaintance, the account of misleading appearances must thus be developed into a full account of how appearances and judgments hook up that shows how acquaintance can actually play that role.

As far as Genone is concerned, he does not give us such an account. He appears to use the expression 'knowledge by acquaintance' approvingly, endorses **Basic Acquaintance**, and hints at the possibility that in the context of articulating a foundationalist theory of knowledge, acquaintance may helpfully serve "as a kind of epistemically basic mental state" (Genone 2014, p. 346). That said, he

offers no worked-out proposal of the epistemic role of acquaintance, so that it would be incumbent on him to present one and to show how his account of misleading appearances can be developed in a way that dovetails with that account.

Generally, the question how to think about the epistemic (and semantic) role of acquaintance is an issue with respect to which individual relationalists differ considerably. Our main concern here, however, is to investigate whether relationalists can accommodate putative cases of **DVEP**. On Genone's favored strategy discussed in 6.3.3, they can accommodate such cases, but only at the price of further complicating the question how to understand the phenomenology of experience. On the alternative strategy discussed in 6.3.4, they cannot accommodate such cases, but explain them away.

Again, whether either of these strategies is likely to succeed is conditional on whether they can develop a satisfactory account of appearances and of the phenomenology of perceptual experience. And as we see now, relationalists who wish to pursue either of the strategies suggested also need to make sure that they develop it in such a way as to fit into the broader relationalist epistemological picture as they see it. Plainly, investigating the various relationalist accounts with respect to what this would require would lead us too far afield. Instead, I will rest content with flagging the potential tension and leave it as a task for relationalists to explore whether Genone's account of misleading appearances can be suitably developed to serve their purposes.

Holding off on such an investigation is also well-advised for the following reason: for arguably, before we can meaningfully ask how the proposed account of shifts in the relations between perceived appearances and judgments might fit into a broader relationalist framework, we should make sure that we have a good grip on what exactly the account of misleading appearances is on which it rests. We should e.g. be able to say how, on the proposed account, appearances and judgments are supposed to relate in the first place. As we will see next, Genone's answer to this question is far from clear.

6.4.3 Appearance-Judgment Relations

The following, recall, are some of the claims Genone adopts from the doxastic accounts of appearance that he rejects: perceived appearances are *related to* or *linked with* the perceiving subject *S*'s judgments and beliefs in such a way that *on the basis of* having an experience in which *S* perceives certain appearances *S* will *be led* (perhaps erroneously) to issue certain judgments, form certain beliefs, or *draw* certain *conclusions*. And since which judgments, beliefs, or conclusions *S* will be led to endorse on the basis of her experience *depends* on *S*'s background view, differences in *S*'s background view may lead to differences in what judgments, beliefs, or conclusions *S* will be led to endorse.

Plainly, these claims raise pressing questions—most importantly: how are we to think of appearances as being hooked up or linked with beliefs and judgments? As he presents doxastic accounts of appearances, Genone states that according to them, appearances are to be characterized as *having the propensity to cause certain beliefs*, as *inclining one* to form certain beliefs or as such that one would, *on the basis of* one's experience, form certain judgments. Suppose we grant that appearances are not to be individuated in terms of the mental states that one's perception of them may yield and, moreover, that they lack content. If so, we must ask how the perception of appearances can *lead one* to form certain judgments or beliefs. Relatedly, in what sense can perceiving appearances function as that *on the basis of which* we make certain judgments or form certain beliefs? Furthermore, if Genone asserts that upon having a certain experience, we *draw* certain *conclusions*, what is the form of the inference involved and how, if in any way, do perceived appearances figure in such inferences?

In general, one must wonder whether the relation between perceived appearances and judgments is supposed to be broadly epistemic or rather causal-dispositional. Some of the expressions Genone uses indicate the latter, others are at best ambiguous. Consider, first, a broadly causal-dispositional reading. On it, in the presence of suitable further factors—such as e.g. what other beliefs the subject *S* holds—perceiving certain appearances might serve as part of a stimulus condition that brings about the manifestation, in *S*, of certain beliefs, judgments, or conclusions. Presumably, *S* would need to have numerous such dispositions, enough to account for the numerous responses to the various

perceptions of the different appearances *S* is able to distinguish. Moreover, to accommodate the fact that what judgments, etc. *S* is led to endorse upon perceiving certain appearances is supposed to depend on *S*'s background view, we must imagine that the relevant dispositions to respond to various such perceptions are suitably malleable; they must change along with changes in the subject's background view.⁴¹ Finally, a story would have to be told what the epistemic import of such causal linkages between perceived appearance and judgments is—a story that Genone does not provide.

To consider the broadly epistemic interpretation, considering Genone's claims to the effect that perceiving appearances *leads to* judgments and beliefs, that in the context of a given background view such judgments and beliefs are formed *on the basis of* perceiving appearances, and that upon having a certain experience we *draw* certain *conclusions*. Such claims need not be read as having causal connotations, but invite a broadly epistemic reading. Consider the last of the three claims. How, one can ask, does perceiving appearances allow the subject to draw certain conclusions? Note that if, *pace* Genone, the experiences that perceiving appearances (somehow) constitute were endowed with representational content—content that either is propositional in form or has a format that can be easily exploited to extract propositional content—the answer to this question would be comparatively straightforward: experience could make available experiential premises. But since Genone endorses **No Content**, perceived appearances must feature in, enable, or give rise to inferences in some other way. But how? Genone does not say.

Moreover, presumably, given some background view, upon perceiving a certain appearance, issuing certain judgments, for instance, will be normatively appropriate—at least by the lights of that view—while issuing others will not be. But how are we to construe this notion of normative appropriateness in light of a perceived appearance? And further, are we to suppose that those judgments, beliefs, and conclusions, which, by the lights of the relevant background view, are (somehow) correct responses to the relevant perceptions, align with those that the subject, upon perceiving a given appearance, is in fact inclined to endorse?

⁴¹ It may be that such dispositions differ in robustness. I return to considering this possibility in chapter 8.1.4.

Furthermore, even a judgment that is correct by the light of some view need not be normatively appropriate in a stronger sense. In particular, it need neither be reasonable, true, nor knowledgeable. Accordingly, we are again faced with the question how a view like the one Genone sketches may fit into the broader relationalist epistemological framework. Does it fit, for instance, with Brewer's claim that the mind-independent objects one's experience acquaints one with are themselves *reasons*?⁴² If so, would they play the role of serving as reasons in the subject's deliberations no matter what, or only if the subject's background view is sufficiently correct?

Finally, besides the question how to specify the relation between perceived appearances and judgments, beliefs, and conclusions subjects are said to draw on the basis of their experience, Genone owes us an account of how this relation in turn depend on one's background view. As evidenced by passage (7), Genone suggests that what a given appearance leads one to judge depends on one's implicit understanding of how the appearances objects manifest in various circumstances are related to the intrinsic properties of these objects. As the brief discussion of the Müller-Lyer example brought out, one consequence of this idea is the following: if one's beliefs about the environment become more accurate, perceived appearances can lose their status of being misleading. Conversely, I suggested that given suitable changes in one's background view, cases should be possible in which appearances acquire that status. In fact, the strategy I suggested relationalists might pursue to accommodate the banana case treats the latter as an instance of such a case: in the test condition, an appearance property that in other contexts leads to the judgment that the object is gray leads to the judgment that it is yellowish. But if the relation between perceived appearances and judgments depends on the background view, should we expect that shifts that lead to inappropriate judgments can be undone? Suppose, for instance, one were to prime the test subjects, prior to the experiment, with images of purple or red bananas. Should we expect that the effect will be reduced? In general, how are we to think about modifications in how appearances and judgments hook up? How are we to characterize them and how they come about? Why do they occur in some cases and not in others? These, I think,

⁴² Again, see Brewer 2011, chapters 6 & 7; Brewer 2018.

are some fruitful questions that relationalists who are sympathetic to Genone's suggestion need to think about. But as long as answers to these questions are pending, I contend, we must reject Genone's view as unsatisfactory.

6.5 LEAVING RELATIONALISM BEHIND

Let us take stock. In this and the previous chapters, we closely examined three variants of the relationalist view, each of which provided a different way of elaborating on the central relationalist tenet, according to which experience is a (suitably qualified) relation of acquaintance between subjects and mind-independent items and thus plays the crucial role of putting us in touch with these items.

One of the ways in which these views differ concern what their respective proponents take the relevant mind-independent items to be. According to Fish, these items are *facts*—construed as object-property couples. According to Brewer, experience relates subjects to *objects* that in turn stand in similarity relations to paradigm exemplars of various kinds of objects. And according to Genone, finally, these items are entirely mind-independent *appearance properties* that mind-independent objects manifest anyway, relative to various environing circumstances.

Another difference between the views concerns the account of **Constitution** they contain. On Fish's view, the phenomenal dimension is constituted by the subject's being acquainted with facts the subject brings into the presentational character of her experience, in virtue of passively deploying her conceptual capacities. On Brewer's view, the phenomenal dimension has two layers that he labels thin and thick looks, which are said to be (somehow) constituted by the (visually) relevant similarity relations objects stand in with paradigm exemplars of various kinds of things and by registering such relations. On Genone's view, finally, things are less clear, but presumably, the phenomenal dimension of experience is taken to be constituted by the phenomena that the subject encounters in experience, which, according to Genone, are a) the entirely mind-independent appearance properties that the environing mind-independent objects manifest b), occasionally, properties of experience itself, and

c) phenomenal states that caused by cognitive and psychological states. Each of these views turned out to be problematic in various ways. Neither provides a sufficiently clear account of what the mind-independent items are, how they constitute the phenomenal dimension of experience, and how, accordingly, we are to think about this dimension in the first place. Given their explicit commitment to **Constitution** and, in Genone's case, **Explanatory Completeness**, the ability to provide an account of experiential phenomenology constitutes an important criterion of adequacy for relationalist accounts. By their own lights, the fact that they are currently unable to meet this criterion should be a particularly dissatisfying result.

Relatedly, to the extent that the project of examining various relationalist accounts of experiential phenomenology was motivated by the hope that these accounts might provide resources that are suitable to develop Hanson's account further, such hopes, it turns out, were in vain. This is so also because, currently, neither of the views we examined can deal with phenomena falling under **DVEP**.

For one, neither account offers a satisfactory account of expert vision. On Fish's view, problems arise in the context of the question how properties and conceptual capacities are to be individuated so as to yield what he wishes to accommodate, i.e. the idea that experiences of experts and laypeople have something perceptually in common. If Brewer's view appears to have room for expert vision by affording a notion of thick looks and a specific phenomenology that registering thin looks gives rise to, he leaves us with next to no account of this specific layer of phenomenology, nor of how it combines or interacts with the layer he takes thin looks to constitute. Accordingly, his account remains seriously underdeveloped. Genone, finally, offers no account of expert vision at all. And though I suggested two ways in which such an account could be developed, both can only succeed on the following condition: he must provide an intelligible account of appearance properties and an account of how these—presumably in tandem with processes of attention—give rise to the phenomenology, i.e. to the ways things look to the perceiving subject.

For another, neither of the views is currently well-developed enough to satisfactorily accommodate or explain away projection effects. As the discussion of the banana case revealed, both Fish and Brewer are committed to the implausible claim that throughout what may be large chunks

of the test condition, the experiences that the test subjects subsequently undergo lack phenomenal aspects associated with color altogether. Given that it is precisely the banana object's color that the test subjects are supposed to attend to and, subsequently, manipulate, this is a particularly puzzling result. Relatedly, neither Fish nor Brewer provide an explanation of what it is that subjects respond to as they adjust the banana object's color.

Genone's view seemed more promising. Clearly, the suggestion he favors—i.e. that the total phenomenology of experience is not exhausted by *perceptual* phenomenology, but can contain elements that are due to effects of cognitive states such as beliefs—enables him to accommodate the banana case. However, for him to allow that some elements of experiential phenomenology are not constituted by mind-independent items is to undermine the core relationalist tenet: that experience is a relation to mind-independent items. Accordingly, from a relationalist perspective, this proposal thus has little appeal—arguably, both Fish and Brewer would reject it. For Fish, it collides with his idea that for any bit of experiential phenomenology, its occurrence presupposes that the subject be acquainted with suitable facts. For Brewer, it runs counter to the spirit motivating his **General Constraint on Thin Looks** and, relatedly, his slogan that the way things *look* is the way *things* look. Also, it gives rise to difficult questions, some of which Brewer faces as well: i.e. how it is that the putative different layers of phenomenology combine and interact.

At first blush, the alternative suggestion I developed on Genone's behalf, i.e. that he might extend his account of misleading appearances to the banana case, too, seemed more palatable. It allows Genone to dodge some of the problems Fish and Brewer face. Notably, he can insist that throughout the test condition, subjects do in fact perceive the appearance property the banana object has in virtue of its having certain color properties. Instead of claiming that the phenomenology of experience is affected, he can insist that the relevant changes are changes in what the perceptual judgments are that subjects are led to endorse upon perceiving the various appearance properties the banana object anyway manifests. As I suggested, the flexibility Genone's account affords with respect to how the phenomenal dimension of experience—i.e. perceived appearances—and judgments, beliefs, etc. can be hooked up is a powerful feature of his account, one he shares with Hanson's account.

Nevertheless, I suggested that it may well be that Genone cannot fully escape the assumption that extra phenomenal elements are needed. Moreover, I argued that without an account of how the relations between appearances and judgments are to be construed, how they can be modified, and in what way they depend on the subject's background view, it remains at least an open question whether the account of misleading appearances can be developed in such a way as to both accommodate the banana case and similar cases and fit into the relationalists' broader epistemological framework, on which acquaintance is supposed to be, provide (typically), or be the source of, knowledge.

As indicated before, Genone's view shares certain strengths with Hanson's, but as we can now see, it also shared certain of its weaknesses. For just like Hanson, Genone, too, says too little to help us understand how the phenomenal and the conceptual are supposed to relate. On Genone's view, the issue manifests as the question how perceiving appearances is related to conceptual items in such a way that the former *leads* subjects *to* endorse judgments, beliefs, or conclusions of inferences, and on how this relation in turn depends on the perceiving subject's background view. On Hanson's view, it appears as the question of what governs the relations between the phenomenal and the conceptual dimension of experience, so that in the context of a given background view, they are amalgamated such that having an experience with a certain phenomenology *is* a case of *seeing* something *as F*, and not *as G*, say.

Either way, while Hanson explicitly purports to make room for doxastic effects on experience, my final verdict on the relational view is the following: currently, it is unable to accommodate such phenomena. Moreover, it lacks a convincing account of the mind-independent items that experience is said to relate us to and of how these items constitute the phenomenology of experience. This is not to say that the relational view is inevitably doomed. But currently, it is shot through with problems and the challenges it faces are significant.

It is thus time to change gears and leave the analysis of relational views behind. Accordingly, I will, in the next chapter, discuss a view that shares Hanson's commitment to the idea that experience has content—Siegel's (Rich) Content View. In particular, I will look at Siegel's attempt to accommodate cases of doxastic variability of experience, i.e. the position she develops in her recent

book, *The Rationality of Perception*. As I will argue, her Content View, too, faces serious challenges. And the account she proposes in her most recent book involves commitments to various ways of construing experience that are not only highly revisionary and counterintuitive, but that turn out to be entirely unnecessary if we drop her implicit commitment to a certain conception of what role experience plays for us. In what follows, the discussion of Siegel's view serves an important function. For one, it provides us with a series of problems that in subsequent chapters need to be addressed. For another, it contains a number of commitments many of which—in a progression that begins at the end of the next chapter and that continues through the chapters that follow—I suggest we can drop.

7.0 SIEGEL'S RICH CONTENT VIEW

Our extended examination of the relational view yielded the following result: it is ill-equipped to provide an account of experiential phenomenology and to accommodate or explain away certain instances of what I called the **Doxastic Variability of Experiential Phenomenology (DVEP)**. For as we assessed the various relationalist views with an eye to their ability to accommodate phenomena that would instantiate such variability—e.g. expert vision and projection effects—we found that these phenomena, especially the latter, pose a serious challenge to relationalist positions.

As we noted, it is not overly surprising that projection effects are difficult for relationalists to accommodate. After all, relationalists are committed to the idea that the nature and the primary role of experience is to put subjects in touch with mind-independent items. Arguably, this conception of the role of experience also undergirds their strong intuition that the phenomenology of perceptual experience must be fully constituted by, and explained in terms of, the perceiving subject's being suitably related to such items. Against the background of such commitments, it is understandable—if not to be expected—that relationalists should generally be wary of cases in which beliefs or other cognitive background states appear to modify experiential phenomenology. After all, in such cases, suitable mind-independent items that relationalists could draw on to account for the relevant modifications are absent.

Perceptual experience, if construed as a relation, is said to put us in touch with mind-independent objects. But whatever further epistemological and semantic roles relationalists may want to attribute to it, perceptual experience will have to be construed as providing us with something that can be exploited so as to make it intelligible how experience can play such roles. Since on relationalist accounts, experience has no representational content, it appears that experience must play such roles

due to its having a phenomenology. If so, then for an assessment of the prospects of relationalist views, the verdict we reached over the course of the previous chapters is highly significant. According to this verdict, the relational notion of experiential phenomenology is flawed—not just because it cannot easily accommodate the kinds of doxastic effects we discussed, but because in the context of discussing why doing so is difficult, we found that in each case, the purported constitution relation between mind-independent items and experiential phenomenology remains unclear. But once we concede that the relationalist notion of experiential phenomenology is dubious, we must also admit that such a notion can hardly serve as a suitable candidate for grounding whatever semantic and epistemic roles relationalists may think experience ought to play. Providing a satisfactory account of experiential phenomenology, one that is both intelligible and powerful enough to deal with the cases we have been considering, is thus not just some minor task—one among many others that relationalists should wish to eventually address. Rather, for the entire relationalist project to get off the ground, it is crucial that such an account be developed. As long as it is pending, the relational view must thus be firmly rejected.

In this chapter, I examine the account of visual perceptual experience and its rational role offered by Susanna Siegel. Siegel defends a version of representationalism, i.e. a view on which conscious visual experience is essentially a matter of representing things as being some way or other. On her account, the content visual experience can have in virtue of representing things as being some way can be *rich*; conscious visual perception, she maintains, can present all sorts of complex properties as instantiated, including kind properties, causal properties, and identity properties.

For our purposes, Siegel's view is particularly interesting because it combines the following two features. First, it is the most recent and arguably the most sophisticated attempt to develop a representationalist position that explicitly seeks to accommodate cases in which cognitive background states affect the perceiving subject's experience. Paradigmatically, these states are beliefs and expectations, but Siegel also considers further influencing factors: e.g. desires, fears, moods, and attitudes.

Second, the account she develops in her most recent book, *The Rationality of Perception*, is an attempt to respond to the kind of epistemological worries such cases raise for standard representationalist accounts of experience more broadly. Accordingly, we can exploit Siegel's work to bring out the shape of these general worries, and then examine the specific response she offers.

Here is how I proceed: I begin by analyzing the account of experience Siegel develops and defends in Siegel (2010)—the **Content View** (7.1). I argue that we need not accept the argument Siegel provides for this account and that the account itself leaves some pressing questions unanswered. Most importantly, Siegel assumes that visual experiences have determinate contents and that phenomenal states are non-arbitrarily related to their contents. However, she provides little in terms of an account of how experiential content is determined and leaves us without an account of **Non-Arbitrariness**. This, I argue, is rather unfortunate. For without a full account of how the content of phenomenal states is determined, it remains unclear how Siegel (or any representationalist who holds a similar view) thinks experience can play the epistemological role representationalists standardly attribute to it: that of justifying or providing evidential support for perceptual beliefs.¹ In 7.2, I present Siegel's account of putative cases in which cognitive background states affect visual experience, outline Siegel's approach of framing and responding to the epistemological problem that accommodating such cases

¹ It has been suggested to me in discussion that as I criticize, in 7.1, Siegel's Content View, I treat Siegel's view unfairly for the following two reasons: first, I am said to complain that Siegel does not provide answers to questions that are pretty much the hardest questions in the vicinity. Second, and relatedly, I am taken to demand answers to questions that Siegel does not even purport to answer.

I agree that e.g. the question how phenomenal states are related to the properties that according to many representationalists they are taken to represent is a hard one. Moreover, I agree that Siegel's primary aim is not to answer such questions. That said, I think it is important to acknowledge that neither Siegel's notion of experience nor the argument for the Content View that she provides are as compelling as she takes them to be. Also, I wish to point out that though I illustrate the problems of **Non-Arbitrariness** and **Experiential Content** by way of criticizing Siegel's view, I take these problems to be pressing not just for Siegel, let alone for Siegel in particular, but for many, if not most representationalists. For again, without a way of addressing them, it remains unclear how experience can play the role representationalists think it does. Especially with respect to 7.1.4, I thus ask those readers who are sympathetic to representationalism to abstract from the specifics of Siegel's account and ask themselves how they think the problems of **Non-Arbitrariness** and of **Experiential Content** can be solved.

In the chapters that follow, I hope to be providing some considerations that point us in the direction of how these issues can be addressed productively. As will transpire, I think that addressing them need not, but may happen in the context of a representationalist account—albeit a non-standard one.

poses within a representationalist framework, and close by raising some problems for her approach. In 7.3, I propose an alternative way of framing and responding to the problem that is compatible with the **Content View**, with representationalism more generally, but that drops some of Siegel's more revisionary assumptions, viz. a) that experiences have epistemic powers that vary with their etiology and b) that subjects are irrational if they respond to experiences in what must strike them as the rational thing to do and provided that the contents of these experiences have been influenced by psychological or cognitive precursors in a way that seems epistemically pernicious. My alternative way of framing the issue crucially depends on endorsing an alternative and, I suggest, completely general conception of the role of experience. On it, experience makes rational view-dependent transitions to judgments, beliefs, and actions.

7.1 THE CONTENT VIEW

According to Siegel's **Content View**, visual experiences have contents, which Siegel understands as a kind of condition under which experiences are accurate. For experience to have such contents, on her view, is for experience to represent properties or—as she also says—for properties to be presented as instantiated, or attributed, by and in experience, to some objects.² It is in virtue of having such contents that experience can play its main epistemological function, viz. that of providing or conveying information (cf. Siegel 2010, p. 7), that of bestowing propositional justification, and that of affording evidential support for beliefs or judgments (cf. *ibid.*, p. 8-10).

These claims need to be unpacked further. The discussion of the epistemic function of experience will be deferred to later (until 7.2). In this section, I first lay out Siegel's notion of visual experience as she develops it in her 2010 book *The Contents of Visual Experience* (7.1.1), present her view that the

² Siegel claims that her view can easily be reformulated in terms of e.g. trope theory and that the position can also be developed so as to accommodate the idea that experience presents not just properties, but also centering features, or that it presents properties under (Fregean) modes of presentation (cf. Siegel 2010, pp. 55-58). For our purposes, such complications can be ignored.

bearers of experiential contents are the visual phenomenal states themselves (7.1.2), and lay out and criticize the argument she presents in favor of the Content View: her *Argument from Appearing* (7.1.3). I then show that we cannot, from Siegel's view, extract an account of how the content of phenomenal states are determined nor an account of how specific phenomenal states are related to the contents they are said to bear, and argue that for us to lack such accounts poses a serious issue (7.1.4).

7.1.1 Siegel's Notion of Visual Experience

Having experiences, Siegel holds, is a matter of being in a (typically complex, multi-faceted) conscious mental state that by its very nature has a felt character (cf. e.g. Siegel 2010, p. 14). If we consider some such state, e.g. the experience one may undergo while waterskiing, we may note that such a state is typically temporally extended, involves inputs from various sources such as multiple sensory modalities (which may or may not be coordinated), proprioception, but also from feelings, moods, and so forth. Having a *visual* experience, Siegel stipulates, is to be in some such potentially complex conscious state that has visual facets, so that one's overall experience involves being in some visual phenomenal states. Here is what Siegel says about phenomenal states:

- (1) Let's say that *phenomenal states* are individuated by what it is like to be in them. To be in the same phenomenal state on two different occasions, what it's like to be in that state has to be the same both times (Siegel 2010, p. 20).

Relatedly, this is how Siegel characterizes the notion of visual phenomenal character:

- (2) A visual experience is one of the states (among many others) that you are in when you see things. There is "something it is like" to have a visual experience, and what it's like varies with what you see, what you pay attention to, and your perceptual idiosyncracies, such as astigmatism, colorblindness, whether your cornea is scratched, whether you are wearing corrective lenses, and so on. All of these factors contribute to the specific conscious or phenomenal character of a visual experience, or equivalently, to what it is like to have it. We can call this *visual phenomenal character*, or *visual phenomenology*, for short. (Siegel 2010, pp. 3-4)

From these passages we learn that Siegel's notions of *visual phenomenology* and (*visual*) *phenomenal state* rest on the idea that there is *something it is like* to have a visual experience: the experience's *phenomenal character*. Phenomenal states—or rather: kinds of such states—are said to be individuated

by their phenomenal character. Moreover, the phenomenal character of an experience and, hence, what concrete phenomenal state one is in while undergoing one's experience, can vary with various factors.

Apart from these passages, Siegel 2010 provides no further characterization of what phenomenal states are. Accordingly, her characterization of the phenomenal dimension of experience is very thin. Note also that the factors listed in passage (2) do not include beliefs or other background states. As we will see below, Siegel explicitly allows that such background states can modify a subject's visual experience, too. What exactly the target of such modification is, however, that is something we will need to discuss.

Since Siegel is particularly interested in visual phenomenal states, she suggests two strategies for arriving at the specifically visual aspects any given experience may involve. To distinguish them, Siegel introduces the notion of *phenomenally conscious states* (cf. Siegel 2010, p. 20). Such states, she stipulates, are such that necessarily, to be in them, one has to be in a phenomenal state. Trivially, then, phenomenal states are phenomenally conscious states, as are states of seeing objects, states of seeming to see objects, of seeing (or seeming to see) something *as* something or that something is the case.³

With the notion of phenomenally conscious states in hand, Siegel suggests that one can arrive at the specifically visual aspects of a given experience by considering some overall experience, construed as the overall phenomenal state one is in during the stretch of time during which one is undergoing a certain experience. Next, one is to zoom in on, and thus single out, its visual components, arriving at the specific *visual phenomenal states* the relevant experience involves—at what Siegel calls the *narrow class* of visual experiences. Alternatively, she suggests, one can start from the overall experience, construed not as an overall phenomenal state, but as a collection of phenomenally conscious states. Next, one is to ignore the non-visual ones, thus arriving at what Siegel classifies as belonging to the *broad class* of visual experiences. And whereas the narrow class of visual experiences comprises solely phenomenal

³ Siegel explicitly focuses her discussion on purely visual experiences and thus brackets multimodal experiences that have visual experiences as parts. Among visual experiences, some are, for the most part, sidelined as well, e.g. the visual experience one has when facing a light source with one's eyes closed or the visual experience one has when one closes one's eyes without a light source present (cf. Siegel 2010, p. 24).

states, the broad class may include a range of ontologically distinct elements, such as episodes, actions, and states of various sorts—most importantly: states of seeing (cf. Siegel 2010, pp. 20-21). But how are states of seeing and phenomenal states related? Since states of seeing are phenomenally conscious states, every state of seeing (and of seeming to see) is such that necessarily, subjects who are in such a state are also in some visual phenomenal state or other. Seeing someone—Jim, say—thus essentially involves being in some visual phenomenal state or other. But Siegel indicates that there is no unique visual phenomenal state one must be in to see Jim, to see him as sad, or even as sad in very specific circumstances. Conversely, she claims, there is no unique phenomenal state such that if one is in it, one must be seeing Jim, him as sad, or him as sad in very specific circumstances (cf. Siegel 2010, p. 20, also p. 23). States of seeing, Siegel insists, are not identical with phenomenal states.

In part, this is to explicitly reject a claim that at least some relationalists would endorse. Recall that according to Fish, having an experience with a phenomenal character requires that the subject be acquainted with some facts, i.e. with some mind-independent object-property couples. Having an experience with a specific phenomenal character, on his view, just is a case of seeing specific object-property couples, from a specific location, in certain lighting conditions, etc. Moreover, recall that for Fish, the phenomenal character of experiences is individuated by which object-property couples the experiences acquaint one with. Accordingly, undergoing two subsequent experiences of numerically different, but qualitatively identical items is to have two experiences with different phenomenal characters. On such a view, phenomenal states are, *pace* Siegel, identical with states of seeing.⁴

Siegel favors what she calls *internalism about phenomenal states*. By this she means that phenomenal states are not individuated externally, i.e. by way of referring to the mind-independent items that may give rise to them. Instead, and again, such states are individuated solely by what it is like to be in them.

⁴ Brewer would maintain that the visual phenomenal state an experiencing subject is in will be characterized in terms of the various ways things thinly and thickly look to the subject, in that experience. If so, then given that looks are said to rest on similarity relations, and given that different objects can stand in the same similarity relations, Brewer will presumably maintain the following: like Fish, he will hold that every visual phenomenal state is a state of seeing some specific object. However, in contrast to Fish, he will accept that seeing different kinds of objects can be a matter of being in identical phenomenal states. Therefore, he will not think that there is a one-to-one correspondence between (kinds of) phenomenal states and (kinds of) states of seeing specific objects.

And this “something it is like,” the idea goes, can be the same across various experiences—such as experiences of numerically different, but qualitatively identical items, hallucinations, perhaps even across experiences of different items with different qualities that are had in different circumstances.⁵ With this outline of Siegel’s notion of visual experience in hand, let us ask how to understand her claim that experience has content.

7.1.2 Content-Bearing Phenomenal States

In her introduction to Siegel 2010, Siegel states that she seeks to explore the question “how things may look to us in our visual experiences of them [...] by asking which properties are represented in visual experience” (Siegel 2010, p. 4). The main idea underlying her Content View, thus, is this: experiential contents are to be construed in terms of properties that experience represents, presents

⁵ Does Siegel argue for internalism about phenomenal states? In chapter 1 of Siegel 2010, she announces that in chapter 6, she will argue that no states of seeing are phenomenal states (Siegel 2010, p. 23). In the introduction to that chapter, she reiterates the claim that no phenomenal states are identical with any states of seeing (cf. Siegel 2010, p. 148) and indicates that she will reach this conclusion in section 6.6. Curiously, the book does not contain such a section (according to p. 162, fn. 13, it was also to contain a now missing argument against the idea that there are phenomenal types specific to hallucination).

Moreover, the position Siegel reaches in 6.5, the final section of the chapter, is explicitly inconclusive. There, she suggests that internalists about phenomenal states have an explanation for how it is that veridical experiences, illusions, and hallucinations can have matching phenomenal characters. According to this explanation, such experiences share phenomenal properties (as we saw in 4.3, Fish feels the force of this idea, but ultimately rejects it). Disjunctivists of various stripes, on the other hand, have a much harder time accounting for the phenomenal similarity between matching veridical and non-veridical experiences—or so Siegel argues. After discussing and rejecting a few proposals, Siegel focuses on casting doubt on Martin’s and Fish’s suggestion that disjunctivists may appeal to the claim that non-veridical experiences are indiscriminable from veridical ones (drawing on arguments developed more fully elsewhere, e.g. in Siegel 2004). Briefly, Siegel claims that for certain illusions, there may be no veridical perception from which the entire illusory experience would be indiscriminable. She also points out that the notion of indiscriminability seems inapplicable to creatures who have experiences, yet lack the cognitive resources to discriminate between them (cf. Siegel 2010, pp. 171-173, and Siegel 2008 for discussion of Fish’s view in particular). Her conclusion is that disjunctivists who take hallucinatory and non-hallucinatory experiences to be phenomenally distinct must provide an account of how they can match anyway. Disjunctivists who think that such states are not distinct, but characterize the merely hallucinatory case by referring to the non-hallucinatory case, she suggests, need a better account of why it is that these cases belong to the same phenomenal state than an account that merely appeals to indiscriminability properties.

Again, Siegel ends section 6.5. by conceding that her considerations do not conclusively favor internalism about phenomenal states. Despite her repeated announcements to the contrary, she thus does not establish that no phenomenal states are identical with any states of seeing. Instead, she settles for motivating internalism about phenomenal states by raising issues for alternative views, and ends by essentially bracketing the issue, asserting that questions about its truth are anyway irrelevant to questions about the contents of experience (cf. *ibid.*, p. 174).

as instantiated, or attributes to objects. Moreover, she holds that when subjects have an experience, the contents of that experience are conveyed to the subject by the experience (cf. Siegel 2010, p. 28). Due to having contents, visual experiences, on this view, are importantly similar to beliefs (cf. *ibid.*, p. 27). For that properties are represented in experience gives rise to a notion of accuracy conditions, which in turn are in many ways like truth-conditions of beliefs (cf. *ibid.*, p. 4). Most importantly, like the contents of beliefs, contents of experiences are true or false (cf. Siegel 2010, p. 28). But unlike beliefs, experiences themselves are neither true nor false. Instead, they are either accurate or not.

Accuracy, Siegel notes, comes in degrees, for a given experience may succeed in representing some properties accurately, but fail in representing others accurately. Accordingly, a given experience *e* is fully accurate with respect to some situation *s* iff in *s*, things are exactly as *e* represents them to be. Put in terms of truth, it is possible that relative to some situation *s* in which a certain experience *e* is had, some of *e*'s contents are true, whereas others are not. If I see a yellow half-sphere head-on, for example, it could be, on this view, that in virtue of the properties my experience presents as instantiated, it has the true content that would be expressed by the sentence "there is something yellow in front of me," but also the false content expressed by the sentence "there is a sphere in front of me." Plainly, such an experience would not be fully accurate. For a completely accurate experience is free from error, relative to some situation *s*, in the following sense: every content the experience has in virtue of (re)presenting various properties as instantiated is true of *s*.⁶

In our earlier discussion of Hanson's account, we asked how on his view, the phenomenal, non-conceptual dimension he takes experience to involve is supposed to relate to its conceptual dimension. A structurally analogous question arose in the context of Genone's view. With respect to the latter, we asked how it is that on his view, the perception of appearance properties is related to the judgments

⁶ Cf. Siegel 2010, p. 32. Note that an experience can be completely accurate with respect to the situation in which it is had, and still be neither what Siegel calls strongly veridical nor completely successful. Examples of completely accurate experiences that are not strongly veridical are hallucinations that are completely accurate with respect to the situation in which they are had, but not because in them, the perceiver actually perceives her environment, but due to some amazing coincidence. They are veridical, but not *of* any items seen. Examples of completely accurate experiences that are not completely successful are examples in which an experience is completely accurate, strongly veridical, but such that some of the enviroing circumstances or properties do not play the right causal role in bringing about the experiential contents that accurately represent them (cf. Siegel 2010, pp. 36-37, for discussion).

or beliefs that subjects, he says, may base on them. However, both Hanson and Genone ultimately left us without a satisfactory account of the relevant relations. Hanson treats the two dimensions of experience as logically separable, but also claims that epistemically significant seeing—*seeing as*—essentially involves both: in his terms, it essentially involves both linguistic and pictorial elements. More specifically, he suggests that in epistemically significant seeing, the phenomenal and the conceptual are (somehow) amalgamated. However, as we saw, he leaves us without an account of **Amalgamation**. Genone, on the other hand, leaves us without an account of the sense in which the perception of appearance properties gives rise to perceptual judgments or beliefs, in what sense such judgments or beliefs are (thus) based on such perceptions, and of the way in which one’s background views may modify which judgments or beliefs a subject may base on what she perceives.

If we ask how on Siegel’s view the dimension of content and the phenomenal are taken to be related, it is instructive to begin by looking at her short discussion of what she calls *two-factor views* of visual experience. On such views, as she characterizes them, visual experience comprises two factors: a phenomenal state and another, independent factor: a judgment, perhaps, or something judgment-like that does the representing. That on such views the two factors are taken to be independent from one another is to say that either factor could exist in the absence of the other. The phenomenal state could be had on its own, and the item that serves the function of representing certain contents could occur without a phenomenal state accompanying it. Moreover, it is compatible with such a view that one and the same phenomenal state could be associated with different representing items (cf. Siegel 2010, p. 21). For example, as one looks at a cloud, one could see it either as a crocodile or as a hotdog while the visual phenomenal state remains the same. Similarly,

- (3) if the person you’re talking to looks a bit like a monkey, perhaps, in some sense you see her differently when you see her as a monkey, even though your visual phenomenal state stays the same. (Siegel 2010, pp. 21-22)

From our discussion of Hanson’s view, we are familiar with one of the ideas endorsed by proponents of two-factor views (as Siegel characterizes them): some experiences may be exhausted by their phenomenal aspect. Hanson, as we saw, concedes that such experiences are possible, even though they are not, according to Hanson, epistemically significant in the sense that they can directly

bear on our beliefs.⁷ From Hanson's discussion, we are also familiar with cases in which we see one and the same item as different objects. It is, however, at least doubtful whether Hanson would comfortably assent to the characterization of such cases that Siegel offers on behalf of the two-factor view. Recall his discussion about what happens as one recognizes an object or as one moves from one way of seeing it to another. As things snap into perspective, he claims, the elements populating the subject's visual field *pull together* and *cohere* differently than before. Patently, Hanson thinks that such effects are due to the beliefs and expectations regarding the things we believe we see. As we recognize what we *see as* something, or *as* something else, the respective beliefs and expectations become salient, as it were, which, presumably, brings about the kind of effect he refers to. Again, in this kind of effect, the elements of the visual sphere are said to remain the same. But it can be doubted that the relevant effect leaves the phenomenology of the subject's experience completely unaltered.⁸

Siegel's characterization of two-factor views may thus not fit Hanson's view exactly. This is true also with respect to the notion of experiential content she takes such views to involve. For both Siegel's own construal of experiential content and the one she attributes to proponents of two-factor views differ from Hanson's in that on the former, but not on the latter, the contents that experiences are said to convey to the subjects that undergo them are, like judgments, propositional in form. However, '*seeing as*' does not form propositional contents (though, of course, we saw that for an instance of *seeing as* to be intelligible, commitments to various propositional contents must be in place). It is easy enough to extract propositional contents from episodes of *seeing as*—contents which, given suitable circumstances, the subject may then choose to endorse. Nevertheless, on Hanson's view, the contents of experiences themselves are non-propositional. Instances of *seeing as* neither involve judgments, nor anything judgment-like.⁹

⁷ As we saw, Hanson thinks that experiences that are purely phenomenal, as it were, are hard to bring about. Nevertheless, he also thinks that trying to do so may serve the purpose of freeing one's experience from preconceptions, so as to perhaps arrive at new ways of seeing things, which may in turn be epistemically fruitful.

⁸ As we saw in 2.3.2, Hanson himself appears to be uncertain how to place such effects. Hence the possible discomfort.

⁹ Note also that Hanson characterizes experiential content as linguistic. In the first chapter, we interpreted this as a commitment to the idea that concepts figure in experience itself. Siegel, on the other hand, talks about experiential content, but in terms of properties instantiated; she mostly avoids talk about concepts entirely.

For Siegel's discussion of two-factor views, however, what matters is something else: on such views, she claims, the *Content View* is non-surprisingly true. If the factor that does the representing is taken to be a judgment, or something judgment-like, then the Content View is true of experience because of the presence, in experience, of this factor. After all, she observes, "[i]t is no surprise that judgments have contents" (Siegel 2010, p. 22). And if at least sometimes, this factor represents complex properties as well, which it well may, it follows that experiences can have content that is *rich*.

Now, if the Content View were interpreted as requiring that experiential contents be true or false, then it would be false of Hanson's view. For if experiential contents, as he suggests, are non-propositional, they cannot be true or false. But Hanson, too, can agree that experiences can be more or less accurate of what is seen, depending on whether the objects seen are indeed what they are seen as. Moreover, he would be happy to concede that one can see something as an x-ray tube, as caused by the recent heavy rainfall, or as identical with the guitar player Al Di Meola, say. Hence, if separated from the construal of experiential contents as propositional, the Content View is true of Hanson's view as well. And, if, like Siegel, we take the **Rich Content View** to be the stronger thesis that some visual experiences present complex properties as instantiated, such as kind properties, causal properties, or identity properties, then the Rich Content View is true of Hanson's view as well.

Siegel's own view, however, diverges from two-factor-views. The more interesting thesis, Siegel contends, and the one she seeks to defend, is at odds with it. For according to her view, the bearer of experiential content is not some independent factor, such as a judgment or something judgment-like. Rather, it is the phenomenal state itself. On her view, the representational content of experience is not separable from the phenomenal states, nor do phenomenal states occur without a representing factor.¹⁰ For it is these very states themselves that do the representing—each and every one of them does.

¹⁰ In a forthcoming response to Harmen Ghijsen (cf. Siegel *ftnc.*), Siegel insists, against Ghijsen, that rather than insisting, as Ghijsen does, that the phenomenal character is something "over and above" representational content, we must acknowledge that presentational phenomenal character is "too closely tied to representational content to provide a distinct feature." As I will argue below, it is one of the issues Siegel never addresses how this relation of being *closely tied* is to be understood.

Accordingly, Siegel's *Content View* is the following thesis:

Content View:

All visual phenomenal states (also labelled '*visual perceptual experiences*,' or 'experiences' for short) have contents (cf. Siegel 2010, p. 22).

And since, as we saw, she thinks that the content of experience can be rich, Siegel also holds:

Rich Content View:

Some visual phenomenal states have content that are rich; they represent complex properties such as kind properties, causal properties, and even personal identity (cf. e.g. Siegel 2010, p. 22).

In large swaths of the contemporary philosophical literature on perceptual experience, Siegel contends, the Content View is simply presupposed (cf. Siegel 2010, p. 28). Siegel, however, seeks to present an argument for it, the *Argument from Appearing*. As I will argue in the next section, this argument is not compelling. Its crucial premise begs the question.

7.1.3 The Argument from Appearing

The argument Siegel presents for her view, the *Argument from Appearing*, runs as follows:

- (4)
 - (i) All visual perceptual experiences present clusters of properties as being instantiated.
 - (ii) If an experience E presents a cluster of properties F as being instantiated, then: Necessarily: things are the way E presents them only if property-cluster F is instantiated.
 - (iii) If necessarily: things are the way E presents them only if property-cluster F is instantiated, then: E has a set of accuracy conditions C, conveyed to the subject of E, such that: C is satisfied in a world only if there is something that has F in that world.
 - (iv) If E has a set of accuracy conditions C, conveyed to the subject of E, such that E is accurate only if C, then: E has a set of accuracy conditions C*, conveyed to the subject of E, such that E is accurate iff C*.
- (C) All visual perceptual experiences have contents. (Siegel 2010, p. 45)¹¹

¹¹ Obviously, for the argument to go through, contents must be identified with accuracy conditions that are conveyed to the subject.

For our purposes, the crucial premise is the first one. As we begin to consider it, recall that on Siegel's proposal, visual perceptual experiences are visual experiences in the narrow sense: visual phenomenal states. Accordingly, premise (i) expresses the claim that all visual phenomenal states present clusters of properties as being instantiated.

Why should one accept this premise? Given their commitment to **No Content**, it seems that proponents of the relational view would have to resist it. And given Hanson's contention that at least some experiences may be purely phenomenal and as such not involve *seeing as* at all, he would reject it as well, or at least restrict its scope to epistemically significant experiences.¹² Again, thus: why, then, should we accept premise (i)? In response, Siegel offers the following consideration:

- (5) Typically, our visual perceptual experiences are cases of seeing objects, where the category of objects includes ordinary objects such as cars, cups, and pencils. Why think that properties are presented in such experiences? Consider the claim [...] that there is no such thing as a "bare particular"—that is, an object shorn of all of its properties. Premise (i) is motivated by the idea that it is not possible for us to represent objects as so shorn in our visual experience. When we see (or even when we merely seem to see) ordinary objects, such as a cube, bare particulars do not figure in visual phenomenology in any way. Properties enter the picture as well. For you to see a cube at all, it must be part of your visual phenomenology that the cube has certain properties: having a certain number of facing edges and surfaces, having a certain color, location, and so on. (Siegel 2010, p. 46)

As passage (5) indicates, the argument Siegel offers in support of premise (i) runs as follows:

- (P1) All visual perceptual experiences are cases of seeing or cases of merely seeming to see objects.
(P2) If in such experiences, clusters of properties are not being presented as instantiated, the experience presents only bare particulars.
(P3) It is impossible for our experience to be such that it presents only bare particulars.
(C) All visual perceptual experiences present clusters of properties as being instantiated.

¹² Might Siegel agree with such a restriction? After all, are there not some broadly visual experiences that she explicitly excludes from the Content View (see fn. 3 above)? No. Removing any kind of phenomenal state from the scope of the first premise would in effect weaken it, bring Siegel's view closer to two-factor views, and raise the question in virtue of what it is that some phenomenal states have contents, but not others—or perhaps: why it is that phenomenal states have contents in some contexts, while in other contexts, they do not. Instead, Siegel argues that the states she sidelined have contents, too, but content that differs from ordinary contents in that they do not represent properties and objects as subject-independent and as perspectively connected (see Siegel 2010, chapter 7).

Given the nature of the views Siegel opposes, this argument is rather puzzling. Let us consider it more closely. As for (P1), Siegel does not state it explicitly in the passage. But plainly, establishing the conclusion—i.e. premise (i) of the *Argument from Appearing*—requires there to be a universal generalization among the premises (as opposed to a mere typicality claim). Accordingly, we should extrapolate (P1) from the typicality claim passage (5) starts with and the parenthetical remark about seemings further below. (P2) then adds a conditional, whose antecedent is the negation of the desired conclusion. And since the negation of its consequent is implied by the impossibility claim expressed by (P3), we can use this negation and apply modus tollens to (P2), which yields the conclusion.

Perhaps one could argue against (P1) and insist that some cases in which one undergoes a visual experience are neither seeings nor seemings. In Hanson's terms, in some cases, visual experiences might not be cases of *seeing as*—the visual experience involved as one stares mindlessly at the passing landscape through the window of a moving train could be an instance in which it seems at least strained to say that while having such experiences, one is seeing or seeming to see anything. But perhaps Siegel could insist that that even such experiences are such that one sees the objects and properties that are passing by. One is, after all, visually related to them. As one undergoes such experiences, one may fail to exploit the fact that in them, certain properties are being presented as instantiated. But for all intents and purposes, they are cases of seeing nonetheless.

Suppose we accept this and grant that there is indeed no need to regiment the notion 'seeing' in such as to require that for one to be in a state of seeing one must exploit that state in any way. So construed, (P1) might also well be acceptable both to proponents of two-factor views and to the relationalists whose views we examined. Fish and Brewer, for instance, could well endorse the generalized disjunction (P1) involves, even though they would also maintain that no phenomenal state satisfies the second disjunct. To be in a phenomenal state, they would insist, one must be acquainted with at least some mind-independent items. Since in the case of vision, such acquaintance requires being visually related to such items, being in any visual phenomenal state requires that one be visually related to some mind-independent item or other. Like Fish and Brewer, Genone, too, might accept (P1). But unlike them, he might also grant that some phenomenal states satisfy the second disjunct.

After all, he is willing to entertain phenomenal pluralism. Thus, he can grant that some phenomenal states are brought about not by the subject's being related to suitable mind-independent items, but in some other way—due to cognitive effects, say, or an impairment of the subject's visual system.

As for (P3), Hanson would accept it, too. According to him, each visual experience that has content is a case of seeing something as something. Moreover, seeing something as something, he thinks, essentially involves seeing it as having (or lacking) various properties. Indeed, on Hanson's view, it would be unintelligible what *seeing* some object *as F* could possibly be unless such seeing occurred in a context in which *being F* is articulated in terms of having or lacking various properties. As for proponents of other two-factor views, let us assume that they, too, accept (P3)—there do not seem to be any pressing reasons against it.¹³ Relationalists, finally, accept (P3) as well. Given their commitment to **No Content**, they hold that in visual experience, *nothing* is represented or presented as being instantiated—including particulars, no matter whether bare or not. Hence, when Siegel claims that it is impossible for us to represent bare particulars in visual experience, they may happily agree.¹⁴

However, it seems overwhelmingly plausible that relationalists would reject (P2). For it is clear that as Siegel understands the idea, for experience to present something just is for it to be such as to have accuracy conditions that yield her notion of content. Abstractly put, the conditional (P2) expresses has the following form: if visual perceptual experiences, construed as phenomenal states, lack something that is ready to be exploited to be a content of kind *A*, they have something that is ready to be exploited to be a content of kind *B*.

Patently, everyone who is committed to **No Content** must reject this claim.¹⁵ Surely, some relationalists, e.g. Fish and Genone, will accept that experience relates us to properties or even that

¹³ Proponents of the two-factor view might either insist that experience, construed narrowly as the phenomenal state, does not represent anything, including bare particulars. Even if 'experience' is construed broadly so as to comprise both the phenomenal state and the representing factor, they may well agree with Siegel that the latter never serves to represent bare particulars.

¹⁴ Some relationalists may think that it is not *impossible* for experiences to have content. As we saw, Genone suggests that it is consistent with relationalism to hold that experiences could have contents that lack an explanatory function. However, even relationalists who for some reason accept that experience has such contents may reject, with Siegel, the idea that such experiences could represent bare particulars.

¹⁵ Even relationalists who think that it is *possible* for experience to have functionally inert contents may reject the inference. For it would be open to them, too, to suggest that some experiences may have no contents at all. Incidentally, Siegel acknowledges, in a footnote, that premise (i) of her argument is at odds with Fish's view (cf. Siegel

properties are presented to us in experience. And though Brewer officially subscribes to a nominalist position, he, too, draws on similarity relations between objects to ground his notion of looks. Arguably, standing in various similarity relations is a property an object can either have or lack. Moreover, as Siegel points out as well, similarity relations between objects have to hold in virtue of something—to wit: in virtue of the relevant objects' properties. Accordingly, one can argue that Brewer, too, will have to accept that in visual experience, properties are being perceived (cf. Siegel 2010, p. 66).

Finally, it is also true that some relationalists will say that it is due to our being related to mind-independent items that experiences have phenomenal properties—Fish certainly would (Genone, however, may reject talk of phenomenal properties as flawed). However, that subjects, when having an experience, are *related* to properties or that their experiences themselves *have* certain (phenomenal) properties need not and—as relationalists will insist—*must not* be understood the way Siegel does. In particular, it must not be understood as entailing that in experience, properties are represented, presented as instantiated, or attributed to objects in such a way as to yield contents that could be characterized by drawing on some abstract objects: propositions. After all, it is, as Genone puts it, one of the fundamental tenets of relationalism that in visual experience, properties do not figure as abstract representations.¹⁶

2010, p. 49, fn. 19. Premise (i), recall, is this: all visual perceptual experiences present clusters of properties as being instantiated). The reason she adduces for the alleged incompatibility is that on Fish's account, hallucinations lack phenomenal character. If visual hallucinations are nonetheless visual perceptual experiences, she claims, they will be counterexamples to (i) (again, for her critique of Fish's account of hallucination, see Siegel 2008).

As I see it, however, the incompatibility is by no means restricted to cases of hallucination. It is of course true that according to Fish, every non-hallucinatory experience has its specific phenomenal character due to the subject's being acquainted with various objects and their properties that figure in what he calls the presentational character of experience. However, given his commitment to **No Content**, Fish must resist the idea that having an experience with a given phenomenal character is *eo ipso* to have an experience that itself *presents* or *represents* certain properties *as instantiated*. If so, however, then on his view, not just hallucinations, but every visual experience is a counterexample to premise (i). Accordingly, whatever the merits may be of Siegel's critique of Fish's account of hallucination—by itself, it does not address the fundamental disagreement between her view and Fish's, i.e. the disagreement with respect to the question whether in experience, properties are represented as instantiated.

¹⁶ In section 2.5 of Siegel 2010, Siegel seeks to establish that relationalists, too, must accept the Content View. However, throughout, she assumes that for one to be perceptually related to properties entails that these properties are represented in experience. This comes out, for example, when she claims that the only version of the relational view that would be at odds with premise (i) is what she calls Radical Naïve Realism—the view that “[a]ll non-hallucinatory experiences consist in a perceptual relation to a worldly item, and properties are not among the things the subject is perceptually related to” (Siegel 2010, p. 65). But the point, again, is not whether relationalists accept or reject the idea

For similar reasons, proponents of two-factor views of experience, too, including Hanson, will reject (P2). Visual experiences, as they figure in the argument under consideration, are phenomenal states. But as Siegel pointed out herself, on two-factor views, not phenomenal states, but some other, judgment-like factor does the representing. Accordingly, proponents of two-factor views, like Hanson, will deny that from the fact that phenomenal states do not present clusters of properties as instantiated, it follows that phenomenal states present bare particulars.

A further problem with premise (i) brings us back to the kinds of cases that may be states of seeing in the minimal sense that they require that the subject be visually related to some mind-independent items, but that are also such that according to Hanson, they lack epistemic significance. The problem arises in the context of Siegel's claim that to be contents, the properties visual experiences present as instantiated and the accuracy conditions experiences are said to have in virtue of such presentation are *conveyed* to subjects by their experiences. As the following passage indicates, Siegel thinks that there are three different ways in which a content can be conveyed to the subject by her experience:

- (6) First, a content is conveyed by experience if it would be a content of explicit beliefs that are natural to form on the basis of visual experience. Second, a content is conveyed to the subject by her experience if it enables the experience to guide bodily actions. For instance, suppose you see the door but don't form any explicit beliefs about the shape of its doorknob, yet you adjust your grip in advance of touching the doorknob as you reach for it. This could be a case of visual experience guiding action. Finally, a content is conveyed to the subject by her experience if it is manifest to introspection that it is a content of experience (Siegel 2010, p. 51).

The problem is that with respect to neither of these senses of what it is for a content to be conveyed to the subject of an experience, it is obvious that the visual phenomenal state one is in while staring mindlessly through the window of a moving train serves to convey any determinate content to the subject. It is far from clear that there are judgments that it would be natural to form based on the visual experience of mindless staring, and what they would be. Nor is it obvious that there is a sense

that experience relates us to properties and, in that sense, presents such properties to us. Rather, the point is the following: relationalists will insist that accepting this idea is not tantamount to accepting that properties must figure in experience in the way premise (i) requires, i.e. by way of being presented as instantiated, or represented, or, more generally, in a sense that allows to generate Siegel's notion of accuracy conditions.

in which mindless staring is action-guiding. And finally, the project of introspecting on one's visual experience while staring mindlessly seems rather impossible. Whatever introspection is supposed to be, it seems that by the very act of engaging in it with respect to one's staring, such staring could no longer be truly mindless. And even if one could engage in such introspection, it still remains far from obvious what the putative content manifest to one while doing so should be.

In sum, as an argument for the **Content View**, Siegel's *Argument from Appearing* remains ineffective. It begs the question against relationalists and proponents of two-factor views (including Hanson). For none of these will accept its crucial first premise, nor the argument Siegel adduces in support of it. Since the argument for the view that all phenomenal states present properties as instantiated rests on a claim that relationalists and proponents of two-factor views are set to deny—viz. that phenomenal states, if they do not represent properties, represent something else (e.g. objects)—it is hard to see how anyone who does not already believe that phenomenal states represent something could be swayed by it. If there are further arguments that speak directly in favor of premise (i), Siegel does not provide them. Given that she is keenly aware of the fact that the **Content View** stands or falls with the answer to the question whether properties are presented in experience (cf. Siegel 2010, p. 76), this may strike one as surprising. As we will see next, the view (like, presumably, many other versions of representationalism) faces an even more difficult issue: it remains rather unclear how on it, phenomenal states relate to the contents they are said to bear.

7.1.4 Which Properties do Phenomenal States Represent?

Let us take it, then, that the *Argument from Appearing* by itself does not establish the **Content View** because it rests on a premise on how properties figure in visual experience, narrowly construed in terms of phenomenal states, that Hanson, the relationalists we considered, and proponents of what Siegel calls two-factor views of perceptual experience will reject. Even so, perhaps the argument could still serve the purpose of motivating the view for fellow representationalists who are already willing to concede that it is the phenomenal states themselves that do the representing. Such representationalists

could be moved to accept that if there is indeed something that phenomenal states represent, this will include properties (with this, Hanson would concur). It may also still serve to explicate a sense in which properties, if they are taken to be presented as instantiated in experience, are fit to be contents of experience. At any rate, we do not need a water-tight argument that establishes the **Content View** to assess it with respect to our main question: whether the view can accommodate cases of doxastic variation. Still, to properly assess it, we do still need a better understanding of what the view is.

Hanson, recall, distinguishes two different ways in which beliefs may affect experience—either by way of affecting its content or by way of affecting its phenomenology. If Siegel takes it that the phenomenal states themselves do the representing, and on the assumption that background beliefs could affect experience in either of these ways, an obvious question that arises is how on Siegel’s view, these two kinds of effects would interact. Raising this question highlights the need to address another one first: what is the relation Siegel takes to hold between specific (kinds of) phenomenal states and contents? How tightly linked are they? Would putative effects on the phenomenology of an experience *e* automatically be effects on *e*’s content? How about the reverse direction? Would putative effects on *e*’s content automatically be effects on its phenomenology? In asking how, on Siegel’s view, phenomenal states relate to the contents they are said to represent, we remain, in a sense, focused on premise (i) of Siegel’s argument. But in contrast to our previous discussion, we now ask not what may speak in its favor, but, rather, how it is to be understood. More specifically, we ask *which* properties a given phenomenal state is supposed to present as instantiated.

Having presented her argument for the Content View and given that her main aim is to establish the Rich Content View, Siegel spends much effort on addressing the question what *kinds* of properties phenomenal states may in principle represent. Accordingly, she argues at length for the claim that phenomenal states can represent complex properties such as kind properties, causal properties, and even identity.¹⁷ Moreover, she also distinguishes various kinds of contents that phenomenal states may

¹⁷ Cf. Siegel 2010, chapters 4-5. She also briefly raises the question what kinds of abstract objects contents could be, “corresponding to different kinds of propositions” (Siegel 2010, p. 77). That said, she then sidesteps the issue by contending that on any of the competing suggestions, properties will figure in these contents in one way or another

bear, arguing that experiences can bear both singular and non-singular contents (and different varieties thereof) and proposing, *inter alia*, that at least some contents experience may have, namely singular ones, are individuated by the objects we see.¹⁸

But if we ask how, on Siegel's view, phenomenal states and the contents they are said to present are related, it is difficult to get a fix on her position. Since she never addresses this question directly, we need to try and extract her answer by drawing on some scattered remarks.

7.1.4.1 Non-Arbitrariness and Expert Vision Our first data point is an assertion Siegel makes as she introduces her method to argue for the Rich Content View, the *method of phenomenal contrast*: “contents of visual experiences are non-arbitrarily related to their phenomenal character” (Siegel 2010, p. 88). Relying on this assumption, let us officially dub it Non-Arbitrariness, Siegel then proceeds to propose that in some cases, contrasts in which visual phenomenal states two overall experiences involve are best explained in terms of the hypothesis that the two experiences differ in content. More specifically, she suggests that they differ in the content represented by the visual phenomenal states involved. Roughly, then, the idea is this: given Non-Arbitrariness, a difference in the phenomenal character of two experiences that are had in otherwise similar circumstances typically is indicative of a difference in the two experiences' content. Unless plausible competing explanations of such a contrast are provided, that the two experiences differ in content counts as the best explanation for its occurrence.

Siegel's attempt to establish the Rich Content View by drawing on the method of phenomenal contrast is instructive with respect to her take on **expert vision**. Her account of expert vision has the

(cf. *ibid.*). Note that in this context, too, the only kind of contents Siegel considers as candidate experiential contents are propositional contents.

¹⁸ Singular contents are such that they are accurate only if the property presented by the experience as instantiated is indeed instantiated by the exact object the given experience attributes it to. In this sense, the singular experiential content “Franco is sad” is accurate only if it is indeed Franco who is sad, not his identical twin, say. In contrast, for the content “someone is sad,” to be accurate, there is no requirement that anyone in particular be sad. Experiences, Siegel claims, have several contents at the same time. For example, she suggests that plausibly, an experience that conveys that Franco is sad plausibly also conveys that someone is sad. If so, one and the same experience can have both singular and non-singular contents. Siegel draws further distinctions, e.g. the distinction between objectually and predicatively singular contents (cf. Siegel 2010, pp. 154ff.). I will return to this distinction shortly.

following shape: as subjects gradually develop their recognitional capacities, the appurtenant changes in their recognitional dispositions bring about changes not just in their beliefs about what they see, but also phenomenal changes (cf. Siegel 2010, p. 99). Siegel provides two examples: First, she suggests that there is a phenomenological difference between seeing a page of Cyrillic text prior to and after having learned to read Russian.¹⁹ Second, she suggests that as one learns to recognize and spot pine trees, these gradually become visually more salient to one. With respect to both cases, the following, Siegel holds, is intuitive: the difference in the degree to which one's recognitional disposition is developed "is reflected in a phenomenological difference between the visual experiences had before and those had after the recognitional disposition was fully developed." (Siegel 2010, p. 100).

Siegel's account of expert vision has some similarities with that provided by Fish. Like on Fish's view, expert vision involves a change in phenomenology, which in turn is associated with the development of the experiencing subject's recognitional capacities. Moreover, both Fish and Siegel agree that the experiential difference between the layperson and the expert has to do with which properties are presented in the experiencing subject's experience. This, however, is where the similarities end. For Fish's view, recall, is this: if due to the subject's possession of certain recognitional capacities, certain facts—i.e. object-property couples—are lifted into the presentational character of the subject's experience, the result is that the experiencing subject gets acquainted with the relevant objects and properties, which in turn serves to co-constitute the phenomenal character of the experience. If the recognitional capacities of a subject change, so does, accordingly, the phenomenal character of their experience. Siegel, however, takes it that the way properties are presented in

¹⁹ Some such effect should be easy to reproduce, even if we consider only one word. Take a word written in Cyrillic: 'ко**ш**ка'. If you don't know Cyrillic, you will be unfamiliar with the third letter of that word (bold). Moreover, you may not know how to pronounce the letters, or what the word means. Note, next, that the third letter is pretty much the same as English 'sh,' that the entire word is pronounced, roughly, like English speakers would pronounce 'caush-c'uh,' and that the word means 'female cat.' Moreover, suppose you also learn that in Russian, the word for 'male cat' is 'коr,' and realize that this is a rather obvious cognate of the English (gender-neutral) 'cat,' German "Kater," Spanish 'gato,' French 'chat,' plausibly also of Arabic 'qitt' and Nubian 'kadis.' If you now look at the word 'кошкa' again, the idea goes, clearly, something has changed. As Siegel would put it, you have begun to become disposed to better attend both to (all) the orthographic and even to the semantic properties of the word. Consequently, Siegel would claim, the phenomenology of your experience has changed. Now, arguably, semantic properties of words are not among the genuinely visual properties. Accordingly, it may well be that the changes that are purely visual are fully accounted for by changes in the perceiver's attention patterns. And while these may well be affected by what beliefs or recognitional capacities a subject possesses, the possibility for them to be exhibited need not depend on them.

experience is such that they are presented as instantiated, which in turn gives rise to a notion of content. Accordingly, her view seems to be this: a difference in a subject's recognitional capacities in otherwise identical experiential circumstances brings about a difference not just in the phenomenology of the subject's experience, but also a difference in experiential content.

Now, conceivably, expertise could modify just which properties a given phenomenal state presents as instantiated, while leaving the phenomenal state unaltered. However, in the dialectical context at hand, Siegel seeks to establish that the phenomenal difference in the experience of the layperson and the expert is best explained in terms of a change in content. Accordingly, the possibility of cases in which what expertise alters is not the phenomenal state itself, but just which properties the unaltered state presents as instantiated does not become salient. It is thus an open question whether expert vision that involves a modification of the experiencing subject's phenomenal states is the only kind of expert vision Siegel deems possible or whether she would allow that expert vision can assume further forms, including forms that leave the phenomenal states unchanged.

Note that if Siegel were to allow these latter forms of expert vision, doing so would establish some similarities between her account and Genone's account of misleading appearances. For as I suggested above, Genone could claim that some cases of expert vision are such that expertise affects not which appearance properties the subject perceives, but what the judgments or beliefs are that the subject may issue on the basis of her experience. Expert vision, so construed, affects not experiential phenomenology itself, but rather how experiential phenomenology and contents are associated. Clearly, Siegel and Genone would have to disagree in how to think about this association. For Genone, this association, however it is to be construed exactly, is one between separate items: experience and its phenomenology on the one hand, beliefs and judgments on the other. For Siegel, on the other hand, the association would have to be more intimate. After all, on her view, it is the experience itself that bears the relevant contents. Nevertheless, in taking this kind of expert vision to affect the association between phenomenology and contents, whatever that association is taken to be, the treatments would be structurally analogous. That said, whether Siegel would be willing to accommodate such cases depends strongly on how tightly she thinks kinds of phenomenal states and

contents are related. In other words, it depends on how exactly the notion of **Non-Arbitrariness** is construed.

Returning to the cases Siegel does discuss, let us suppose, with Siegel, that differences in what phenomenal states two experiences involve (in otherwise identical experiential settings) are sometimes explicable in terms of differences in their content. But it is one thing to say that phenomenal differences between two experiences can reflect differences in their content, quite another to insist that differences of the former kind always reflect differences of the latter kind. The former, weaker claim is compatible with believing that sometimes, different phenomenal states may have the same content. Let us ask again, thus, how on Siegel's view phenomenal states and contents are related.

7.1.4.2 Phenomenal States and Their Contents In her argument for the claim that phenomenal states can present kind properties as instantiated, a crucial premise Siegel adduces to establish her conclusion is a conditional that connects a difference in the phenomenal character of two given visual experiences to a difference in their content. More specifically, Siegel takes 'E1' and 'E2' to stand for two specific experiences—e.g. the experience of seeing a pine tree before learning to recognize pine trees, and the experience of seeing a pine tree after having acquired the capacity to recognize pine trees—and then motivates the following conditional: if there is a phenomenological difference between E1 and E2, then E1 and E2 differ in content (Siegel 2010, p. 101). For our purposes, what matters is that in the context of motivating this premise, Siegel makes the following remark:

- (7) Premise (2) [i.e. the conditional under consideration] is a consequence of the more general claim that [...] *any* phenomenal change is a change in content of the phenomenal character of a sensory experience. But premise (2) itself is much more limited. It just makes a claim about the phenomenal change in our pair of cases" (Siegel 2010, p. 109).

As the passage shows, Siegel is well aware of the stronger claim that every phenomenal change is a change in content. However, instead of either committing to it or rejecting it, she side-steps the issue by emphasizing that the claim she needs to defend to establish her conclusion is just the weaker one that in specific cases, differences in phenomenology are best explained in terms of differences in

content. What, then, are we to think? Can different phenomenal states represent the same content? And conversely, can the same phenomenal state represent different contents?

If we engage in a bit of fairly common philosophical science-fiction, we can imagine a case in which a subject, Pia, undergoes a procedure that leads to an inversion of how her visual phenomenal states figure in her color perception. In such a case, a proponent of a view like Siegel's might perhaps suggest that for Pia, a phenomenal state that to her, prior to her undergoing the procedure, presented the property of being green as instantiated may after the procedure present—or after some time come to present—the property of being red as being instantiated. Conversely, a state that prior to Pia's procedure presented the property of being red as instantiated may after the procedure present, or after some time come to present, the property of being green as instantiated.²⁰ If acceptable, this example can be taken to suggest not only that the same content can be presented by different (kinds of) phenomenal states in different contexts, but also that conversely, in different contexts, the same kind of phenomenal state can present different contents as instantiated.

To have a different example for the latter kind of situation, let us again consider the Müller-Lyer illusion. Arguably, the illusion is fairly robust, which is to say that regardless of whether we know it, the kind of visual phenomenal state we are in as we look at it (in suitably similar circumstances) remains rather stable across belief contexts. On this assumption, consider Mia, who does not know the illusion. A proponent of a view on which phenomenal states present properties as instantiated could well agree that the phenomenal state Mia is in as she is looking at the illusion for the first time presents the two

²⁰ A structurally similar and fairly ordinary kind of case can be made by way of drawing on the fact that for many of us, it is a sad truth that as we age, our eyesight slowly and often unnoticeably degenerates. Assuming Siegel's general view, one should find it rather plausible that as this process unfolds, the phenomenal states that attribute to objects the properties of having specific colors change as well, though the properties attributed need not. To make this vivid, imagine Pete, a young widower, who every morning looks lovingly at the golden urn that contains the ashes of his deceased partner. Since he keeps the urn in excellent condition, its actual color properties do not change. Over time, Pete's eyesight slowly degenerates. Accordingly, the phenomenal states he is in upon seeing the urn in various lighting conditions change as well. And yet, it would seem rather odd to insist that there is also a change in the color properties his changed phenomenal states present as instantiated.

Moreover, imagine that Pete undergoes surgery that drastically improves his eyesight. As a consequence, he may well notice that what it is like to look at the urn after the surgery is different from what it was like prior to it. The phenomenal state he is in upon seeing the urn has changed. Still, Pete need not insist that the phenomenal state he is now in upon seeing the urn presents different color properties. Instead, he may well say that it presents exactly the same properties as before, just better.

horizontal lines the illusion involves as having the property of being different in length (though they do not have that property). After all, that the two lines differ in length appears to be the belief that, on the basis of her experience, it is, in the context of what Mia knows, natural for Mia to form. It will also be the content that guides her subsequent actions. Finally, if some notion of introspection is taken to be viable, it may also be the content manifest to her as she introspects on her experience. That the two lines differ in length, in short, could well be the content that is conveyed to her, given Siegel's characterization of the idea of conveying content (see 7.1.3 above, passage (6)).

But suppose that Mia realizes in some way or other that the belief she initially formed upon seeing the Müller-Lyer is mistaken. Suppose, further, that she finds the illusion fascinating, devotes some time to studying it thoroughly, and eventually becomes maximally familiar with it. *Ex hypothesi*, this knowledge does not affect what phenomenal state she is in while looking at the illusion. But is it not plausible that the content of her experience changes? More specifically, is it not plausible to assume that after becoming maximally knowledgeable about and familiar with the illusion, the phenomenal state she is in while looking at the illusion comes to be such that to Mia, it attributes the property of being the same in length to the two horizontal lines involved? If on the kind of view that we are considering, this is intuitive, then it is intuitive that the same phenomenal state can present different properties as instantiated.²¹

Perhaps some will be inclined to reject such examples—perhaps one is skeptical that inversion cases are possible²² or perhaps one thinks that the phenomenology of the Müller-Lyer is not as robust as the example presupposes.²³ However, there is some evidence for the claim that Siegel, too, thinks that the same phenomenal state can present different contents as instantiated. For one, this claim is entailed by what she says about the content of hallucinations. For according to her, hallucinations, as

²¹ Patently, this would be an instance of a case of expert vision that works akin to Genone's account of misleading appearance, as suggested in the previous section.

²² For a helpful overview of inversion scenarios and their problems, see Byrne (2016). Another reason for rejecting the example could be that one favors one of the various suggestions to the effect that contents of experience, beyond properties, may also involve further features, such as centering features or Fregean modes of presentation. See Siegel 2010, pp. 55-58 for discussion.

²³ Whether and in what sense the illusion is robust and what mechanisms explain it is the subject of a longstanding debate both in philosophy and vision science. For a recent review and further references see Kopiske et al. (2017).

opposed to their non-hallucinatory counterparts, cannot have what she calls objectually singular contents. To elaborate, note that as per Siegel's stipulation, in general, for any content that is *singular* with respect to some object *o*, whether that content is true in an arbitrary world *w* depends on how things are with *o* in *w* (cf. Siegel 2010, p. 153). Moreover, if *o* figures in the experience as that to which a property is attributed, then in the resulting content, *o* figures *objectually*. If, alternatively, *o* figures in the experience as part of the characterization of the property that is attributed to some object, then in the resulting content, *o* figures *predicatively*. Finally, Siegel stipulates that "contents of states that are singular with respect to an object *o* by virtue of *o*'s being seen" are *objectually singular contents*, while "contents of states of seeing that are singular with respect to an object *o* by virtue of *o*'s figuring in a property attributed to the object seen" are *predicatively singular contents* (ibid. p. 154).

Siegel's suggestion, then, is this: hallucinations, e.g. that of Jim being sad, can be predicatively singular with respect to Jim. It is part of the hallucination that it attributes to the hallucinated figure the property of being identical with Jim. However, Siegel contends, the hallucinatory content could not be objectually singular with respect to Jim. On the one hand, this follows from the characterization of objectually singular contents: hallucinating Jim is not a case of seeing him. Moreover, recall, according to the constraints Siegel puts on the notion of content, contents are conveyed to the subject of the experience. But, Siegel claims, objectually singular contents could not be conveyed to the subject by her experience if that experience is a hallucination. For even veridical hallucinations, she maintains, could not reliably guide actions or movements with respect to Jim. Nor could such hallucinations make the belief the hallucinating subject may base on her hallucination of Jim being sad be a belief that is properly about Jim, as opposed to a belief about the hallucinated figure that looks like him.

Arguably, whether one accepts this last line of reasoning depends on further assumptions on what it takes to form beliefs that are properly about what they purport to be about. We need not take a stand on such issues here. Still, given that Siegel repeatedly expresses her commitment to internalism about phenomenal states (see the passages referred to in 7.1.1, also Siegel 2010, p. 207), on her view, one and the same (repeatable) phenomenal state can have different contents: if a phenomenal state is part of a state of seeing, it can have objectually singular content. If the same state is part of a

hallucination, its contents can be predicatively singular, but not objectually singular. In the context of considering *internalism about phenomenal states*, the claim that no state of seeing is identical with a particular phenomenal state, the following is also plausible. Suppose that the state of seeing Jim, for example, is not identical with any phenomenal state. After all, different phenomenal states can represent Jim as present, as sad, or as sad in very specific circumstances, say. If so, it appears that different (kinds of) phenomenal states can represent the same content.

The resulting picture, so far, is this: on the one hand, Siegel assumes **Non-Arbitrariness**—an assumption that she draws on in presenting her argument for the **Rich Content View**. On the other hand, on Siegel’s view, too, different (kinds of) phenomenal states can bear the same contents and the same kind of phenomenal state can bear different contents.

There are two further data points to consider. First, Siegel lists it as a “substantial objection” against two-factor views that according to them, “two experiences could be phenomenally the same, while varying enormously in which contents it would be natural to believe on the basis of the experience” (cf. Siegel 2010, p. 72). Siegel does not elaborate on why such a view would be objectionable. But the mere fact that she takes it to be so is telling; at the very least, it serves to underscore her commitment to the assumption that the relation between phenomenal states and contents is non-arbitrary.²⁴ But it also brings us face-to-face with the fact that she provides no account of how **Non-Arbitrariness** is to be spelled out. Second, consider the following concession that Siegel makes in a footnote:

- (8) Discovering which properties figure in experience is difficult and in many cases introspectively reflecting on an experience does little to help one decide whether a property is presented in visual phenomenology, or farther downstream. For example, introspection alone does not seem to tell us whether visual phenomenology presents an object as Franco (and so not as his twin), or as someone with certain facial features that Franco’s twin could equally share, or [...] merely as a human-shaped entity that [*missing, presumably*: “has features that”] a non-human alien could equally share. (Siegel 2010, pp. 52-53, fn. 24).

²⁴ That Siegel considers this a serious objection may suggest that she should reject the way I characterized the Müller-Lyer example provided above. For on the interpretation offered, it seemed plausible that in the context of different background views, for Mia, the same phenomenal state can have contents that contradict each other, i.e. *the two horizontal lines are different in length* vs. *the two horizontal lines are the same in length*.

Moreover, note the following claim:

- (9) [O]ur initial uncertainty about which contents experiences have is also uncertainty about their exact phenomenal character. The phenomenal character is no more accessible to introspection than are the contents of experience. We are thus [...] precluded from using the phenomenal character to reidentify experiences. (Siegel 2010, p. 85)²⁵

Taken together, passages (8) and (9) reflect the following three commitments. First, the question which properties figure in a given experience, or what content a given experience has, is difficult to answer. Second, the exact phenomenal character of an experience, too, is difficult to assess introspectively. Third, even if it may be difficult to discover which content and what phenomenal character a given experience has—i.e. what the properties are that the perceived object (if any) looks to have to the perceiver, and what looking that way is like—there are facts of the matter that settle these questions.²⁶

In passage (8), Siegel also claims that introspection is not always helpful when it comes to deciding what content a given experience has. Briefly put, the argument she offers for this claim runs as follows: neither is it fully clear how one should proceed to introspectively determine the contents of one's experience, nor is it clear how one should determine that the putative verdicts introspection delivers are indeed verdicts about experience—as opposed to verdicts about some other kind of state, e.g. one's perceptual judgments. Moreover, given the widespread disagreement in the literature about what contents experience can represent, it does not seem plausible that even if we *had* an introspective capacity that targeted visual experience in particular, it would be reliably accurate. After all, if we did possess such a capacity, we should not expect to see as much disagreement as we do (cf. Siegel 2010, pp. 79-83).

That said, Siegel nevertheless concedes that introspection can take us part of the way:

²⁵ This claim appears in the context of Siegel's argument to the effect that naturalistic theories of content cannot serve to discover the contents of experience either. Cf. Siegel 2010, pp. 83-87.

²⁶ Patently, if there were no such facts, both Siegel's talk about *discovery* and the use of the determinate article—e.g. in talking about *the* (exact) phenomenal character of an experience—would be inappropriate.

(10) It seems plain that in seeing the fruit bowl (or even in merely hallucinating), one can know by introspection that one is not having an experience as of a busy airport or of an undifferentiated expanse of blue. (Siegel 2010, p. 80)

Though intuitive, passage (10) raises questions. For in principle, it is quite conceivable that upon seeing or hallucinating a fruit bowl, a being that differs from me or you in its physical make-up could be in a phenomenal state that is exactly like the one you or I are in as we look at an undifferentiated expanse of blue, or at a busy airport.

Moreover, perhaps we, too, could be manipulated in such a way as to enter such phenomenal states whenever we look at or hallucinate a fruit bowl. Consider the following variation of the color inversion scenario mentioned earlier. Perhaps a scientist could affect my visual apparatus in such a way that whenever I see a fruit bowl, I enter the kind of visual phenomenal state I am in now when I look at a busy airport (whatever state that may be). Over time, as I adapt to the situation, it could become perfectly natural for me to take it that the phenomenal state that originally presented the property of being a busy airport as instantiated now presents as instantiated the property of being a fruit bowl—or perhaps the disjunctive property of either being a fruit bowl or of being a busy airport. It might then become natural for me, upon having such an experience in suitable contexts, to form the belief that I am currently in the presence of a fruit bowl. If so, it seems possible for that state to be such as to convey the relevant content to me. Patently, analogous scenarios could easily be contrived with respect to numerous kinds of phenomenal states and contents.

Of course, such scenarios are speculative. Moreover, it may be adduced, and quite plausibly perhaps, that intuitively, some phenomenal states—albeit in a sense that would need to be explained—are richer than others and that such richness places constraints on which or how many properties a given phenomenal state could present as instantiated. Drawing on such considerations, one might be able to explain, for example, why the phenomenal state that is typically associated with seeing an undifferentiated expanse of blue would be ill-suited to present as instantiated the various properties that would have to be instantiated in a busy airport. Nevertheless, whatever constraints may govern the relation between phenomenal states and contents, they would have to be spelled out.

Again, if one thinks that phenomenal states can present properties as instantiated, the claim Siegel expressed in passage (10), i.e. that introspection can provide us with knowledge about what the contents of our experience are not, seems quite plausible. But what plausibility the claim has rests on the presupposition that we can take it for granted that certain phenomenal states do not—or cannot—serve to present certain properties as instantiated. In other words, it presupposes an account of **Non-Arbitrariness**.

As we have seen, Siegel provides an argument for why phenomenal states that figure in hallucinations cannot have objectually singular contents. If successful, this argument illustrates at least one general constraint that Siegel thinks governs the putative relation between phenomenal states and (kinds of) contents. But there is no obvious route that leads from that general constraint to the kind of constraint that might in turn explain how introspection could serve to rule out certain contents as what properties a given phenomenal state can represent. Accordingly, if introspection is to provide us with beliefs—and knowledgeable ones at that—about what the contents of a given experience are or are not, some account is needed that explains how introspection can play that role.

The question Siegel owes us an answer to, thus, is what determines which content a given phenomenal state may have. What settles, for instance, whether a given experience represents an object as Jim or as his twin? Presumably, regardless of whether a given experience is said to represent an object, *o*, as Jim or as Jim's twin, it might, by the same token, be understood as also representing *o* as having less determinate properties, i.e. the property of being someone with certain facial features that Jim's twin could equally share, or that of being a human-shaped entity whose features a non-human alien could equally share. One and the same experience could be said to have, and convey, all these contents at the same time.²⁷ But again, if one faces the initial question whether what is represented by a given phenomenal state is the property of being Jim or the property of being Jim's

²⁷ Siegel concurs: "If you see Franco and your experience represents him as sitting down, it is natural to believe on the basis of your experience that Franco is sitting down. It is also natural to believe that someone with a certain appearance is sitting down. These are both ways for contents to be conveyed to a subject. So both options result in accuracy conditions that have a good claim to being conveyed to the subject by her experience." Siegel 2010, pp. 54-55. See also the comments on singular and non-singular contents in the previous footnote.

twin, or the property of being a cleverly disguised Jim impostor, say, the question what settles the answer remains open. Incidentally, this question does not arise just with respect to complex properties. It arises with equal force for something as simple as color or shape properties. Adopting an example from Brewer, note that on the kind of view Siegel is suggesting, it seems possible that one and the same phenomenal state could either represent as instantiated the property of being a white piece of chalk looked at in red light, a red piece of chalk looked at either in regular sunlight or in red light, or, say, a yellow piece of chalk looked at through a magenta filter. To take an example concerning shape, in suitable circumstance, circles can look like ellipses and ellipses can look like circles. What, then, settles whether a given experience represents the property of being a circle, the property of being an ellipsis, or some other property, e.g. that of being some amorphous squiggle that from the position looked at happens to look just like a circle would if looked at head-on? In a nutshell: if phenomenal states are said to present properties as instantiated, then regardless of whether these properties are simple or complex, for every token phenomenal state, the question: “*And which ones?*” should have an answer.

Perhaps Siegel could suggest that there is no need to decide, with respect to a suitable experience, whether it presents the property of being identical with Jim as instantiated, that of being Jim’s twin, or that of being some Jim impostor. Above, we already drew on the idea that a given experience might present some disjunction of properties as instantiated, i.e. that of being either a fruit bowl OR a busy airport. Similarly, it could be held, for example, that a given experience can present as instantiated the property of *being Jim OR his twin OR a Jim impostor, AND the property of being someone who has or shares Jim’s features OR the property of being someone who does not share Jim’s features, but is cleverly disguised as Jim, AND the property of being sad OR the property of looking sad, etc.*

However, given that experiential contents might involve a potentially rather large number of disjuncts, they could quickly become unwieldy. And while this would not need to pose a problem in general, recall that according to Siegel, experiential contents are conveyed to the subject of the experience. But it simply seems phenomenally inaccurate that as one undergoes experiences, these

typically convey to one some large disjunctions or conjunctions of contents.²⁸ Nor does it seem viable for Siegel to suggest that what properties a given experience presents as instantiated is determined merely externally. Patently, in some broadly causal sense, every phenomenal state can be said to represent that which causes it. But if the properties of the enviroing objects that cause a given phenomenal state were also taken to be the properties which that phenomenal state represents, it would become rather unclear how experiences could ever be inaccurate.

Furthermore, externalist accounts, too, risk running afoul of Siegel's claim that the contents of experiences are conveyed to the subjects who have them. Suppose the contents of a phenomenal state *P* were determined fully externally, perhaps by involving the objects, and the properties had by them, that populate the environment in which *P* is had and with the presence of which *P*, let us assume, covaries reliably.²⁹ Moreover, suppose we completely bracketed the concern that rather different sets of conditions might each bring about the same kind of phenomenal state and made the rather strong concession that each phenomenal state reliably covaries with exactly one set of external conditions. Even then, it could still happen that the experiencing subject lacks the conceptual resources to entertain beliefs that have as contents the properties that *P* presents as instantiated, the ability to recognize, upon introspection, that *P* has such contents, and the practical capacity to have her actions be guided by such contents. In other words, it seems quite possible that the experiencing subject lacks everything that, according to Siegel, would be required for the putative contents of *P* to be conveyed

²⁸ One can of course imagine that upon being asked what she sees, a subject—in a somewhat philosophical mood, perhaps—might well respond that she sees either *x*, *y*, *z*, possibly *t*, *u*, or *w*, or, should circumstances be extraordinarily unusual, perhaps even *r* or *s*. However, it would be highly unusual if something like this were her response to *every* experience she undergoes. Just like every other regular person, our philosophically-minded subject, too, will typically settle for a non-disjunctive characterization of what she sees. As she does, she arguably does not thereby somehow misrepresent her experience. (Indeed, were a person always to respond to her various experiences the way we imagine our philosophically-minded subject to respond, one would have reason to believe that something is very wrong with the way she forms judgments based on her experience.) At any rate, all that the philosophically-minded subject's response may indicate is that in the context at hand, she is able and willing to consider a rather large set of scenarios, each of which could serve to bring about the phenomenal state she finds herself in. But it need not be taken to indicate that at the time when she responds by providing a disjunctive answer, she somehow has a better or fuller access to what content her experience anyway represents than others, who in sufficiently similar circumstances do not consider as many different scenarios.

²⁹ Siegel considers accounts of that shape in Siegel 2010, pp. 83-87. However, she does not ask our question, i.e. whether such accounts could help *settle* what content a given phenomenal state has. Rather, she considers the question whether such accounts could allow us to *find out* what the content of a given phenomenal state is—which, she argues, they cannot.

to her. In sum, since Siegel insists that it is a requirement on contents that they be conveyed, and since there are possible cases in which externalist accounts yield contents that do not meet that requirement, Siegel must reject such accounts.³⁰

A much more appealing theoretical option, I think, would be to hold that it is at least in part the experiencing subject's background beliefs that determine which properties a given visual experience represents. For one, if what properties a given phenomenal state represents were to depend on details of the subject's background view, an experience could not present, and thus not convey, properties as instantiated picking up on which is beyond what the subject's conceptual resources allow her to do. Also, on such a view, it would be hardly mysterious how the properties a given experience presents as instantiated can be conveyed to the subject and how they could be inaccurate. After all, if possible experiential contents of a subject's experience are constrained by the subject's conceptual and doxastic resources, it is not surprising that a content that the experiencing subject can handle is also a content that her experience can convey to her.³¹ Moreover, such constraints would also provide an explanation

³⁰ Thinking about the conveyance constraint raises further questions. Suppose that hallucinations cannot, like Siegel claims, convey objectually singular content. If so, the content that a hallucination, e_1 , conveys to some subject, S , must differ in at least some respect from that of a matching veridical experience, e_2 . Suppose the difference in content were noticeable to S . After all, one might think that if the content of one's experience is conveyed to one by one's experience, it should be clear what it is that is being so conveyed. If so, however, S should be able to tell apart e_1 and e_2 based on the content each conveys. This seems implausible. Next, suppose that the difference between the contents conveyed by e_1 and e_2 is not noticeable to S . If so, it seems that it could be natural for S to form the same beliefs based on undergoing e_1 and e_2 , respectively. It may also be that e_1 and e_2 guide S 's actions in the same way and, finally, that the content manifest to S upon introspection appears to be exactly the same, no matter whether what she introspects is e_1 or e_2 . If all of this is conceivable, however, it becomes quite unclear in what sense the contents conveyed by e_1 and e_2 , respectively, are indeed different.

As we saw above, Siegel seems to think that hallucinations and matching veridical experiences cannot be reliably action-guiding in the same way. However, this simply raises the question what it is for an experience to count as reliably action-guiding in the relevant sense. Also, though the reliability constraint seems to be doing some work in distinguishing objectually singular from objectually nonsingular contents, it is at least remarkable that when Siegel introduces the notion of conveying content, such a reliability constraint is not even mentioned.

Finally, it could be doubted that the notion of guiding actions reliably serves to distinguish hallucinations from their non-hallucinatory counterparts. For suppose that in a certain possible world (which may well be ours), people inevitably die right after undergoing a certain visual phenomenal state, but only if that phenomenal state is part of a non-hallucinatory experience and thus has a certain objectually singular content. If so, it seems odd to say that the hallucinatory counterpart fails to reliably guide the subjects' actions in the right kind of way. For though the non-hallucinatory experience leads to certain events, i.e. the subjects' sudden death, it does not guide the subjects' actions at all.

³¹ The idea that the background view co-determines experiential content might also help further develop the option that the content of any given experience is indeed disjunctive—perhaps massively so. Suppose one suggested that the role of the subject's background view is to eliminate irrelevant disjuncts. Some of these disjuncts could be eliminated because the subject knows, or believes, that the circumstances in which she finds herself are not as they would have

why the content of one's experience can be inaccurate. The content of Tycho's experience of the sun, for example, could be taken as inaccurate precisely because Tycho holds false beliefs about the sun, which in turn determine what the properties are that his experience presents as instantiated.

Finally, such a view would also help answer the question why it is that introspection could play the role Siegel attributes to it. For suppose that the associations between kinds of phenomenal states and contents these may bear in various circumstances were an integral part of the background view. If so, this could explain why it is that subjects, on introspecting their experience (on some account of what doing that would amount to), can be in a position to rule out that the experience they are having is an experience of certain specific scenarios. Whether such a procedure would yield true results would of course depend on the precise shape of the background view, on how rich it is, on the conceptual and doxastic resources it provides, and on how accurate it is. Moreover, it would also depend on the background view whether the procedure would yield a determinate result, a disjunction of possible scenarios, or no scenario at all. If the conceptual resources the view affords are poor, it could be that all that the subject can assert is that she is having an experience, but not what the experience is an experience *of*. And if the subject's conceptual resources are even poorer—if, say, the subject lacks the concept of experience altogether—she may not even be able to make *that* assertion.

Clearly, the idea that the background view plays a significant role in determining the content of a given phenomenal state would have to be spelled out further.³² But it is worth emphasizing what is at

to be for the properties featuring in various disjuncts to be in fact instantiated. Other disjuncts could fail to come into view altogether because the subject lacks the relevant conceptual resources. Perhaps something like the following view could then be suggested: while any given experience's actual content is disjunctive, and thus potentially rather rich, the content the experience conveys to the subject may be variously constrained, e.g. by the subject's beliefs, conceptual, and attentional resources. Pursuing this strategy would remain at odds with Siegel's view, however, since it dislodges the notion of content from the conveyance constraint by insisting that experiences may have contents that are not being conveyed.

³² At least in Siegel 2010, it appears at times as if Siegel is hesitant to accept the proposal that beliefs co-determine what contents a specific experience has. In a footnote, she asserts the following: "Since we bring plenty of standing representations to bear on perceptual beliefs, one can't infer from the fact that one believes that (say) somebody is Franco that the property of being Franco is presented in visual phenomenology" (Siegel 2010, p. 52, fn. 22). This assertion is compatible with the idea that, if conjoined with further beliefs, the relevant belief does entail that the property of being Franco is presented in visual phenomenology after all. However, Siegel gives no indication that this is what she thinks. Instead, she sidesteps the issue by emphasizing that what she is interested in is inferences in the other direction, i.e. from facts about which properties an experience represents to attributions of such properties to items seen.

issue: the issue is in part how to understand what the content *is* that a given phenomenal state has. In our discussion of Hanson's view, we saw that what it is to see an object as the sun can vary significantly with how the concept 'the sun' is articulated in the experiencing subject's background view. It is an interesting question what role the subject's background view may play in settling what the semantic features of a given experiential content are, what else it is taken to imply, or what it in turn is implied by. And it is true that Siegel, in contrast to Hanson, provides no account of **Experiential Content** that allows us to answer such questions.

The issue we have just been considering, however, is arguably even more basic. For it does not concern the question how to understand the role the background view may play in determining what it is for an experience or, for that matter, anything to have a specific content. Rather, it concerns the question whether and how the background view plays a role in settling which particular content a particular phenomenal state bears in particular circumstances. And this question can arise even on the assumption that the background plays no role in determining what that content is. In suggesting, as I have, that Siegel owes us an account of **Non-Arbitrariness**, it is this latter question that I have been pressing.

7.1.5 Implications

Suppose Siegel does indeed owe us an account of **Non-Arbitrariness**. Why should we care? In response, recall that in 3.1.3, I suggested that both the relationalists and Hanson face structurally similar challenges. Both owe us accounts of the phenomenology of experience, of how it relates to the mind-independent items in the subject's environment, and of how it relates to conceptual items such as beliefs or judgments. As our discussion of the various relationalist proposals revealed, their notions of phenomenology and, in particular, their responses to the question how the mind-independent items the subject is said to be related to in her experience constitute that phenomenology, remain massively unclear. And as our discussion of Genone brought out, the same holds for the relation that putatively obtains between perceived appearances and the perceptual judgments that

subjects may base on their experience. As indicated above, Siegel's notion of phenomenology, too, is rather thin. Apart from her claim that phenomenal states are said to be individuated by what it is like to be in them, and her claim that such states present various properties as instantiated (including complex properties), we learn nothing about what phenomenal states are.³³

Arguably, there is really only one major role experiential phenomenology plays on Siegel's account: that of being the bearer of various (kinds of) contents. As we saw, Siegel's argument for the claim that phenomenal states bear content is not compelling. But even if this problem is bracketed, the fact that she owes us an account of **Non-Arbitrariness** poses a serious problem. For in the absence of such an account, it remains unclear which properties any given phenomenal state presents as instantiated. And it remains unclear how facts about which properties a phenomenal state presents as instantiated are settled. Accordingly, we are left in the dark as to how we can determine what the contents of a given experience are in general. But if we have no way of telling which contents an experience has that we are undergoing, we also have no way of telling what beliefs or judgments that experience could possibly serve to justify.

Patently, the complaint that Siegel owes us an account of **Non-Arbitrariness** is structurally analogous to the complaint we raised against Hanson, i.e. that he lacks an account of **Amalgamation**. At a slightly more abstract level, it is also structurally similar to the complaint raised against Genone, i.e. that he does not provide an account of how the perception of appearance properties hooks up with the beliefs and perceptual judgments that he thinks subjects may base on their experience, and of how this relation is in turn governed by the subject's background view.

As a result, I contend that the **Content View** is at least as problematic as the relational view. Relationalists, recall, endorse **No Content** and must thus hold that whatever epistemic or semantic roles experience may play, it plays them due to having a specific phenomenology. If the argument presented in the previous chapters is correct, their notion of phenomenology must be rejected as

³³ Incidentally, one may think that what it is like to have an experience could at least in part depend on what content it conveys. To accept this thought is to put pressure on the idea that the same phenomenal state could have different contents. If one rejects it to make room for the latter possibility, more needs to be said about what the expression 'what it is like' is supposed to pick out than Siegel does.

unsatisfactory. Accordingly, their epistemic and semantic accounts, whatever they may turn out to be, cannot get off the ground. Qua representationalist, Siegel endorses **Content**. Nevertheless, she, too, thinks that the phenomenology of experience is vitally important, insisting that it is the phenomenal states themselves that bear the content. However, since she provides neither a full account of the phenomenology of experience, nor an account of how contents and phenomenal states are related, her epistemological account, whatever it may turn out to be, will struggle to get off the ground as well.

Returning to our guiding question, i.e. whether Siegel can accommodate phenomena that would fall under the heading of what I have labeled the doxastic variability of experience, let us see what implications our discussion so far has for the assessment of Siegel's position. As I argued above, Siegel clearly seeks to accommodate cases of **expert vision**, cases in which both the phenomenology of the expert's experience and which content her experience bears differ from their counterparts in the layperson. Whether Siegel would also allow cases in which the phenomenal state remains unaffected and in which expert vision is solely a matter of which properties an otherwise unaltered phenomenal state presents as instantiated cannot be determined with certainty from what she says. To determine her answer, we would need the account of **Non-Arbitrariness** that, again, she does not provide. For similar reasons, we cannot assess her view with respect to the question raised near the outset of this chapter, i.e. how effects on the phenomenology and effects on the putative content of experience might relate to each other. Could expert vision sometimes occur as an effect *just* on the phenomenal character of the experience? Could it sometimes occur as an effect *just* on which properties a given phenomenal state presents? For answering such questions, Siegel's account affords no resources.

Recall that on Hanson's view, one way in which experience is doxastically variable has to do with the fact that according to him, what the concepts that figure in experience mean is essentially a matter of how they are articulated in the subject's background view. We have touched upon this issue near the end of the previous subsection. In short, it is not obvious how Siegel would position herself with respect to this issue. For one, in contrast to Hanson, Siegel does not explicitly endorse the idea that the attribution of properties in experience is a matter of *concepts* figuring in experience itself. But even if she were to reject the view that experiential content is to be construed in terms of *conceptual* content,

she might still be sympathetic to the suggestion offered in the previous subsection. She might, that is, accept that which properties a given experience presents as instantiated is settled (at least in part) by the subject's background view. If so, it would also be open to Siegel to side with Hanson and hold, for example, that the property of *being the sun* that is attributed in Tycho's experience differs from the property of *being the sun* attributed in Kepler's experience precisely in virtue of the difference in how the concept 'sun' is articulated in their respective background views and which property (or sets of properties) the concept of *being the sun* is thus taken to pick out. If she were to accept the doxastic variability of experiential content in this sense, she would endorse a position that we can dub **Variable Content View**, a position on which the content a given experience represents would depend on the subject's background view in two distinct ways. First, on such a view, the background view would help settle which properties a given phenomenal state presents as instantiated. Second, it would help settle what it is for an experience, or for anything, to have that specific content.³⁴

As for **projection effects**, we have not here discussed them. But we can note that the question whether such effects could occur independently of changes in experiential content also depends on how much flexibility Siegel's missing account of **Non-Arbitrariness** would afford. On the one hand, one might suspect that since Siegel thinks—in contrast to proponents of two-factor views (at least as Siegel characterizes such views)—that phenomenal states and contents are non-arbitrarily related, she might also hold that projection effects will go hand in hand with effects on experiential content. But patently, this need not be so. For suppose a given subject believed or even knew that in certain circumstances, the occurrence of certain projection effects is at least likely. Suppose, further, it were accepted that beliefs of that sort can affect what content a subject's experience presents. Consider, next, an experience involving a projection effect that is had in circumstances in which the subject knows or at least takes it to be very likely that such effects may occur. If so, it could be that in such cases, the projection effect occurs and that the subject's knowledge or belief that such effects are likely affects the content of her experience. More specifically, her background view could affect her

³⁴ It would not settle, of course, whether a given phenomenal state has objectually singular content or not.

experiential content in such a way that the phenomenal state that—as a result of the projection effect—she is in ends up representing a content that is no different from the content of the phenomenal state that she would have been in had no projection effect occurred. However, and again, without an account of what settles which properties a given phenomenal state presents as instantiated, how Siegel would position herself with respect to such possibilities cannot be conclusively assessed.

In the next section, I will examine how Siegel deals with cases in which cognitive background states affect the putative content of experience and in particular how she responds to the epistemological worries such cases give rise to. So far, I have argued that the Content View she proposes is not sufficiently motivated and that it leaves us without an account of what determines which properties a given phenomenal state presents as instantiated, and, given the lack of an account of **Experiential Content**, what these properties are. In the next section, I turn to her proposal of how to accommodate the possibility that cognitive background states such as beliefs may affect experience. It crucially depends on the idea that experience has representational content and on the conception of the default rational role of experience as serving to justify beliefs. In a sense, then, her proposal is only as compelling as the **Content View**. But even if this issue is bracketed, further issues arise. For as I will emphasize, her proposal entails unsatisfactory consequences.

7.2 THE RATIONAL ROLE OF SIEGELIAN EXPERIENCE

In this section, I outline (7.2.1) and then criticize (7.2.2) Siegel's view of the rational role of experience. In 7.3, I will offer a suggestion that will be crucial for the remainder of the book: we can drop the counterintuitive and revisionary elements of Siegel's view, since as soon as we adopt a different conception of the general role of experience, the motivation for including such elements goes away.

7.2.1 Irrational Experiences and Reduced Epistemic Powers

The account Susanna Siegel proposes in her most recent book, *The Rationality of Perception*, is based on two assumptions: a) the primary role of experience is to provide justification, e.g. for everyday beliefs about ordinary things (cf. Siegel 2017, p. xiii), and b) if everything else is held fixed, one's beliefs, hypotheses, knowledge, desires, fears, traits, moods, preferences and prejudices, and evaluative attitudes—in short: one's outlook on the world—could influence the way things look to one (cf. *ibid.*, p. xiv, p. 3, p. 7).

The second assumption, if true, entails some version of the thesis that experience is doxastically variable. And arguably, the first assumption is a default assumption regarding the rational role of experience, one widely shared among representationalists of different stripes. Accordingly, if in combination, the two assumptions were to give rise to an epistemological worry, such a worry would be likely to arise not just in the specific context of Siegel's **Content View**, but in the context of various competing versions of representationalism as well. And indeed, such a worry does arise. Siegel glosses it as follows: “if prior beliefs could influence your experience, how could your experience go on to strengthen those very beliefs?” (*ibid.*, p. xiv).

Applied to the banana case and phrased in terms of Siegel's **Content View**, the issue is this: suppose we construe the banana case in line with Hansen et al.'s suggestion, i.e. as involving an effect the test subjects' background beliefs have on their respective experiences. Suppose, further, that the experiences the test subjects undergo fully retain their putative ability to justify e.g. beliefs that match the content they convey. If so, the test subjects' experiences of the banana object, which present it as having the property of being yellowish, appear to invite the test subjects to illicitly strengthen their respective beliefs that the banana object is indeed yellowish.³⁵ If so, the experience of the banana object as yellowish seems to confirm what clearly should not be confirmed: a false belief, a close

³⁵ A variant of the problem that concerns the question of whether experience that has been affected by background beliefs can support universally generalized beliefs is expressed as the worry that lest we allow badly circular reasoning, we should not think that seeing a specific banana as yellow can strengthen the generalization that bananas are yellow if the latter is in part what gives rise to the former. Cf. Siegel 2017, p. 7.

variant of which was causally responsible for bringing about the experience in the first place.³⁶ If we suppose that the primary role of experience is to justify beliefs and also allow that background states such as beliefs can influence the content experience is said to have, there are thus possible cases in which experience appears to justify what it should not and cannot justify.

Before we look at the shape of Siegel's solution, let us note right away that for Siegel to entertain that the kind of cases mentioned in the second assumption are possible is to make an assumption that so far, we had not yet been able to attribute to her. As we saw in the previous sections, she leaves us without an account of how the content of a given experience is determined. Accordingly, the underlying claim that which properties a given experience presents as instantiated can at least partly be influenced by the experiencing subject's background beliefs is instructive. That said, for Siegel to endorse the assumption that beliefs (and other states) may play such a co-determining role falls far short of providing an account of what determines the putative content of a given phenomenal state in general. For we are still left in the dark as to what the content of the phenomenal state would be if influences like those the test subjects' background beliefs are said to have on the test subjects' respective experiences of the banana object were completely absent. And if it is suggested that intuitively, the answer should be something like 'there is a gray banana object in front of me,' we should still want to know what exactly it is that settles that the phenomenal state in question, had in those particular circumstances, would get to have *that* content in particular, as opposed to some other content, and what it is for it to have that content.

Note also that Siegel characterizes the relevant effects as modifications of *how things look to one*. However, this notion is ambiguous between at least two interpretations. On one interpretation, '*how things look to one*' is a reference to the phenomenal character of one's experience, which, on Siegel's

³⁶ The kinds of effects Siegel considers have come to be known in the literature as cases of cognitive penetration. The exact characterization of cognitive penetration, whether the relevant effects need to be direct effects on experience or whether they can also be mediated via attention, and how exactly we are to think about the target of such effects in the first place, all these are contentious issues. For discussion, see e.g. Siegel 2008, Stokes 2013, Macpherson 2015, 2017; Lupyán 2015; Raftopoulos & Zeimbekis 2015. It is also a contentious issue how wide-spread such effects actually are (see again Scholl and Firestone 2016). In the following, I side with Siegel in bracketing such questions and in assuming that it is independently interesting to evaluate how well different accounts of experience would be able to deal with such effects.

view, is what individuates phenomenal states. On such a reading, the banana case, construed as involving effects on how things look to one, involves projection effects, i.e. effects that modify what phenomenal state the experiencing subject enters. However, recall Siegel's assumption that the primary role of experience is that of justifying beliefs. Further, presumably, the relevant experience of the gray banana object will be at least a candidate for something that could serve to strengthen the belief that the banana object is yellow(ish). To be such a candidate, the relevant projection effects would have to be accompanied by a change in the properties the experience presents as instantiated as well.

On an alternative reading, effects on how things look to one are mere changes in which properties an otherwise unchanged phenomenal state presents as instantiated, and, thus, changes in what content it conveys. As we noted previously—in the context of discussing expert vision—such a proposal would be structurally similar to Genone's account of misleading appearances. For on such a proposal, the effects background beliefs are taken to have on the subjects' experience would be such as to leave the subjects' phenomenal states unaltered. Instead, the effects would just modify which contents are (in some sense) associated with the phenomenology that the test subjects' experiences possess anyway.³⁷ However, as before, in the absence of an account of **Non-Arbitrariness**, we cannot determine whether Siegel's view would permit just the former, or both these options.³⁸

³⁷ If Siegel were to accept this proposal, she could of course take a step further and assert that one need not even assume that projection effects do in fact occur. To do so would, in effect, be to pursue a strategy analogous to the one I suggested above Genone might wish to pursue in order to explain away projection effects entirely. Qua relationalist, Genone should find a strategy that avoids phenomenal pluralism appealing. After all, endorsing it would appear to enable him to maintain **Constitution** for experience quite generally, i.e. not just for perception. Since Siegel does not share the relationalists' commitment to the idea that experience *just is* such a relation, **Constitution** need not hold any particular appeal either. But if so, then prima facie, a commitment to rejecting the possible or actual occurrence of projection effects need not have any particular appeal, either.

³⁸ In Siegel 2017, pp. 9-10, Siegel lists a number of things that could be happening when subjects arrive at an inaccurate classification of what it is that they see due to what their background states are. These are: *Disbelief* (subjects disbelieve the content of their perceptual experience), *Bypass* (subjects do not respond to their experience at all, but respond to something else, e.g. by way of being primed), *Cognitive penetration* (subjects respond to their modified experience), *Attention* (subjects are primed in such a way as to attend to features specific features of the object seen that look like an object that it is not an instance of, while disregarding others), *Introspective error* (subjects introspectively misidentify their experience), *Haste* (subjects get mixed information and classify the object seen in accordance with how they have been primed), and *Disowned behavior* (subjects' behavior is guided by their being primed, not by what they see, but they realize their mistake immediately). What I am suggesting, in effect, is that there are at least two ways in which *Cognitive penetration* could be interpreted – once as an effect on the phenomenology and a (somehow) corresponding effect on its alleged content, once as an effect on the alleged experiential content alone.

Either way, in considering the epistemic quandary posed by the possibility that background states such as beliefs could affect how things look to one, Siegel identifies two kinds of pressures to respond—pressures, she notes, that push in different directions. On the one hand, she acknowledges that it seems hard to blame subjects who undergo such experiences for taking them at face value and thus as providing further support for the very beliefs that—unbeknownst to them—contributed to bringing about their experiences in the first place. Relatedly, it may seem perfectly rational for these subjects to believe their eyes. After all, what else are they supposed to do, given the evidence their experience presents? On the other hand, Siegel also feels the urge to say that as they take their experiences to provide such support, the subjects are in some sense acting irrationally. Indeed, such cases appear to illustrate that epistemic blamelessness and rationality can come apart.

After presenting various scenarios—including cases involving the biased perception of hiring committees, biased perceptions of researchers who are strongly committed to certain theories and the accompanying expectations, and fearful perceivers, whose perception is affected by their irrational fear—Siegel states the following:

- (11) In all of the cases, the challenge is to assess whether the ultimate conclusions are epistemically appropriate [...] and to either explain away the appearance of an epistemic flaw in the conclusion, if there isn't one, or else identify the epistemic flaw, if there is one. (Siegel 2017, p. 8)

The way Siegel phrases the challenge is noteworthy. For it suggests that in asking whether a subject, in trusting her eyes, is rational, the criterion Siegel intends to draw on is provided by the epistemic or, more broadly, rational status of what results: judgments, beliefs, perhaps even actions.³⁹ If the latter turn out to be epistemically (or rationally) deficient, the flaw must be identified. And given that the beliefs, judgments, and actions under consideration are said to be based on the content of the relevant subject's experience, the idea that in many cases, the flaw may be inherited from the experience and, as such, may be present in experience already, can seem quite natural.

³⁹ Further below, beginning in 7.3, I will suggest, in effect, that accepting the **Content View** does not force one to interpret the challenge in this particular way. For there is an interesting alternative way of thinking of the primary rational role of experience, on which the challenge does not even arise—a way of thinking that proponents of the **Content View**, too, could accept.

Siegel's response to the two pressures outlined earlier can be interpreted as a way of spelling out this natural idea. In a nutshell, her response is based on the following claims: a) like beliefs, experiences have an epistemic status—an *epistemic charge*⁴⁰, b) the epistemic charge of any experience *e* is to be construed in terms of *e*'s epistemic power to justify beliefs, c) the epistemic power of any experience *e* depends on how *e* has been formed, in short: on *e*'s etiology, and d) contents of experiences can have the status of being rational or irrational—a status that determines the experiences' epistemic charge and that they inherit from the rationality or irrationality of the way in which the relevant experience was formed.⁴¹ Simply put: an experience that has been formed in epistemically or rationally non-kosher ways is thereby irrational and does not have its regular power to justify beliefs. Beliefs and judgments that are formed on the basis of such experiences inherit the irrationality of the latter and are, as such, ill-founded.⁴²

⁴⁰ Note that the notions of epistemic charge and of epistemic power are relativized to contents. Moreover, Siegel distinguishes Reason-Power, the power to give reason to believe, from Forward-looking Power, the power to serve in the formation of well-founded beliefs, and grants that if experience has the power to provide baseline justification, i.e. justification that suffices to make the resulting belief well-founded, it may well be that it does not do so on its own, but only by way of being part of a minimal unit that provides such justification. For present purposes, nothing hinges on these distinctions, so I suppress them here. See Siegel 2017, chapter 4.1 for discussion.

⁴¹ As Siegel reports in the preface to her book, what convinced her that perceptual experiences themselves can be epistemically weakened by their psychological precursors were political cases. An example of such cases are cases of implicit bias, in which to a subject, members of a certain racial or societal category look to have properties that they do not possess precisely because of the presence, in the subject's outlook, of internalized cultural narratives, beliefs, biases, or fears. Consider an experience had by a biased subject *S*, in which a black young man looks dangerous to *S* precisely because *S*'s implicit biases silently influence her experience. On the one hand, one could think that *S*'s experience is epistemically as powerful as it would be in the absence of such biases (and in the presence of a young black man who does indeed look dangerous, however such a look may be construed). Siegel, however, suggests that it is exactly such cases that make the general intuition more compelling that the subject's experience, if affected by irrational precursors, is made epistemically less powerful.

One can of course agree that there is something irrational about the biased subject. But one can do so while rejecting Siegel's idea that the locus of that irrationality is experience itself. Siegel concedes that her proposal that experiences themselves can be rational or irrational is highly revisionary, in that, as she puts it, it "overturns the entrenched assumption that perceptual experience stops at the threshold of the house of reason" (Siegel 2017, p. xxiv). But she insists that the reasons for resisting the idea that experience can itself be rational or irrational are less powerful than is commonly held and that it is anyway worth to explore what the epistemology of perceptual experience looks like if the idea is endorsed (cf. *ibid.*, p. xxv; see also pp. 31-37 for her attempt to dismantle objections to the effect that experiences cannot have a rational status).

⁴² The resulting view does not entail that every effect background states could possibly have on a subject's experience is epistemically insidious. For it is compatible with the view that e.g. states that are characteristic of expertise can affect how things look to the subject without reducing the resulting experience's epistemic power. Expertise, in other words, may well involve rational ways of generating experiences that do not reduce the experience's epistemic charge and, hence, its power to justify beliefs. On Siegel's view, epistemically appropriate precursors can even raise the epistemic power above the baseline required for justification (see Siegel 2017, chapter 7). We already noted that expertise, if combined with a tendency to overgeneralize, may have harmful effects as well. Siegel could concur with

To make things more concrete, let us frame the following discussion by way of considering one of the examples Siegel provides—the case of Vivek, a vain performer:

(12) To [Vivek], the faces in the audience range in their expression from neutral to pleased. Remarkably, no one ever looks disapproving. [...] Vivek's vanity or diffidence influenced the character of his perception. Depending on his self-conception, how a scene looked to him differed, even when all other conditions stayed the same. [...]

Vivek's vanity might reach all the way to the appearances themselves. Vivek's perceptual experience is the conscious part of perception that Vivek is responding to, when he forms his judgment. If his vanity influences his perceptual experience, then there's no need for him to jump to conclusions from the visual appearances. If he just believes his eyes, he'll end up believing that the people are pleased. That's how their faces look to him. If you saw the faces, in contrast, you'd most likely think they were just neutral. Unless you admire Vivek as much as he admires himself, you're not motivated to see the faces as approving (Siegel 2017, p. 3-4).

With our outline of Siegel's position in hand, the case of Vivek can be characterized as follows: upon looking at his audience, there are some determinate ways things look to Vivek. Among these is the following: to him, the members of his audience invariably look somewhere between neutral and pleased. In the terms we encountered in the last section, his experiences attribute—perhaps to the face of each individual member of his audience, perhaps to faces of the audience as a whole—some property or other that ranges somewhere between being neutral and being pleased. Accordingly, there is something it would be for Vivek to just believe his eyes. Upon seeing his audience, for him to just believe his eyes would be to just endorse the content his experience anyway conveys to him. His audience's response to his performance, he might thus come to believe, is somewhere between being neutral towards it and being pleased by it.

However, as Siegel presents the case, which particular properties Vivek's experience presents as instantiated, and which content it accordingly conveys, is influenced by an irrational factor: Vivek's disproportional vanity.⁴³ For Vivek to just believe his eyes would thus be to endorse a content that has been formed irrationally and, as such, an experience that in virtue of having been so formed inherits

this diagnosis and suggest that in such a case, the expert's tendency to overgeneralize is precisely the kind of feature that saps her experience of its power to justify.

⁴³ Since I am primarily interested in the doxastic variability of experience, I assume, with Siegel, that Vivek's vanity is at least in part a matter of what he believes, e.g. about what people think about him, about himself, his skills, and his ability to impress audiences by way of performing (cf. Siegel 2017, p. 17).

the property of being irrational.⁴⁴ According to Siegel's suggestion, an experience whose epistemic charge has been reduced by having been formed irrationally does not have the same epistemic power as an experience with matching content would have that has been formed in an epistemically harmless way. Accordingly, on Siegel's view, Vivek, both in having the experience and in believing his eyes, would be irrational.

In the following section, I will criticize Siegel's account. Before I do, let me acknowledge that the view is much richer than I have here sketched it—Siegel fleshes it out in a number of respects. For instance, since she acknowledges the revisionary character of her proposal, she considers various objections one could raise against the idea that experience could be epistemically charged. Moreover, she proposes an account of inference that is intended to corroborate the following assumption: just like beliefs can inherit properties such as being more or less rational or well-founded from the beliefs they are inferred from, experiences, too, can inherit analogous properties from the various ways they can be produced. Finally, Siegel applies the view to cases of evaluative perception, selection effects, and to an upscaled version of the problem that concerns problems that arise in the context of assessing the epistemic status of attitudes such as racially discriminative attitudes that are culturally entrenched.

In what follows, I will bracket the discussion of these further aspects of her view. For such issues are entirely downstream of what I think are the two crucial commitments Siegel makes right at the outset: first, a commitment to an account of epistemic powers and, second, a commitment to treating what is rational to do based on one's experience as something that may often be beyond the subject's ken.

We need not, and should not, I think, follow her in these commitments since doing so comes at the cost of accepting a consequence I believe we should reject: experience can execute what is said to be its default rational role only in ideal circumstances. In non-ideal circumstances, what is rational for

⁴⁴ Note that according to Siegel, effects on the experiential content by irrational factors are content-specific (cf. Siegel 2017, chapter 3.3 and 4.1.2). Hence, not all contents that Vivek's experience conveys to him need to be affected. Even if his experience is hijacked with respect to how his audience members look to him in terms of whether or not they enjoy his performance, he may, for instance, still be in a good position to form justified judgments about the color of their hair, the lighting conditions at the performance venue, etc.

the subject to believe, on the basis of her experience, may well remain completely opaque to the subject. Construed that way, experience often cannot and will not be the guide that we ordinarily take it to be.

7.2.2 Objections

In order to bring my objection against Siegel's account into view, one more aspect of it needs to be brought out. In the previous subsection, we saw that on her view, experiences, if generated in irrational ways, lose their power to justify beliefs and judgments that match (or are close to)⁴⁵ the content the experience is said to convey. Accordingly, upon having an experience that, as Siegel puts it, has been *hijacked* by one's prior outlook, one exhibits one's irrationality both in having it and in believing one's eyes in response to it. Believing one's eyes is not rational, she asserts, "because [...] the subject's having the perceptual experience detracts from his or her rational standing, and it does that because the experience came about through an irrational process" (Siegel 2017, p. 14). Similarly, she states that

(13) hijacked experiences are irrational [...] because they are epistemically sensitive to their psychological precursors, in the same way that conclusions of inference epistemically depend on inferential inputs. It is no more rational for these subjects [i.e. subjects that undergo hijacked experiences] to believe that the world is the way their hijacked experiences present it as being, than it is for them to believe something on the basis of assumptions that are themselves irrational. (Siegel 2017, pp. 21-22)

A natural question that arises in this context is the following: if upon having a hijacked experience, believing her eyes would be irrational, what, then, would be the rational thing for the subject to do? What, for example, would be the rational thing for Vivek to do?

⁴⁵ This parenthetical remark is supposed to indicate that Siegel wants to keep room for the possibility that the contents of experience are so unlike contents of beliefs that beliefs and experiences cannot have the same contents. Nevertheless, as Siegel puts it "some contents of belief will be closer to the contents of experience than others" (Siegel 2017, p. 63). Note that if it is held that belief contents and experiential contents are different in a strong sense, the problem posed by the lack of an account of **Non-Arbitrariness** becomes multiplied. For on such an account, it is not only an open question how contents of experience are related to the phenomenal states that are said to bear them, but also how experiential contents relate to contents of belief.

Siegel's response is that subjects who undergo hijacked experiences "are not in a position to know, on their own, what the reasonable reaction to their experience is." With respect to Vivek in particular, she holds that although Vivek is not in a position (all by himself) to know it, "the reasonable response is to suspend judgment on [...] whether the audience is pleased" (Siegel 2017, p. 14).

In a footnote, Siegel acknowledges that "with enough distinctions," one can, like e.g. Jackson 2011, defend the view "that Vivek is at the same time rationally required to believe his eyes, given that he has the experience and no reason to discount it" (*ibid.*, p. 15, fn. 1). In response to Jackson, she contends that one may not need to draw on something as strong as requirements of rationality in order to explain why it would be reasonable for Vivek to believe his eyes and adds that coherence requirements would at most supplement, not challenge the idea that perceptual experiences can be rational or irrational.

As will become clearer below, I think that the latter claim is false. I confess that I find it very hard to side with Siegel's suggestion that the reasonable thing to do *for Vivek*—i.e. given his experience and his doxastic circumstances—is to suspend judgment. By comparison, from his perspective, believing his eyes appears much more reasonable. And I think that if we want to get a proper sense of the role that experience plays in our rational and epistemic endeavors, we should not assess the role it plays in a way that ignores the perspective of the experiencing subject.

To spell out this worry further, let us begin by emphasizing that to the extent that we agree that for Vivek, suspending judgment is indeed the reasonable thing to do, such agreement appears itself appropriate only from the vantage point afforded by *our* doxastic context, a context that in crucial respects differs from the one Vivek inhabits.

There is, of course, nothing wrong with opting to characterize what would be reasonable to believe or do against the backdrop of the best doxastic context (rationally and epistemically) available to one. And certainly, as we consider the case of Vivek, the doxastic context we inhabit is better than his. After all, we are aware of the effects his vanity has on his experience, whereas Vivek is not. Indeed, were he aware both of his vanity and of the possibility that it could affect how he experiences his audience, then for him, too, suspending judgment should be a response to his experience that is well

worth considering. Indeed, the more evidence supporting the possibility of such effects we imagine Vivek as possessing, the more we feel compelled to blame him for not taking such evidence into consideration. And such blame would be apt due to the fact that Vivek, instead of making his beliefs accord with his evidence, irrationally ignores it or favors evidence that serves his already inflated ego by feeding into and thus sustaining his vanity.

In the absence of such evidence, however, such blame is ill-placed. More importantly, if we agree that it is appropriate to characterize what would be reasonable to believe or do against the backdrop of the best doxastic context (rationally and epistemically) available to one, the same should hold for Vivek as well. After all, on Siegel's way of putting it, his experience presents the faces of the members of his audience as somewhere between neutral and pleased. Moreover, *ex hypothesi*, his doxastic content contains nothing that provides him with a reason to mistrust his experience. Were he indeed to suspend judgment, he would, if asked, be in no position to say why he did. Indeed, to him, suspending judgment would have to seem erratic, irrational, and inappropriate as a response, given his beliefs and what his experience conveys to him. Accordingly, while against the backdrop of a more informed doxastic context in which Vivek's condition is known, it is clearly correct to say that Vivek, in forming the belief that his audience is pleased, say, is not fully rational and that he would be more rational overall were he to suspend judgment, it is also clear that from Vivek's own perspective, doing the former must appear much more rational than doing the latter.

Generally, assessments of rationality must be relative to some standard. But where should such standards come from if not from the doxastic contexts we inhabit and what, given these contexts, we take to be true? If your and my doxastic contexts differ, an action that seems rational to you, in a given situation, need not seem rational to me. Perhaps I know less than you about the situation at hand, or more, or different things. Perhaps I am aware of fewer or more options for action than you are. Or maybe I hold different beliefs than you do about how the various agents (including you and me), the circumstances that shape the situation, and the various options for action that are in principle available to the relevant agents ought to be evaluatively characterized.

The same holds for assessments that concern not actions, but forming beliefs. If your background view differs from mine, so may what we take to be rational to believe, upon having a certain experience. If I am like Tycho and you are like Kepler, then upon seeing the sunrise, you may find it rational to form the belief that that the Earth's horizon is spinning away from the sun. I, on the other hand, may find it rational to form the belief that the Earth is standing perfectly still, while the sun is engaging in its diurnal journey around the stationary Earth. In yet another doxastic context, it may have seemed rational to believe, upon seeing the sunrise, that Helios, the god of the sun, is beginning his daily journey across the sky, setting out from Mount Olympus, riding a chariot drawn by four horses of fire, accompanied by his sister Eos (who would soon transform into Hemera and, eventually, into Hespera), and eventually hiding in his golden cup, thus bringing about nightfall.

Today, the latter view strikes us as archaically fantastic, Tycho's view as naïve, perhaps, at least as overly committed to a specific religious and pre-scientific world view. Of course, both views were, at some point and within certain communities, part of the so-called common sense. But over time, along with our beliefs, common sense shifts, sometimes dramatically, as do standards of what is deemed rational to believe.

As she assesses the rationality of the judgments and beliefs that Vivek forms based on his experience, Siegel appeals to information that is external to Vivek's own doxastic context. And again, relative to a vantage point which includes such information, it is obvious that Vivek's experience could not serve to justify the beliefs he forms on its basis, nor would his response, relative to such a vantage point, seem rational. But that does not detract from the fact that in the context provided by what Vivek knows and believes, and given his experience, there remains a rather strong temptation to think that for him to form the relevant belief is completely innocuous and at least rationally permissible.

Indeed, if we take his doxastic context into account, we should actually fault him for suspending belief, were that what he did. And we should do so not because we think that suspending judgment would not be the most rational thing to do—which we may well think it is—but rather, because what *we* think matters little. What matters, rather, is that against the background provided by *his* doxastic context, suspending judgment would seem irrational. Were he to do it anyway, he would seem

rationally impaired, whereas if he did what in light of his experience and his beliefs is rational, he would not. Why, then, does Siegel resist the idea that Vivek's most rational response would be to endorse the content his experience conveys?

The reason, I think, rests on the fact that there is really only one alternative to her proposal that she considers and rejects. We already encountered it in our initial illustration of the banana case in 7.2.1. Siegel's dismissal of that view comes out when she notes that traditional approaches to the epistemic role of perceptual experience predict that Vivek's hijacked experiences "can provide just as much epistemic support for believing that [...] the audience is pleased [...] as non-hijacked experiences could." (Siegel 2017, p. 22) Analogous to what we saw in our brief discussion of the banana case, on such a picture, Vivek's experience would appear to provide him with additional justification for his mistaken belief that his audience is pleased, yielding the untoward consequence that Vivek's experience justifies what it should not and cannot justify: an irrational belief.

On Siegel's view, in contrast, Vivek's ill-formed experience is sapped of its justificatory power. Therefore, her proposal succeeds in blocking the untoward consequence. In 7.3, I will suggest that even within the confines of the **Content View**, an alternative is available, one that both blocks the untoward consequence and that, as I show in the subsequent chapters, allows us to give a fully general account of the rational role of experience—an account on which experience plays its rational role without exception—even in cases like Vivek's, in which one's experience is hijacked.

Stepping back for a moment, let us acknowledge that Siegel takes possible cases of doxastic variation of experience very seriously. That she does, I think, is an advantage of her position. Creating the conceptual leeway required to accommodate such cases gives her view a decisive leg up on relational views. Proponents of the latter, I argued, must try to explain away such doxastic effects on experience. If that fails, there is significant pressure on them to integrate, in their account, a notion of non-perceptual phenomenology. However, such a notion threatens to undermine both their account of **Constitution** and the idea that motivates it, viz. the idea that the primary role of experience is to put subjects in touch with mind-independent objects. And if they resist phenomenal pluralism, it is not obvious that alternative strategies are available. For while I suggested that a generalized version of

Genone's account of misleading appearances may in principle be promising and potentially powerful, it remains an open question whether it can be developed in such a way as to fit into the relationalists' general epistemic framework.

That said, Siegel's account is problematic as well. For in accepting it, we would be saddled with the consequence that experience is a potentially rather unreliable guide, whose rational credentials are generated behind the scenes, in ways that often, if not standardly, remain completely opaque to the subject. Relatedly, it would appear that experience plays what is alleged to be its default rational role—that of serving to justify perceptual beliefs and judgments—only in choice circumstances. In others, i.e. in all those cases in which it is sapped of its justificatory powers, it is epistemically treacherous. For in such cases, experience presents the subject with, and invites her to endorse, contents which—though there is nothing about them that would indicate as much—it would be irrational for the subject to endorse.

The problem posed by hijacked experiences could be rather massive. Even if in the actual world, doxastic effects on experiential contents were limited, in other possible worlds, the situation may be considerably worse.⁴⁶ But even in the actual world, it is unclear whether a general optimism would be

⁴⁶ Siegel suggests that an experience's phenomenal character—in line with the Content View understood as involving the presentation of properties as instantiated—provides that experience with epistemic charge. In the context of making this suggestion, she takes it for granted that it is very often reasonable to believe one's eyes and other senses (cf. Siegel 2017, p. 46) and suggests that an acceptable account of epistemic charge may need to respect this intuition and accordingly construe the default epistemic charge of experiences as positive (i.e. as powerful enough to justify perceptual beliefs). Siegel also indicates that her account is compatible with views that think that there are self-justifying experiences, that experiences that are positively charged could serve to immediately justify perceptual beliefs. The view, accordingly, is compatible with, though does not entail epistemological foundationalism, at least not without additional assumptions.

However, and importantly, to dispel the worry that the properties one's experience presents as instantiated may often be the result of irrational processes, more needs to be said about what determines what these properties are. Suppose, for instance, that something like Hanson's broadly holistic semantic picture of experiential content is right. If so, then which properties a given experience presents to a significant extent depends on the experiencing subject's background beliefs: the latter play an essential role in determine what the properties instantiated *are*. Depending on how the holistic account is spelled out further, it may even be that false and irrational beliefs that form part of the background view inevitably shape the properties experience is said to present in epistemically pernicious ways. In such a case, perceptual hijacking would be massive and indeed ubiquitous. To be able to block such possibilities, Siegel would need to provide what, as we saw in 7.1, she still owes us: a full account of how phenomenal states are related to the properties they are said to present, of what settles which properties a given phenomenal state presents as instantiated, what these properties are, and of how these accounts yield what she takes for granted, i.e. that the putative content of some, even many phenomenal states can in fact serve to justify corresponding beliefs. In Siegel 2017, Siegel discusses, in passing, Bayesian account of content determination (see chapters 6.2.1 and 6.2.2). However, as she does, her aim is not to argue in favor of such a view, but to illustrate how on such views, the content of

warranted with respect to the putative rational status experiential contents standardly have. For surely, as we respond to our various experiences, there are many occasions in which the judgments we issue and the beliefs we form are false—in ordinary circumstance, in the sciences, and even more so in the realm of social interactions.⁴⁷

For instance, upon seeing visual illusions like the Müller-Lyer for the first time, we may issue the false judgment that the two horizontal lines it involves differ in length. Upon seeing the sunrise, we may judge that the sun is in fact moving. For the longest time, we miscategorized whales as fish, saw fire as a process involving phlogiston (at least some scientists did), ignored what is in fact the Golgi apparatus since we saw it as a result of improper staining, etc.

We also go astray—arguably quite often—as we engage in relationships with others, as colleagues, as friends, lovers, or as we just interact with others socially. We frequently, sometimes gravely, misinterpret utterances and actions of others that are directed at us (and sometimes we interpret them as being directed at us though they are not). On Siegel’s **Rich Content View**, recall, the contents of experience can be rather rich. Accordingly, it is conceivable that on it, cases in which we misread social

experiences could be negatively influenced by prior beliefs in various ways. Accordingly, her notion of **Experiential Content** remains pending.

⁴⁷ Not every such case must be explained in terms of flawed experiential contents. In one kind of case, subjects may simply discount the content their experiences anyway have. In another kind of case, subjects may erroneously take the content presented—p, say—as entailing false or irrational propositions—e.g. q and r—thus ending up forming these beliefs in response to their experience (this may, but need not involve conscious inference). In either of these kinds of cases, experience does not get to execute its alleged primary role properly.

In the first kind of case, this is not because the subject’s experience could not in principle be exploited in such a way as to enable it to play that role, but rather because the subject fails to properly exploit it. It could thus be suggested that at least in the first kind of case, the experience does provide the subject with *propositional* justification for the content the experience represents. It does not, however, provide her with *doxastic* justification since we are assuming that the subject does not actually endorse the experiential content—or if she does, she does not do so on the basis of her experience.

The second kind of case is harder to assess. For whether or not experiences that belong to that kind of cases count as hijacked will depend on one’s account of experiential content (which Siegel, as I keep insisting, does not provide). On a broadly holistic view of experiential content such as Hanson’s, what a given content is taken to entail is an essential part of what makes that content the specific content that it is. After all, the content associated with the expression ‘being the sun’ differs precisely in this respect between Tycho and Kepler. On a kind of view that in 7.1.5 I dubbed **Variable Content View**, the experiential content of cases that belong to the second kind would thus be influenced by false or irrational beliefs. Arguably, they can thus count as hijacked by the subject’s outlook. In contrast, on an account of experiential content on which the content of experience is not co-determined by the subject’s beliefs or further background states, but in some other way, it could be argued that cases that belong to the second kind of cases would be like cases that belong to the first kind of case, in that they also provide propositional justification for the content the experience represents, but not doxastic justification.

interactions could be construed as involving our seeing others as performing actions under specific evaluative characterization.⁴⁸ As we interact with others, we might thus see them as e.g. plotting against us (though they may not be), as friendly towards us (even though they are just acting politely), as indifferent towards us (though they are in fact trying to help us), as harboring feelings towards us that they do not in fact harbor, or, generally, as acting under descriptions they would fiercely reject as inaccurate.

On Siegel's **Rich Content View** (and on Hanson's view, too), and given that the entire account she develops in *The Rationality of Perception* rests on accepting the idea that one's background view can modify how things look to one, it thus seems possible that many of these cases could be construed as cases in which it is the putative content of our experiences itself that is influenced by our outlook, by our fears, suspicions, and by our false or irrational beliefs.⁴⁹ By the same token, many of these cases could thus be classified as cases of hijacked experience. If so, however, then on Siegel's view, and in the absence of further restrictions, it would be as irrational in such cases for us to believe our eyes as it would be irrational for Vivek to believe his eyes when to him, his audience looks pleased. Moreover, in such cases, our experience would not serve to justify the beliefs we form on its basis (alone) and would thus fail to properly execute its default rational role. As a result, in many of our social

⁴⁸ This is in fact Siegel's actual view. After all, she spends a lot of effort of considering cases in which e.g. racial biases may influence subjects' experiences. As she does, she asserts, *inter alia*, that subject's experiences can present people as having the property of being dangerous (I will draw on a similar scenario in chapter 8).

⁴⁹ It may seem as if I am relying here on the idea we saw operative in Hanson, i.e. that each false and irrational belief in the subject's background view co-determines (through being related to it via subjunctive conditionals), and thus potentially hijacks, the content of a given subject's experience (which may or may not have effects on its phenomenal character, too, which an account **Non-Arbitrariness** would have to settle). However, arguably even a less thoroughgoing holistic account of content determination that allows background views to co-determine content in some ways, but not fully, would raise similar issues. Siegel could try to defend a notion of how experiential content is determined on which the individuation of such content is shielded from at least some false or irrational beliefs that figure in our background view. At least currently, such an account is pending.

Perhaps Siegel could also respond by accepting a broadly holistic account of content determination and then state that not every such effect will be significant enough to reduce the epistemic power of the experience so as to drag it below the baseline required for justification. In that case, an account would be required that illuminates what it takes for false and irrational background beliefs to be bad enough to drag the resulting experience below the baseline.

I suspect that Siegel may not accept a broadly holistic account of content determination and be more sympathetic to an account on which phenomenal states whose contents have not been modulated by inference have an intrinsic content that is somehow determined by the objects and properties of the environing items that the subject sees and that give rise to the relevant phenomenal states in standard conditions. At any rate, and again, in the absence of a full Siegelian account of **Experiential Content**, it is impossible to determine what her response would be.

interactions with others, we should, instead of responding in a way that seems rational from our perspective, suspend judgment. Arguably, such concerns are further amplified if we consider what story one would need to tell, on the kind of view Siegel proposes, about the progress we made in transitioning from world views that appeared to license believing in, say, a nature populated with gods, spirits, and personified forces of nature, in the existence of ill-wishing witches, in a geocentric world-view, or in the moral, cultural, intellectual, racial, and overall supremacy of white males, to today's world view—with all the errors, imperfections, and overt and hidden inconsistencies that the latter may still contain. Analogously, consider the individual progress each of us makes as we respond to our experience of others, as we (if things go well) slowly come to learn how to see their actions for what they are intended to be, as opposed to what we wish, suspect, or fear them to be.

With respect to both these developmental trajectories, on Siegel's view, the story to be told will involve numerous irrational experiences, experiences that unbeknownst to the respective agents were formed irrationally, were accordingly sapped of their justificatory powers, and could thus not in fact justify the beliefs that were formed on their basis. In hindsight, i.e. from a vantage point that, presumably, provides more accurate standards of rationality, it would thus seem as if both in our individual history and throughout the cultural, intellectual, and moral evolution of contemporary society, experience played its alleged primary role only rarely. After all, on the view under consideration, it will have played it (and still does) only in ideal conditions, which for all we know may obtain only infrequently. If so, it begins to seem rather puzzling how these irrational experiences and responses could have played an important role in helping us make progress, overcome many prejudices, fears, ill-directed wishes, hopes, and desires, and false conceptions of the world and of the self. In short: if, as Siegel holds, endorsing the putative content of an irrational experience counts as epistemic and rational failure, the question arises how a story that may involve, and not just at its inception, numerous failures of that sort could be at the same time the story of epistemic and rational progress.

Perhaps such worries could be dispelled. But to see how, I contend, what we need from Siegel is not a better conception of how experiential content could be influenced by irrational processes.

Rather, we need a conception that shows that even if hijacking were, or had been, pervasive, experience could still serve as what helps us overcome false and irrational beliefs. We need a conception of experience on which it could serve us even when our background views are fairly poor, maximally false or irrational, so that many of our experiences are hijacked. In the next section, I will suggest that in a sense to be explained, Siegel's view is unstable, and then sketch the alternative conception of the rational role of experience that I recommend we adopt.

7.3 THE GENERAL ROLE OF EXPERIENCE

As we saw in the previous section, the reason Siegel rejects traditional approaches to the epistemic role of experience is that they predict that Vivek's hijacked experience provides further evidence for, and serves to justify, the irrational belief that his audience is pleased with his performance. It is to a large extent because she holds, quite plausibly, that such a consequence should be rejected that her own proposal begins to look more attractive—after all, it does not entail the untoward consequence.

7.3.1 Dropping the Standard Representationalist Conception of the Role of Experience

There is an alternative way of blocking the consequence that Siegel does not consider. It, too, involves breaking with traditional approaches, yet in a way that differs from Siegel's suggestion. As we will see in the next chapters, acknowledging it brings into view a range of possible positions some of which are quite compatible with much of Siegel's own view. For instance, these positions can absorb Siegel's claim that subjects, by having experiences that have been hijacked by irrational outlooks, manifest their irrationality. Moreover, these positions are fully compatible with a part of Siegel's account that we have not discussed, i.e. her specific elaboration of the claim that experiential contents can indeed

be influenced by the subject's psychological precursors in a way that Siegel characterizes as a kind of inference.⁵⁰

Here, then, is the suggestion: drop the conception of the default rational role of experience that Siegel shares with the proponents of the traditional approaches that she rejects. We should, that is, drop the idea that the default role of experience is that of serving to justify beliefs.

First, note that this conception of experience as serving to justify beliefs is deeply entrenched in contemporary literature. If one brackets views (relatively few in number) on which the role of experience is merely causal or on which episodic experience is a confused notion that should be dropped altogether,⁵¹ it is not an overstatement to say that the conception of experience as playing the normative role of constraining our views by providing justification is the default view—even though there is massive dispute about how the details of such a view are to be spelled out.

The conception is so widely shared that it is sometimes drawn on to motivate representationalist views of experience.⁵² We can see a precursor of this in Hanson. For Hanson, recall, to be epistemically significant, experience must be able to bear on our views. And if we ask, next, what it is for experience to have such a bearing, then pointing to the putative justificatory role of experience is one popular way to answer. And if experience is taken to represent things as being thus and so—if it has, as Siegel suggests, accuracy conditions—it becomes immediately intelligible how experience could serve the role of justifying beliefs. To assume that this is what experience does for us is to endorse “a natural next idea” (Siegel 2017, p. 60). That said, justification is not the only way in which experience could

⁵⁰ More specifically, on the broad notion of inference Siegel defends, it is not necessary for subject who engages in an inference to consciously reckon that some information supports the conclusion (though inferences may, of course, involve such reckoning, and often do). This view creates the conceptual leeway for the proposal that experiential contents can be generated by unconscious inferences—in short: by way of the subject's engaging in *inference without reckoning*. Siegel develops this account of inference in Siegel 2017, chapter 5.

⁵¹ Both Davidson and Quine fall into the former, Rorty and Brandom in the latter category. I return to Brandom's view in 10.3.1

⁵² It is worth noting, though, that the view that experience serves to justify is not just shared by proponents of representationalist accounts of experience. In the contemporary literature on evidentialism, for example, many (but not all) take it for granted that experience serves as a source of evidence for one's beliefs (see e.g. Feldman and Conee 1985, Conee & Feldman 2004; and McCain 2014 for discussion). However, not every evidentialist is also a propositionalist, such as e.g. Kvanvig 2007, who thinks that experience, to serve as evidence, must have propositional content. Instead, evidentialism can be paired with views on which experiential states can be justifiers even if they have no content at all.

bear on our beliefs. Moreover, neither representationalism nor Hanson's view of how concepts figure in experience entail a conception of the default role of experience as serving to justify beliefs. The Content View, Hanson's View, and representationalist views more broadly can be dislodged from it.

Dropping the idea that providing justification is experience's default rational role, I contend, need not be as much of a deviation from Siegel's view as it may seem. After all, as I suggested in the last section, it is precisely part of the point of her view, that in cases of hijacked experience, experience cannot play that role (not, that is, in virtue of the part of its content that is hijacked). Moreover, if on Siegel's **Rich Content View** it is indeed possible, if not likely, that at least in the past, our experience was hijacked rather frequently, and maybe still is in many circumstances, it follows that experience may play that role only rarely.⁵³ This is, of course, not to say that it could never play that role. If circumstances are right, it may. But if such circumstances do not always obtain, or obtain only rarely, then even in the context of Siegel's own view, rejecting the idea that providing justification is experience's default rational role is not entirely unmotivated and the resulting view can still be quite friendly to her view and retain the **Content View**.⁵⁴

If we consider what it might be to reject this conception, we soon realize that it is *only* if we accept it that the specific problem that Siegel thinks is posed by cases of hijacked experience, and to which her account is a response, so much as arises. Only on the assumption that the default role of experience is indeed to provide justification for the beliefs or judgments that subjects form on the basis of it, it

⁵³ Again, how pressing this issue is hinges on the account of content determination one endorses and that Siegel does not provide.

⁵⁴ For something to be the primary role or function of something, it need not play that role always. The primary function of a knife could be cutting, even if it does not always cut. Likewise, that experience does not play the role of justifying beliefs always—perhaps often not, or only in choice circumstances—does not entail that justifying beliefs could not still be held to be its default role.

Taken together with the fact that will transpire shortly, viz. that on Siegel's view, hijacked experience has no role to play, the problem of rational story-telling sketched above, and the fact that on the alternative view I will recommend, the implication that Siegel, too, acknowledges as counterintuitive—i.e. that Vivek, in believing his eyes, is irrational, but would be rational if he did what for him must seem highly irrational—does not arise, I take it that the view I recommend is much more attractive. As I will show, it avoids each and every one of the issues just mentioned, has the conceptual leeway for accommodating the idea that the justification of beliefs is *one* role experience may sometimes play, provides a way of characterizing the conditions in which it would play it, and at the same time does without the revisionary assumption that experience has epistemic powers that are opaque to the subject.

In any event, what I am after is a conception of a role of experience on which experience never fails to play it. And clearly, on Siegel's view, the role of providing justification for one's beliefs does not fit that particular bill.

follows that Vivek's experience provides justification for an irrational belief that it should not and cannot justify. But once this assumption is dropped, the untoward consequence no longer follows. Accordingly, one may well choose to remain committed to Siegel's claim that experience, in virtue of having content, has epistemic powers that in cases of hijacking are diminished. But once the conception of the default role of experience as serving to justify beliefs is dropped, such a commitment becomes at best optional.

The situation, thus, is this: by looking at how Siegel's view classifies various experiences, i.e. as hijacked and thus to be ignored, we can extract some motivation for the idea that one could drop the conception of the default role of experience as that of justifying beliefs altogether. If one does drop the conception, however, some other parts of her account become less motivated, e.g. the idea that experiences have epistemic powers to justify beliefs that could be modified by their cognitive and psychological precursors. Note also that if we drop the standard conception of experience's primary role as providing justification, yet another part of Siegel's account becomes less motivated. Consider the following question: what, if any, might the positive role of a hijacked experience be? Remarkably, on the view Siegel proposes, the answer to this question appears to be: *none*. Hijacked experiences, it seems, are both epistemically and rationally inert. For again, on Siegel's view, experiential contents that unbeknownst to the subject have been sapped of their epistemic powers are irrational. The subject is irrational in having experiences with such contents and would be irrational in endorsing them. For such a subject, the rational response to her hijacked experience, Siegel suggests, is suspending belief, which in effect amounts to the suggestion that one's hijacked experiences, or rather: their hijacked parts, are to be ignored.

As I suggested above, such a response must seem highly irrational from the perspective of the experiencing subject. Moreover, if hijacking were indeed widespread, which in e.g. social interactions it may well be, then believing one's eyes would, on Siegel's view, often be irrational. Finally, even if one knew that one's current experience may be hijacked, there does not seem to be any positive role,

on Siegel's view, that a hijacked experience could play in such contexts.⁵⁵ Above, we noted the strong temptation to say that in the absence of defeating considerations that are accessible to Vivek, believing his eyes is rationally permissible, perhaps even rational. As we saw, Siegel, too, acknowledges the pull of this idea, but cannot accept it. Yet patently, what prevents Siegel from endorsing a more positive conception of the role of hijacked experience just is the very conception of the default role of experience that I suggest we can drop. For dropping it paves the way towards the possibility of defending a kind of view that combines the following claims:

Irrationally Hijacked Subject

The fact that a subject has a hijacked experience indicates that something about her psychological or cognitive configuration is irrational.

Rational Endorsement of Hijacked Experience

In endorsing the putative content of her hijacked experience, subjects need not be irrational, but may act in ways that are rationally permissible, perhaps even rational.

On Siegel's view, **Rational Endorsement of Hijacked Experience** is false and **Irrationally Hijacked Subject** is supplemented with two further ideas: a) as per the **(Rich) Content View**, hijacked experiences have (possibly rich) experiential contents and b) the hijacked experiential contents are themselves irrational—a feature they inherit from their psychological and cognitive precursors.

In chapter 9, I will present a view which illustrates that these further ideas are completely optional. But if, for now, we keep them in place, my recommendation is the following: we should drop the conception of experience Siegel shares with the opponents she considers. Once we do, on the resulting

⁵⁵ Siegel considers cases in which the epistemic effect irrational beliefs have on the conclusion one draws based on them can wash out in the presence of suitable further beliefs (see e.g. Siegel 2017, p. 42, p. 109). Analogously, she might perhaps accept that that instead of saying that generally, hijacked experiences are sapped of their epistemic powers, in some cases, the ways in which their irrational contents may negatively affect the well-foundedness of the beliefs that subjects base on such experiences could similarly wash out due to the presence of suitable further beliefs in the subject's background view. A hijacked experience, in other words, could be part of the minimal unit that provides baseline justification, e.g. for the belief that in current circumstances, one should suspend one's judgment. Note, however, that if this is accepted, the assumption that in such cases, the experiential content itself is sapped of its epistemic powers seems entirely otiose, since the work this assumption is supposed to do is actually done by the further beliefs contained in the subject's background view. My own proposal, to be revealed shortly, can be understood as taking such cases not as exceptions, but as illustrating what is the case generally.

Siegelian view, nothing stands in the way of accepting **Rational Endorsement of Hijacked Experience** as well. For if being rational in one's response to the content of one's experience is no longer narrowly construed as requiring that this content serve to actually justify that response, endorsing the putative content of a hijacked experience can be rational. In other words, dropping the conception of the default role of experience as justifying beliefs brings into view the possibility of an account that keeps much of Siegel's position intact and at the same time respects the overwhelming intuitive plausibility of the idea that Vivek, in believing his eyes, may well act rationally.

7.3.2 No Defensive Measures Necessary

Before we consider what a better alternative conception of experience's rational role may be, let us rephrase the results of the previous subsection in a slightly different way. As I suggested, the problem that Siegel's account of epistemic powers is supposed to address only arises in the context of the default conception of experience as providing justification. Accordingly, I contend that we should construe the idea that hijacked experiences are sapped off their epistemic power as a strongly defensive move—one that is designed to *protect* the conception of experience as providing justification that Siegel shares with other standard representationalists from yielding untoward consequences.

Something similar holds true for the idea that the rational thing to do in response to hijacked experience is to suspend judgment. In effect, this idea is nothing but an injunction to the effect that what cannot be drawn on to provide justification should not be drawn on. Both measures—the account of epistemic powers and the injunction—taken together are thus defensive measures whose sole purpose is to ensure that hijacked experiences are taken out of the business of epistemic justification and that who draws on them anyway acts irrationally and can be dismissed. But in devising such measures, whatever positive role hijacked experiences may be able to play is ignored. Moreover, to do so is to run the risk of failing to capture the following fact: in an important sense, the rationality of a subject who responds to her hijacked experience in the only way that from her perspective seems rational to her is completely unimpaired.

Incidentally, let us note the following: if we see implementing these measures as a defensive move that is intended to protect the standard conception of experience as providing justification, this explains in a rather straightforward way why the measures—questionable anyway—immediately lose what appeal they may have had once we drop the standard conception. For if protecting that conception is what they are designed to do, then eschewing it makes them lose their defining function.

Siegel's original position, I contend, is unstable in the following way. In an attempt to protect the standard conception of the rational role of experience, she implements measures that ensure that in cases where it should not play that role, experience does not play it, whereas experiences that *do* play that role have no untoward epistemic effects. At the same time, implementing these measures brings it about that the experiences they target do not play any rational role at all.

Above, I have been pushing the thought that there could well be, in fact were, and probably still are contexts in which our experience is very likely to be massively hijacked—perhaps contexts characteristic of certain areas of discourse or kinds of social interactions, or contexts that may have been much more common in our cultural and intellectual past. In such contexts, the defensive measures must do a lot of work. But the more work they are taken to do, the more the idea that the default role of experience could indeed be that of justifying beliefs loses its appeal. But if so, then the consideration of cases in which the measures Siegel implements work hard and well invite us to doubt that the conception of the rational role of experience that these measures are supposed to protect is attractive.

7.3.3 The Alternative

If the rationality of one's response to one's experience is not construed in terms of justification, how else could Siegel-friendly representationalists construe it? Here is the proposal: whether a subject in endorsing the putative content of her experience is rational or not is neither a matter of the epistemic status of the putative experiential content, nor a matter of the epistemic status of the resulting belief

or judgment. Rather, it is a matter of whether *forming and endorsing* such beliefs and judgments is rational—given and by the lights of the subject’s experience and her background view.

The general role of experience, according to the conception that I adopt from Anil Gupta, is to make rational view-dependent transitions to beliefs, judgments, and other responses, e.g. actions or activities such as suspending belief.⁵⁶ Crucially, this conception of the rational role of experience is absolutely general. In other words, experience plays this role without exception, regardless of whether one’s experience is hijacked or not.

To illustrate, note that on this conception, Vivek, in believing his eyes, does not act irrationally. For in light both of Vivek’s experience and of his background beliefs, for him to transition to the belief that the response of his audience to his performance is somewhere between neutral and pleased is perfectly rational. Both some of his background beliefs and the belief he transitions to may well be false or irrational. However, given that Vivek inhabits the doxastic context he does and that he has the experience that he does, making the relevant transition is not. Of course, on the conception I am proposing, it remains true that Vivek, in responding to his experience by believing his eyes, forms a judgment that is irrational. As we saw above, Siegel takes the fact that a belief formed on the basis of a given experiences is epistemically flawed as a reason to seek an epistemic flaw in the experience itself. On an alternative Siegel-friendly view, we could accept that in undergoing the experience that he does, Vivek manifests his irrationality. At the same time, we need not locate the flaw primarily in the experience itself, but in what accounts for his having the experience in the first place: his irrational antecedent view. We can also grant that the content of Vivek’s experience inherits some of this irrationality. But doing so does not prevent us from insisting that in the following important sense, Vivek’s rationality is not impaired: he responds to his experience in a way that given both the experience and his antecedent view is perfectly rational.

⁵⁶ Gupta first develops this idea in Gupta 2006 and, in much more detail, in Gupta 2019, chapter 4. He claims that experience, if conjoined with a background view, also makes rational other things besides judgments and beliefs, e.g. ostensive definitions. I address, slightly modify, and further develop parts of Gupta’s view in chapter 9.

As he responds to his hijacked experience, Vivek's epistemic situation does not improve. But it could. Suppose that Vivek, perhaps in response to a well-meaning friend's careful criticism, begins to entertain it as a possibility that his current experience is hijacked. Once he does, his doxastic context will have changed. Accordingly, it may no longer be rational for him, upon having a further suitably hijacked experience, to endorse its content. Rather, it may be more rational to suspend judgment and get a second opinion—his friend's, perhaps, or that of select audience members. As a consequence of fielding their opinions, his epistemic position may improve. He might even decide to make an effort and pay special attention to his audiences. And it may be that as a consequence of entertaining it as possible that his experience may often be hijacked, the grip his vanity used to have on his experiences gradually diminishes. Perhaps he could learn to see the members of his audience more clearly, and assess their responses more accurately, which would further improve his epistemic position and make him less irrational overall.

Again, on the alternative and, as I insist, fully general conception of the rational role of experience, we are not taking Vivek's experience to provide additional justification for his irrational belief that his audience is pleased. Moreover, we grant that as he responds to his hijacked experience by way of endorsing that irrational belief, his epistemic situation does not improve. Does it get worse? Yes. For if prompted to provide reasons for his general irrational belief that his audiences are always pleased with him, Vivek will now have one more experience he draws on. More precisely, he will use the belief he formed on the basis of his experience as additional evidence to support his general irrational belief. In doing so, he may, from within his point of view, proceed quite rationally. But since to him, his general irrational belief appears to be strengthened, he is epistemically worse off.

The root of the problem is, of course, that appearances are misleading. For in taking his experience as evidence that provides, or assists in providing, justification for an irrational belief, Vivek goes wrong. His general irrational belief is not really strengthened, he just takes it to be. Though in the context of his background view, his experience makes it rational for him to transition to the belief that his audience is pleased, making rational transitions is different from conferring justification.

Relatedly, we can agree that by repeatedly endorsing his hijacked experiences, Vivek can get himself into positions that from an epistemic perspective are increasingly worse. Responding to one's experience can have such an effect. But we can insist that what explains such an epistemically pernicious trajectory is *not* that for Vivek to repeatedly transition to beliefs that match the putative contents of his hijacked experience must itself be irrational. Moreover, we can insist that we cannot explain the occurrence of the epistemically pernicious trajectory simply by pointing to Vivek's experiences. For given a suitable background view, having an experience with a content that is hijacked need not make it rational to transition to a belief that matches the hijacked content. Accordingly, a crucial element of what explains the epistemically pernicious trajectory is that the irrational elements in Vivek's background view by whose lights transitioning to irrational beliefs is rational are never addressed or removed. And there may well be opportunities for him to do so that Vivek ignores.

Ignoring such opportunities can be irrational and indeed pathological. For suppose, again, that Vivek is told by a critic that as *she* experienced things, some or all of his audience members were bored or displeased. His vanity might lead him to disregard such comments. Suppose, further, that as a consequence of his bad performances, his audience keeps shrinking. Again, his vanity could prevent him from even entertaining the thought that this is due to the quality of his performances. Instead, he might lament the alleged fact that discerning audiences are increasingly hard to find.

Plainly, what would make Vivek irrational in such a scenario is not that upon having the experiences he undergoes, he believes his eyes. Rather, what makes him irrational is that his vanity is so dominant that it prevents him from entertaining it as possible that his critics may be right and that the leaving members of his audience are more discerning than he gives them credit for.

If, on the other hand, Vivek listens to his critics, suspending judgment on his hijacked experience may well come into view as the most reasonable response to his hijacked experience. But crucially, it comes into view as the most reasonable response *within Vivek's own doxastic context*. This would become possible if Vivek's vanity is not too pathological to prevent him from being properly responsive to what others tell him. For through being so responsive, he may gradually come to inhabit a doxastic context that makes it rational for him to respond to his experience in a way that may, in one sense, be

as rational as it was when he simply believed his eyes. But in a different, yet compatible sense, is more rational overall in that it also yields beliefs and judgments that are more rational overall. Note that the conception of the primary role of experience I recommend has Siegel-friendly versions also in that the role is general enough to allow representationalists like Siegel to hold on to the thought that assisting in justifying beliefs is an interesting role that experiences can and perhaps do play often. However, *pace* Siegel, what enables experience to play this role is not determined by the rational status of experience itself, or its alleged epistemic powers. Rather, whether a given experience can play that role, in a given context, depends on the rational and epistemic status of the experiencing subject's background view. In other words, if, in the context of a given experience, the background view that the subject brings to bear on that experience is sufficiently correct, rational, and justified, the subject's experience will make it rational for the subject to form beliefs that are indeed justified.⁵⁷ And if the subject is sufficiently aware of the possibility of hijacking, this can be so even if the experience in question is massively hijacked.

Note also that the conception I recommend solves another issue—one that I suggested, in the previous section, besets Siegel's original view. For consider again the trajectory that may have led from initially fantastic, false, and irrational world views to the (presumably) less irrational world view that we inhabit today.⁵⁸ Moreover, consider the individual trajectory that may have led from our initially murky vision of others and our social interactions with them to an improved way of seeing who they are and what they do. On the conception I suggest, both may well be trajectories that for the most part involve responses to one's experience that are rational in the broad sense that I have sketched.⁵⁹

On that note, if we recall the scenario in which Vivek manages to overcome the negative effects of his vanity, we can see the importance that on the conception I recommend attaches to one's being and remaining responsive to what others have to say, to one's paying proper attention to who they are

⁵⁷ Still, whether a belief is *indeed justified* in some absolute sense may well be a matter that is extremely hard to settle.

⁵⁸ The assumption that there is one world view that we all inhabit is an idealization. The situation is much more complex in that individual world views differ, at times massively.

⁵⁹ I thus take it that the conception I am recommending is better suited than Siegel's to serve as an approach to rationally reconstructing e.g. the trajectory of scientific and of individual moral progress.

and what they do, and to one's remaining flexible in entertaining as possible different ways of seeing both them, ourselves, their and our own actions. On this conception, making epistemic and rational progress, both individually and as a community, is a deeply social enterprise. In this enterprise, the willingness to listen to others, to acknowledge and try to understand the motivations and the rational credentials of their ways of seeing things—which may well differ from our own—becomes a crucial prerequisite for improvement. For remaining open to alternative interpretations of experience and paying close attention to how others respond to theirs promise the fruit of getting a better understanding both of who they are, of who we are, of what it is that we do and believe and what weeding out false and irrational components of our cognitive and psychological context may require.

Relatedly, I suggest that accepting the idea that our experiences may be hijacked and be affected by our psychological and cognitive outlooks should instill in us both humility and compassion. For one, it suggests that to assess whether someone acts rationally, we must consider not just how *we* see the actions in questions. On the view I am recommending, when others act in ways that we find objectionable, their actions may nevertheless be rational responses to their experience, given the doxastic context they inhabit. To the extent that we take them to go astray, acknowledging that they may nevertheless act rationally should instill compassion. Conversely, acknowledging that the vision of others may be clearer where ours is murky should keep us humble.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ I adopt the language of clear vision, humility, and compassion from Iris Murdoch (cf. Murdoch 1970). In this context, pursuing this topic further would be too much of a digression. But I think that the conception of the role of experience I recommend resonates exceptionally well with Murdoch's idea that moral progress involves a purification of vision, and may even serve to motivate it (for one development of this idea, see Rosenhagen ms-a., for another that draws on Buddhist conceptions of compassion, see Rosenhagen ms-b).

Incidentally, I also take it that the suggestion that we should treat other experiencing agents with compassion captures an important aspect of an idea that Robert Brandom develops in his reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (cf. Brandom ms): the idea that in treating others, we need to magnanimously forgive them when they apply norms to particular cases in ways that we see as deficient. Doing so involves trying to find a broader purpose that the deficient application can be seen to have contributed to. Appreciating the ways in which others may be responding rationally to their experience, even if we disagree with the background view against which such responses are rational, I contend, can be part of what finding such a purpose involves. The notion of humility, on the other hand, roughly corresponds to Brandom's (Hegelian) notion of *confession*, which is construed as the subject's acknowledgement of the fact that her own way of seeing and judging things may in turn be deficient and thus be such as to require forgiveness by others.

7.3.4 Taking Stock

In this section, I took my cues from Siegel's own concession that in cases of hijacked experience, experience does not play what on the conception that she shares with her representationalist opponents is its alleged default role: that of justifying beliefs and judgments.

I then suggested that we can drop this conception of the default role of experience altogether. This move, I suggested, is in part motivated by looking at Siegel's own view. Moreover, doing so allows us to devise a Siegel-friendly view that keeps many of Siegel's other claims intact. That said, I also argued that if we drop the standard conception, the revisionary and counterintuitive elements of her view lose their appeal. They lose their defining function: that of protecting the standard conception. Dropping the standard conception thus paves the way towards a family of views some of which can take many of Siegel's commitments on board. At the same, doing so reduces the appeal of accepting Siegel's more revisionary moves, i.e., first, the idea that experiences have epistemic powers and, second, the claim that subjects who upon having a hijacked experience believe their eyes, must in doing so act irrationally.

On the alternative conception I recommend, the fully general role of experience is to make rational background-view dependent transitions to (accepting) beliefs, judgments, and other actions or activities such as suspending belief. I claimed that this conception if fully general und showed that accepting it allows us to address some of the issues that arise for Siegel's account. Finally, I indicated that the conception can be used to highlight the social dimension of cultural, intellectual, and moral progress and the importance for such progress of intellectual flexibility, humility, and compassion.

In the next two chapters, I will gradually move away from Siegel's view even further. This will bring into view other accounts that can accommodate the conception I recommend. More specifically, I will show that the conception of the general role of experience I recommend does not only allow us to recouch Hanson's view (chapter 8), but is compatible with views on which experience has no content at all (chapter 9).

8.0 HANSON REVAMPED

In the previous chapters, we examined various competing conceptions of experience—two representationalist, and three relationalist ones. After finding fault with Hanson’s representationalist proposal, I argued that we should reject relationalist proposals as well as the standard representationalist proposal offered by Siegel.

Let us briefly recap one of issues we encountered in the course of our analysis of the latter. Siegel’s view entails, recall, that experience does not always serve to justify beliefs. If hijacked experiences lose their epistemic powers and when subjects, upon having such experiences, believe their eyes, their experience does not play that role. If we drop the default conception of experience as justifying beliefs completely, we pull the rug under the assumption that hijacked experiences are problematic in that they appear to illicitly provide additional justification for false or irrational beliefs. Consequently, doing so removes the need for Siegel’s defensive measures, her account of variable epistemic powers of experience and the injunction that hijacked experiences are to be disregarded. It is then open to us to suggest an alternative conception of the role of experience, one that takes seriously the intuition Siegel disregards. For on this conception, we can concede that in endorsing the contents of a hijacked experience, subjects may be transitioning to beliefs that are irrational. But at the same time, and importantly, we can insist, against Siegel, that in the context provided by their experience and their doxastic setting, this may be a perfectly rational thing for subjects to do.

I suggested we endorse a conception (first offered in Gupta 2006), according to which the rational role of experience is to make rational view-dependent transitions to, *inter alia*, beliefs, judgments, and actions. This conception of the role of experience, I claimed, is completely general. It is never undermined, not even in cases in which the subject’s experience is hijacked. Moreover, the conception

is compatible with the possibility that in the context provided by a suitable background view, subjects can respond even to thoroughly hijacked experiences by way of transitioning to beliefs in a way that is not only rational, given their experiences and their view, but that also yields justified beliefs. Relatedly, I suggested that if combined with Siegel's **Content View**, the conception allows us to hold on to the idea that in suitable doxastic circumstances, experience may well serve to justify beliefs, viz. in circumstances in which the subject's background view is sufficiently correct, rational, and justified.

In the next section, I argue that we can move even further away from Siegel's view by a) dropping Siegel's **Content View**, b) adopting to a Hansonian account of experience, thus c) dropping the idea that the content of experience is true or false. As I will illustrate, the conception of experience as making rational view-dependent transitions to beliefs, judgments, etc. is compatible both with a Hansonian account of experiential content and with his account of empirical constraint, on which one's experience can lead to a change in one's background view, which in turn may alter one's experience.

As I do, I distinguish various ways in which changes in the subject's background view could affect her (Hansonian) experience. Among such effects, I suggest, are changes in **Amalgamation**. Amalgamation, in other words, need not be construed as permanent. Furthermore, how experiential phenomenology and instances of *seeing as* are amalgamated, in a given subject's mental economy, can be heavily context-dependent. Also, relations of amalgamation can vary in robustness. But as I will argue, even in cases in which suitable changes in the subject's background do not affect the subject's experience at all, it will still be the case that such changes may affect which transitions to judgments, beliefs, etc. having that experience makes rational. Moreover, as on the Siegelian view we discussed in the last section of the previous chapter, given the right circumstances, experience may still play a vital role in arriving at beliefs that are in fact justified.

8.1 A HANSONIAN VARIABLE CONTENT VIEW

In 7.3.3, I sketched a view that adopts the conception of the general role of experience I recommend and at the same time keeps much of Siegel's view intact, notably the **Content View**. This view, I suggested, solves some of the problems that beset Siegel's view, such as promising to provide a better account of individual and rational progress and dropping revisionary or counterintuitive claims. It does not, however, solve all of Siegel's problems. Notably, it, too, leaves us without an account of experiential content and does not address the issue of **Non-Arbitrariness**. As we consider a version of Hanson's view that is supplemented by the conception of the rational role of experience I recommend, it will thus be opportune to keep in mind the Hansonian counterpart of this issue: the problem of **Amalgamation**.

In what follows, I proceed as follows. First, I draw attention to the fact that moving from Siegel's account and the Siegelian account sketched in 7.3 to a Hansonian account puts us in a better position with respect to addressing the issue of experiential content (8.1.1). Next, I show that Hanson's account of empirical constraint can be characterized in terms of the conception of the general role of experience I recommend (8.1.2). Then, I sketch an account of changes in the subject's background view might affect her subsequent experience. In doing so, I provide a partial account of how ways in which phenomenal states and instances of seeing as are amalgamated may be modified by changes in the subject's view, which yields the **Hansonian Variable Content View**. (8.1.3) Triggered by a brief comparison between Modifiable Amalgamation and Genone's view, I propose that we may think about the relation between phenomenal states and instances of seeing as in terms of what I will call *dispositions of amalgamation* (8.1.4). In the final section (8.2), I suggest that to model the behavior experiencing subjects *actually* exhibit, we can add a further level of dispositions—*dispositions to transition*. Summing up, I list various ways in which the view needs to be developed further, and emphasize both its advantages over Siegel's view and the fact that it, too, affords the conceptual leeway required for the idea that experience can contribute to justification.

8.1.1 Experiential Content

Like for Siegel, for Hanson, too, experiential content can be rich. As we saw, Siegel construes such richness in terms of the variety of *properties* that experience can present as instantiated. For Hanson, on the other hand, richness is a matter of which *concepts* can complement the *seeing as* locution.¹

Recall that in contrast to Siegel's account, it is an important facet of Hanson's account of the theory-ladenness of observation that he seeks to provide the resources for addressing the question of how to understand experiential content. For Hanson, this question became salient in his attempt to find a way of explaining the following kind of case: as Tycho and Kepler see the sun in identical environing circumstances, see it *as* the sun, and may even have experiences that are exactly alike in their phenomenology, they may still see different things. As our discussion in the first chapter brought out, the solution Hanson offers is a broadly holistic account of conceptual content. On it, what the concepts complementing the *seeing as* locution are, for the experiencing subject, is construed in terms of the ways in which they are inferentially articulated in that subject's background view.² Recall that on this account, theory-ladenness, construed as a semantic relation, is not a contingent feature of

¹ Since the '*seeing as*' locution can be complemented by all sorts of predicates, there are, arguably, only very few constraints on what such contents could possibly be. There is, for instance, no restriction to contents that are taken to pick out properties that are observable to the human eye. In a physics classroom, dots and squiggles on the blackboard can be seen as representing moving neutrinos, even though neither neutrinos and their movements, nor the property of representing something unobservable can be literally seen. Recall also that '*seeing as*' can be complemented by e.g. evaluative predicates such "a good/dangerous/nosy/cowardly person," or by identity predicates such as "identical with Nero." It would at least be contentious to characterize all such predicates as picking out observable features.

Generally, restrictions as to what such complements could be will plausibly derive from the background view in which they are articulated and the commitments this view involves with respect to which predicates are robustly incompatible. For example, given that we think that nothing can be green and red all over—indeed, we take this belief to be a crucial part of our concepts of red, green, and, presumably, colors in general—nothing can be *seen as* green and red all over, nor could anything be seen as a round square, or as F and not F in the same respect. Note that some predicates that appear incompatible can turn out to be compatible after all. After all, it is, on Hanson's account, through *seeing* things *as* behaving in ways that previously (and perhaps erroneously) were deemed unlikely or even impossible that modifications of the background view are triggered. As experience exerts its empirical constraint, and if we respond to it rationally, then if things go sufficiently well, experience may thus assist us in eventually gaining a better understanding of which predicates are in fact incompatible.

² This was part of the point of Hanson's claim that *seeing as* is intelligible only in terms of *seeing* (and merely believing) *that*.

experiential content. Rather, the inferential articulation of concepts with other concepts is a feature that is essential for understanding what such content is.

As we saw, in Hanson, the details of the broadly holistic account of concepts that he appears to endorse are not fully spelled out. He is, for instance, completely silent on the issue whether he also thinks that experiential phenomenology or referential relations between concepts and mind-independent items could be part of what constitutes a concept's content as well. Even so, once we grant, with Hanson, that its inferential articulation is at least co-constitutive of what a concept is, this allows us to explain how for Tycho and Kepler, *seeing* something *as* the sun could be instances of seeing the sun as different things: for 'being the sun,' as it is articulated in Tycho's background view, is a different predicate than 'being the sun' as it is articulated in Kepler's.

As we saw, on Siegel's view, things are much less clear. Suppose both Tycho and Kepler see the sun in identical enviroing circumstances. Moreover, suppose—as presumably Siegel would as well—that both their experiences present the property of being the sun as instantiated. But what, exactly, is this property? What determines what this property is? Is it the same property in both experiences or are the properties presented as instantiated in Tycho's and Kepler's respective experiences different? If the former, how comes that both experiences present the same property as instantiated? And if the properties presented as instantiated differ, how is *that* to be explained?

That Siegel remains silent with respect to such questions invites drawing a parallel between her proposal and Fish's. For as we considered the latter, we ran up against the issue that he leaves us without an account of how to construe and individuate the properties that he thinks are lifted into the presentational character of experience by the passive exercise of conceptual capacities (and without a corresponding account of the conceptual capacities that are said to do such lifting).³ In the last chapter, I pointed out that Siegel leaves it unclear how to understand *which* properties a given phenomenal state is said to present. But this complaint comes in two flavors. One concerns what I dubbed the problem of **Non-Arbitrariness**—a problem that we can characterize by asking the question of what settles

³ This came up in the context of my attempt, in 4.4, to spell out how Fish could make good on his contention that experts and laypeople may have something perceptually in common.

how, given a set comprising determinate properties and a set containing kinds of phenomenal states, these two sets relate. The second is strikingly similar to the problem we raised for Fish: on Siegel's view, it remains unclear how the properties that are said to be in some way presented in experience are individuated in the first place. In this latter respect, I contend, Hanson's account is more illuminating than both Fish's and Siegel's. Consider again Tycho and Kepler looking at the sun at dawn. On Fish's view, what the properties are that each lifts, through a passive deployment of their conceptual capacities, into the presentational character of their respective experiences, and how such properties are individuated, remains unclear. The reason, ultimately, is that it is unclear how we must think about the conceptual capacities operative in them. Are they the same in both, are they different? How? Likewise, on Siegel's account, too, it remains completely unclear what determines what the properties are that Tycho's and Kepler's respective experiences present as instantiated.

For Hanson, on the other hand, the situation is much better. He does not think about experiences as presenting properties as instantiated, but as involving the operation of concepts. And by virtue of claiming that the concepts figuring in a subject *S*'s experiential content derive an essential part of their meaning from the way they are inferentially articulated in the subject's background view, he provides an answer to the question what individuates experiential contents and thus succeeds where both Fish and Siegel fail: in characterizing the difference between the experiential contents of Tycho's and Kepler's respective experiences. What enables him to do so, in part, is that in contrast to both the relationalists and Siegel, his stance towards the doxastic variability of experience is not defensive. Rather, and again, he accepts doxastic variability of this semantic kind as a necessary requirement on the intelligibility of experiential content. Accordingly, as we adopt Hanson's broadly holistic account of **Experimental Content** (with the caveat that it may need to be supplemented further) we do not only address a problem that besets both Siegel's and Fish's accounts. We also take a much less defensive stance towards doxastic variability more generally than most of the philosophers who partake in the contemporary discussion about such issues. As will transpire, I will eventually suggest that we can eschew this defensive stance altogether.

8.1.2 Empirical Constraint Recouched

In 2.4, I showed that according to Hanson, the possibility of doxastic effects on one's experience, construed as semantic effects that one's background belief have on what the concepts are that supplement the *seeing as* locution, does not rule out the possibility that experience can afford empirical constraint. That the latter remains possible was explained as follows: suppose we accept that the way the relevant concepts are articulated in the subject's background serves to individuate an essential part of what these concepts mean, to the experiencing subject. Even so, the relevant background cannot plausibly determine what the mind-independent items seen are, nor how they behave. Nor need they fully determine the phenomenology of the subject's experience. Even if projection effects, too, are possible, it is one thing to accept that such effects are possible, or actual, and quite another thing to also hold that our background views must systematically determine our experience in such a way that the beliefs we form on its basis will always keep the hijacking effects in place.

Let us consider a concrete case. To begin with, suppose that Elijah's background beliefs hijack his experience in such a way that he typically sees young black men as dangerous. He is biased. For ease of exposition, let us assume that the hijacking state is an irrational racially discriminatory generic belief that Elijah has adopted (and that he may not be fully aware of)—the belief that young black men are dangerous. Assume, further, that in Elijah's case, the hijacking involves projection effects: the phenomenal dimension of Elijah's experience is affected by his irrational belief in such a way that to him, all the young black men he encounters look such that he sees them as dangerous (whatever that may come to, phenomenally).⁴

Clearly, Elijah's background beliefs cannot determine who these men in fact are or what they do. It may thus well be that none of the young black men Elijah ever sees are in fact dangerous. Moreover, it may well be that he never witnesses any of them act in a dangerous way towards him—or, for that

⁴ I am, for now, operating under the assumption that for Elijah, there is a kind of phenomenal states that he enters upon seeing young black men and that such states are robustly amalgamated with his concepts such that entering such states just is for him to see these men as dangerous. I consider different ways of think about amalgamation in the next subsection.

matter, towards anyone else. But just as it would be absurd to think that his beliefs could determine who they are and what they do, one would have to make rather strong assumptions about Elijah's mental state to make it plausible that his irrational belief will systematically manage his experience so as to keep that belief completely shielded from any rational pressure to revise it.

How strong the relevant assumptions would have to be comes out even more clearly if we allow that quite plausibly, Elijah's experience of young black men is not the only source he can draw on.⁵ Suppose, for instance, that upon seeing a young black man, he judges, and tells his nearby friends, that he sees a dangerous-looking young black man. But suppose Elijah's friends are less biased. Further, suppose they point out to him that their own experiences do not fit Elijah's characterization and, perhaps, even suggest that his experience could well be affected by some implicit bias.

In such a scenario, it seems fantastic to suppose that Elijah's irrational belief will systematically determine his experience (in this case both his aural and his visual experience) in such a radical and pathological way that it alters what he sees and hears his friends as saying—e.g. by making him see and hear them as saying something that, rather than alerting him to the possible irrationality of his belief, makes it rational for him to transition to the belief that they said something that actually confirms his irrational belief.⁶ Thus, if at least in non-pathological cases, a subject's background views will not systematically determine his or her experience in such a radical fashion, and if we assume that Elijah, though he holds an irrational racially discriminatory belief, is not pathologically irrational, the

⁵ The following considerations are structurally analogous to some of the considerations we issued with respect to Vivek's case in the previous chapter. In Vivek's case, too, we imagined his well-meaning friends or critics to serve as an important resource that allows Vivek to eventually loosen the grip his irrational vanity has on him. I will not here argue for a claim that I think is both true and was recognized by Aristotle as well: that for making epistemic and moral progress, friendship is vitally important (see Rosenhagen *ftc.* for discussion).

⁶ That such cases can occur need of course not to be ruled out as impossible. It could be, that is, that Elijah's irrational belief, perhaps supported by further auxiliary beliefs, systematically hijacks his experience so as to keep the irrational complex of beliefs intact. He could, for instance, form the belief that his friends are too frightened to speak the truth, or that they are being threatened to say only good things about the dangerous man. The point is that if Elijah's irrational belief were to have such effects on his experience, we would take Elijah to be exceptionally delusional. In other words, the simple assumption that one's background beliefs may be strong enough to affect one's phenomenology is much weaker than the assumption that these beliefs are also super-strong hijackers such that the one's complete experience of the world *must* systematically conform to them. In Elijah's case, attributing to him that his irrational belief is a super-strong hijacker is to attribute to him that his mental economy is pathologically irrational and renders him incapable of revising the irrational racially discriminatory generic belief at hand. The assumption that an irrational belief may affect the phenomenology of Elijah's experience does not involve such an attribution. Regardless, in having experiences that are so affected, Elijah may well be said to manifest his irrationality.

following is possible: Elijah may come to realize that the young black men he sees as dangerous never in fact act in ways that based on his belief he would expect them to. He may realize that even though he keeps, for the time being, seeing young black men as dangerous, it is not rational for him, in light of what he sees them as doing, to transition to beliefs such as that they are in fact dangerous, that they act in a dangerous fashion, that he thus should avoid them, etc.⁷

Elijah could become aware of the tension between his irrational belief and the expectations that accompany them and the beliefs that he is rational to transition to (given his experience and e.g. his beliefs about what dangerous actions are) on his own or by listening to and taking seriously the comments of his friends. Either way, once he does become aware of the tension, such awareness will exert some rational pressure on him to modify his background view so as to resolve it. And one way in which this could be achieved is by way of entertaining the possibility that the way he experiences young black men may be the result of an irrational generic belief. Suppose this happens. If so, this newly acquired belief will in turn modify what beliefs and judgments, etc. it will be rational for him to transition to in response to his future experiences of young black men.⁸

Structurally, then, we can characterize what happens in such a case as follows: Elijah is alerted to a possible tension between the beliefs that his experience makes rational for him to transition to and

⁷ Since racial stereotyping is omnipresent in popular culture, matters will typically be more complex. For one, racist beliefs and biases are arguably shaped, and perhaps strengthened, by one's encounters with fictional characters in literature, movies, etc. For another, racially biased individuals like Elijah may live in a context in which the fact that such biases are possible or that racially discriminatory beliefs are false or irrational is either little known or regularly discounted. Either way, I am not suggesting that overcoming one's false or irrational beliefs or one's biases must be an easy thing to do. And if we recall Hanson's remark that "thirteen centuries of expert observation failed to disclose the error in Galen's contention that the septum between the ventricles of the heart is perforated" (PD, p. 168), we may come to appreciate that the same applies not just to matters of discrimination, but is plausible in areas as well, e.g. in the area of scientific thinking. What I am suggesting, however, is that happening upon inconsistencies that may obtain between one's beliefs and one's experiences, though perhaps difficult, is possible even if one's experience is hijacked. Moreover, the realization of such inconsistencies should rationally motivate a modification of one's view that removes the inconsistency. That said, whether the latter is done in a rational or irrational way will of course depend on further factors such as the details of one's background view and one's psychological make-up.

⁸ On the resulting view, experience may allow subjects to overcome both false and irrational beliefs and implicit biases as long as it is assumed that the subject's background view is not pathologically rigid, as it would be if it fully determined the subject's experience. Such a process may be long and arduous. But as I suggested in the previous chapter, making progress may be more likely if we remain humble and compassionate. To develop this line of thinking further would be to suggest—with virtue epistemologists and, more specifically, virtue responsibilists—that epistemic virtues may include both self-regarding and other-regarding ethical virtues. See Turri and Alfano *forthcoming* for discussion, also Kawall 2002 for an argument for the claim that virtue epistemologists tend to neglect the importance of other-regarding virtues.

a standing belief, i.e. that young black men are dangerous. For Elijah to be rational requires that he respond to this inconsistency by resolving it. Given this realization, he may come to question whether his standing belief is indeed accurate. One way to resolve the inconsistency, thus, would be to weaken that standing belief or to eschew it altogether.⁹

When in 2.4 we discussed Hanson's account of empirical constraint, the case we considered involved a subject witnessing a conjurer's trick: during that trick, a young lady appears to be sawed in half and yet, she afterwards gaily kicks her legs. That case, too, involves a such tension. The experiencing subject sees as happening what she believes could not possibly be happening, and which, given the what her subsequent observations make rational for her to transition to, she believes cannot have happened: a disjoinery.

In characterizing Elijah's case, I phrased it by drawing on the general conception of the role of experience I recommend, i.e. in terms of the rationality of transitions. The case of the conjurer's trick, too, can be characterized in this fashion: while witnessing the trick, and given her background view, the subject—call her Lea—initially sees the conjurer's saw as an ordinary saw, the sawing as an ordinary case of sawing, etc. Given Lea's experience and her background beliefs, she may well be rational to form the belief that this is indeed what she sees. Suppose she does. Given that her background view now contains, *inter alia*, the resulting beliefs, her subsequent experience will make it rational for her to transition to the judgment that the young lady has been sawed in half. However, presumably, this belief strongly conflicts both with what Lea believes could possibly happen in the circumstances at hand and with further judgments that—given her subsequent experience and her background view—it is rational to transition to as well: after the sawing, the young lady gaily kicks her legs, thus indicating that despite all appearances to the contrary, she is alive and well.

⁹ If what is responsible for the hijacking is implicit bias, the characterization may have to look somewhat different. Since whether implicit bias has a belief-like structure is contentious, the inconsistency between Elijah's bias and the beliefs he forms based on his reflection, or his drawing on other sources of information may not be one that obtains between beliefs. For recent discussion on the nature of implicit bias, see Brownstein & Saul 2016. In it, cf. Holroyd & Sweetman 2016 for an argument that implicit bias may be a rather heterogeneous category.

As she faces this tension, Lea must respond. She resolves the tension by holding on to the belief that she is most firmly committed to, i.e. that the young lady could not actually have been sawed in half. Moreover, she drops the beliefs that are incompatible with the former and that she cannot thus adopt as well: that a disjoinery took place and, perhaps, that an ordinary saw was used, an ordinary act of sawing was involved, etc. Were she now to see the trick again, she might thus no longer see it as involving such things in the first place.

Both Elijah's and Lea's case illustrate that in the context of a given background view, one's experience can make rational transitions to judgments that are incompatible with some parts of that view. This is what makes empirical constraint possible. For if the subject realizes such incompatibilities (which need not always happen, since incompatibilities can be hard to spot), there is some rational pressure on her to resolve them.¹⁰

Again, which resolution among the potentially numerous available the subject will come to endorse will depend on the specifics of the subject's background view and on which of the beliefs—including, but not limited to, the incompatible ones it contains—the subject is most strongly committed to.¹¹ Either way, any such resolution, even if it only amounts to a suspension of belief, will involve some modification of the background view. And given that on the conception of the general role of experience that we are considering, what having a given experience makes rational to transition

¹⁰ I acknowledge that I take it for granted, and will assume without further defense, that it is part of what it is to be rational that as one realizes that one holds incompatible commitments, one is under a rational obligation to at least try and resolve the incompatibility. It may be suspected that without such a requirement in place and on the assumption that from a contradiction everything follows, an entitlement to knowingly hold incompatible beliefs would seem to entail the entitlement to hold any belief whatsoever, which seems absurd. For an interesting proposal regarding the requirement to resolve such incompatibilities, see Brandom 2009, chapter 1, pp. 35ff. According to it, the relevant requirement is part of a conception of judging as involving the taking up of a distinct task-responsibility, including that of integrating newly acquired beliefs into a unified whole.

¹¹ That there will always be several ways of resolving such conflicts is part of the so-called Duhem-Quine thesis, also emphasized by Feyerabend and also illustrated by Neurath's image that our web of belief is like a boat that we continually rebuild whilst staying afloat on it. On Michael Devitt's characterization of this image "[w]e can rebuild any part of the boat but in so doing we must take a stand on the rest of the boat for the time being. So we cannot rebuild it all at once. Similarly, we can revise any part of our knowledge but in so doing we must accept the rest for the time being. So we cannot revise it all at once." (Devitt 2002, p. 32). The point highlighted by the Duhem-Quine thesis, however, is not that the boat cannot be rebuilt all at once, but rather, that in rebuilding the boat, there are, like in the case of revising our beliefs, always various incompatible ways of proceeding. See Devitt 2002 and Stanford 2017 for further discussion of the Quine-Duhem thesis. It should be noted, however, that just because several ways of resolving conflicts are always possible *in principle*, in the context of a given background view, it may well be that only one way of resolving a given conflict is acceptable.

to depends on the background view the subject brings to bear on it, the same experience, if had again, may, in light of the modified background view, make rational transitions to different beliefs, judgments, etc.

Note that as Hanson characterizes Lea's case, the relevant change in the subject's background view will modify not merely what belief the subject, if she witnessed the same trick again, would be rational to transition to. It also modifies what she will subsequently *see* things *as*. As we will see shortly, though changes in the subject's background view may, they need not lead to a modification of what one *sees* things *as*. Moreover, given the variety of effects on experience that Hanson thinks are in principle possible, a modification of what the subject *sees* things *as* could be brought about in different ways. We consider this in the next subsection.

As for this section, I contend that it illustrates the following: Hanson's account of empirical constraint can well be couched in the terminology suggested by the conception of the general role of experience I recommend. Doing so allows us to see that his account of empirical constraint highlights an important possibility that the conception of the general role of experience I am recommending must and can accommodate: that the beliefs, judgments, etc. that a given experience, in the context of a background view, can make rational to transition to can be in conflict with some parts of that view. If the subject acknowledges it, it is put under rational pressure on her to revise her view in some way so as to resolve the conflict.

8.1.3 Amalgamation

In the previous section, we noted that the empirical constraint exerted by experiences of seeing things or people as behaving in ways that defy our expectations can ultimately trigger the revision of one's view. In this section, let us consider how changes in the background view might in turn affect the subject's subsequent experiences.

Returning to the case of Elijah, suppose Elijah realizes that what he habitually sees young black men as, i.e. as dangerous, does not match what he typically sees them as doing, i.e. actions that are

characterizable as dangerous. Alternatively, there could be some other way in which he is alerted to the possibility that his experience may be in part a result of a biased irrational belief, e.g. by being confronted with diverging assessments of others. Next, recall that Hanson insists that background beliefs can affect experience in various ways, including its phenomenology. Such effects may be what is operative in certain cases of expert vision—such as effects that involve elements of the visual field cohering in specific ways—and will be involved in projection effects. Suppose, then, that as a result of Elijah’s realization that his irrational racially discriminatory generic belief might be unwarranted, the hijacking effect of that belief are reduced. Consequently, the phenomenology of his experiences of young black men is modified. This modification could be such that the phenomenology that Elijah’s experience has upon seeing young black men comes to be no longer that of experiences of *seeing* them *as* dangerous, but, perhaps gradually, that of experiences of *seeing* them *as* perfectly harmless, neutral, friendly, or indifferent, say.

We can distinguish two ways in which this could happen. Recall that on the characterization of Elijah’s experience that derives from Hanson’s view, the non-conceptual dimension of Elijah’s experience will be amalgamated in some specific way with the conceptual dimension. Presumably, Hanson would thus assume that there is some phenomenology that, qua **Amalgamation**, in Elijah’s subjective life, *is* the phenomenology of experiences of *seeing* someone *as* dangerous. Analogously, there would be some phenomenology that in Elijah’s subjective life, *is* the phenomenology of experiences of *seeing* someone *as* harmless, say.¹² Against the backdrop of this view, the scenario we are currently imagining is the following: Elijah’s newly acquired belief leads, perhaps gradually, to a reduction of the hijacking effect exerted by his weakened irrational belief and to a subsequent systematic shift in his phenomenology. His phenomenology transforms into one that is anyway amalgamated in such a way with experiential contents that upon encountering young black men, he comes to *see* them more and more *as* harmless—or at least *as* no more or less dangerous than other

¹² Such amalgamation will be context-dependent. In other words, for any given subject, one and the same phenomenology need not be amalgamated with just one sort of content, but may be amalgamated with different contents in different contexts. In suitable doxastic circumstances, phenomenally identical experiences can be experiences that involve rather different instances of *seeing as*.

people. The projection effect, in other words, disappears, perhaps gradually.¹³ If so, then Elijah, were he to form beliefs based on the assumption that things are the way he now *sees* them *as*, would, upon encountering young black men, no longer be rational to transition to the belief that they look dangerous. Instead, he might transition to the belief that they are harmless, neutral, friendly, or perhaps just indifferent. And in the absence of further reasons to the contrary, transitioning to such beliefs should be a perfectly rational thing for him to do.

Note that in the scenario just considered, the way phenomenal states and kinds of seeing *as* are amalgamated was taken to be stable. But that need not be so. Dropping the assumption that **Amalgamation** must be stable brings into view a second way in which Elijah could cease to see the young black men as dangerous. For suppose that in response to acquiring the belief that his experience may be hijacked, the phenomenology of Elijah's experience does not change at all. Even so, since he will now have been alerted to the possibility that the phenomenology of his experience could be affected by an irrational belief, having experiences with a phenomenology that previously were experiences of seeing black young men as dangerous may—perhaps gradually—come to be experiences of *seeing* them *as* not dangerous, but harmless, say.

What we are now imagining, thus, is the following: the change in Elijah's background view does not remove whatever effects his irrational background belief may have on his phenomenology. Conceivably, if doxastic effects on the phenomenology of experience are allowed, it could be that in some kinds of cases, such effects may be difficult to remove. And given that implicit biases (whatever they are, exactly) seem to be difficult to overcome, effects that rest on such biases may well be of that sort. That said, on the current proposal, the modification of Elijah's background view still does have an effect: it alters the way his phenomenology is amalgamated with instances of *seeing as*.

Providing a fully satisfactory account of **Amalgamation** would need to involve an account of how amalgamation is set up initially.¹⁴ But regardless of how one takes the initial configuration to

¹³ In a less optimistic scenario, the projection effect could be replaced by a different projection effect.

¹⁴ How this works may be a question for psychologists to address. Either way, if both the relationalists and Siegel are entitled to assume that some story can be told as to how having experiences that have a certain phenomenology come to be ways of looking *F*, or to involve the presentation of specific properties as instantiated, then a Hansonian, too,

come about, there is no need to assume that amalgamation must be stable. It could be modifiable. On a Hansonian account that also accommodates **Modifiable Amalgamation**, the subject's background view would thus not just semantically determine, to a large extent, what a given experiential content *is*—by providing the doxastic context in which the concepts that figure in the subject's experiential content are inferentially articulated.¹⁵ Rather, it also governs, at least in part, how kinds of phenomenal states are amalgamated with instances of *seeing as*. It is a Hansonian version of the Variable Content View the possibility of which was hinted at already in 7.3.

8.1.4 **Modifiable Amalgamation, Genonian Misleading Appearances, and *Seeings As* as Dispositional States**

The account of **Modifiable Amalgamation** shares some features with Genone's account of misleading appearances (see the discussion in 6.3.1). More specifically, it is somewhat akin to Genone's idea that one's background beliefs may affect what judgments or beliefs one may form on the basis of perceiving appearance properties. Important differences do remain, however.

For one, at least if we bracket Genone's tentative endorsement of phenomenal pluralism, in contrast to Genone's view, the view we are currently considering entails no commitment to the relationalist idea that the phenomenology of the experience that the subject responds to is constituted exclusively by the subject's being related to entirely mind-independent items. After all, in the case of Elijah, we are operating under the assumption that the phenomenology of his experience is in fact irrationally influenced by some of its irrational cognitive and psychological precursors. A Hansonian who accepts the conception of the general rational role of experience I recommend can readily grant that experience may put us in touch with such items, and that it may indeed do so quite often.

should be entitled to assume that it is part of the natural process of acquiring one's first language that some connections between the phenomenology of one's experience and concepts are being set up.

¹⁵ Again, such articulation will not settle every question one might raise with respect to what kind of content the experience has. For example, it will not settle the question whether a given content is indeed objectively singular (see the discussion in chapter 5).

However, she has no need for the additional assumption that experience *must* play this role generally. For as she will point out, and as the case of Elijah illustrates, even in cases in which experience does not (at least in part) put us in touch with such items, it can still play its general rational role, viz. that of making rational view-dependent transitions to e.g. beliefs, judgments, or actions. Moreover, in the process of experience playing this role, the following can occur: it can happen that the subject becomes aware of the hijacking factors. If so, her background view will be revised. If this happens, this may (but need not) lead in turn to a reduction of the influence that the hijacking factors exert on the subject's experience.

Another difference between the Hansonian view we are considering and Genone's account is that on the former, the background view does not just govern which *beliefs* or *judgments* a subject may form based her experience. Instead, the background view may also influence which kinds of *seeing as* having an experience with a specific kind of phenomenology is amalgamated with. And an instance of *seeing as* is neither a judgment nor a belief.

Third, recall that on Genone's view, it remains unclear how to interpret the modality involved when he states that background beliefs govern which 'beliefs and judgments the subject *may* form based on her experience' and, relatedly, what it is for such beliefs and judgments to be *based* on the relevant experience. As I argued, Genone's talk about how perceiving appearance properties relates to the beliefs and judgments that are said to be formed on the basis of such perceptions is ambiguous between causal and epistemic readings. A Hansonian, I will suggest next, can be more specific.

A Hansonian can, for instance, suggest that the various kinds of *seeing as* are conceptually contentful, but doxastically non-committal states that experiencing subjects are disposed to enter as they have experiences with various kinds of phenomenology. Instances of *seeing as*, so construed, are manifestations of dispositions to respond to the phenomenology of one's experience. And **Amalgamation**, on such a view, concerns what a subject, upon having an experience with a specific phenomenology, is disposed to *see things as*.

Note that such *dispositions of amalgamation*, as we may dub them, can be heavily context-dependent. In different contexts, experiences with the same phenomenology can be amalgamated with different

kinds of *seeing as*. Moreover, if we allow that **Amalgamation** is **modifiable**, these dispositions are not set in stone. Instead, some dispositions of amalgamation may be sensitive to modifications of one's background view and change along with it.¹⁶

8.1.5 Stable Amalgamations

A last possibility to consider is the following: it could be that in some cases, a weakening of an irrational belief does not lead to a change in what things are seen as. It could be, for instance, that neither the phenomenology of Elijah's experience nor the *dispositions of amalgamation* that tie kinds of phenomenal states to instances of *seeing things as* can be easily modified.

Hanson, recall, rejects two-stage accounts of experience. According to him, and on the dispositionalist reading just suggested, instances of *seeing as* are being triggered instantaneously, not after, somehow, taking in the phenomenology of one's experience first. Theories, Hanson thinks, are there in the seeing, right from the start. If we think of instances of *seeing as* as being triggered quasi-automatically and of the relevant dispositions of amalgamation as potentially varying in how stable they are, it becomes conceivable that changes in one's doxastic context may not always lead to changes in the relevant dispositions immediately.¹⁷ It may even be that some dispositions are so stable that they cannot be changed at all.¹⁸

¹⁶ Hanson's case of the conjurer's trick can be construed as a case involving a modification of **Amalgamation** as well—namely if we assume that upon witnessing the trick a second time, the phenomenology of the witnessing subject's experience does not change. Just like Elijah's background, once it has been enriched by the belief that his experience of young black men may be hijacked, may result in a change not in the phenomenology of his experience, but in what he *sees* such men *as*, the change in Lea's background view could result in a change not in the phenomenology of her experience, but in what she *sees as* happening.

¹⁷ Were we to take the notion of response to imply that responses cannot be instantaneous, it would thus be misleading to talk about manifestations of instances of *seeing as* as *responses* to one's experience.

¹⁸ In this context, recall that one can knowingly see something as what it is not—one can see what one knows is a cloud as a horse, or what one knows is in fact a 3-D projection as an attacking tiger, say. As one considers the latter, it is plausible to think that at least some of the relevant dispositions may have a long evolutionary history. That said, in stages of our evolutionary history that predate the advent of language, the relevant dispositions to *see things as* some way or other may not have involved responses that should be characterized as conceptual. Instead, it seems more appropriate to characterize them as dispositions to act in certain practical ways. One's account here will depend on what minimal requirements one thinks must be met to consider the practice of a certain species as involving concepts.

Suppose, then, that the disposition triggered in Elijah to see the young black men he encounters as dangerous is comparatively stable. Recall, further, that we are thinking of instances of *seeing as* as of non-committal states. Finally, recall that as per our assumption, Elijah's background view has been modified so as to make him alert to the possibility that things may not be the way he sees them as. Accordingly, even if upon encountering young black men, neither his phenomenology nor the kind of *seeing as* it triggers is modified, it may no longer be rational for him to simply believe that things are the way he sees them as. Depending on how strong Elijah's conviction is that his experience is hijacked by his biases, he may even take his seeing a young black man as dangerous as indicating that quite probably, his experience is hijacked and that the young man in question is not dangerous at all.¹⁹

Note that what in part, what makes this latter kind of case particularly interesting is that it accommodates a case that on Siegel's view does not even come into view: a case in which a hijacked experience makes a positive contribution to the process of arriving at beliefs that are in fact justified. After all, for Elijah to respond to his stably hijacked experience of seeing a given young black man as dangerous by way of transitioning to the belief that the young man is not dangerous at all may not simply be the rational thing to do, given his background view, it may also be a transition to a belief that is in fact justified.

Note also that on a view on which instances of *seeing as* are manifestations of dispositions, these instances turn out to be to some extent autonomous from the subject's background view, since changes in the latter will not automatically entail changes in which instances of *seeing as* are triggered. This raises the question how, in instances of seeing as, conceptual capacities are deployed. Again, on Hanson's view, in epistemically significant seeing, the *seeing as* involved is not just a quasi-automatic response to experience, where having the experience is a separable, prior event. Rather, *seeing as* is part

¹⁹ Some instances of *seeing as* may be accompanied by physical symptoms. If so, the realization that one is currently seeing something as dangerous, say, could be inferential. Upon seeing a young black man, Elijah might, for instance, not notice right away that he sees him as dangerous, but instead conclude that he does on the basis of noticing that his pulse is going faster, that he has started to sweat, or that he has an uneasy feeling in his stomach. It is a strength of the Hansonian account, I think, that it could accommodate an idea that Siegel, too, suggests, i.e. that the content of one's experience does not always need to be introspectively accessible to the subject right away, without leaving it a complete mystery what this content is and what determines why this content is amalgamated with the specific phenomenology at hand.

of experience itself. Perhaps, somewhat like Fish, a defender of this Hansonian position could hold that in experience, concepts are deployed passively, automatically, and non-deliberately, and not—as e.g. on Brewer’s view of registration—actively. But if such a view were proposed, arguably, more would have to be said about how such a passive deployment of conceptual capacities is to be construed.²⁰

8.2 ACTUAL VS. RATIONAL TRANSITIONS & CONCLUDING REMARKS

Surely, the beliefs, judgments, etc. that subjects actually transition to—in the context of a given experience and a given background view—may and perhaps often do come apart from those that it would be rational for them to transition to, in that context. Also, what it is that having a given experience makes rational to transition to, given a background view, need not be an easy thing to find out. Doing so may require extended reflection. Perhaps only highly rational and cognitively rather powerful agents would be able to unerringly do what in light of their experience and their view is in fact rational, or at least rationally permissible.²¹

Here is one way in which, on the Hansonian account under consideration, the irrationality of less than highly rational and cognitively powerful subjects could be captured: as of now, we characterized states of *seeing as* in terms of manifestations of dispositions that are (instantaneously) triggered upon having an experience with a certain phenomenology, relative to a given doxastic context. In addition,

²⁰ One way of addressing this question could be to claim, roughly along the lines suggested in McDowell 2009, that *seeing as* provides the subject with intuitional content that is generated by a passive actualization of one’s conceptual capacities. This passive actualization, one could then hold, is in turn triggered instantaneously as one has an experience with a specific kind of phenomenology. Only as the subject exploits the content thus provided to her by her experience by way of carving it out or articulating it, her conceptual capacities (the very same ones, as McDowell would insist) are deployed actively. Applied to a case of **Stable Amalgamation**, the idea would be that the change in the subject’s background view modifies what beliefs, judgments, and actions it would be rational for the subject to form or issue, given the hijacked content that the passive deployment of the subject’s conceptual capacities in experience makes available to her.

²¹ As noted above, the background view need not always allow one to settle how to respond or how to resolve conflicts and may leave open various different options that are, as far as one can tell, on a par. Also, it could be too poor to allow any kind of decision apart from suspending judgment.

one could suggest that states of *seeing as* themselves are among the conditions that are characteristic of further dispositions, *dispositions to transition*, as we can dub them. *Dispositions to transition*, so construed, have states of *seeing as* among the manifestation conditions that are characteristic of them and manifest, in the subject, as the subject's transitioning to certain responses, such as the subject's forming certain beliefs, issuing judgments, or performing certain actions.²² Importantly, *dispositions to transition* need not be dispositions to transition to beliefs that it would indeed be rational to transition to, given the subject's background view and her experience. Often, they may not. For often, we do not have the resources to act in ways in which we might if only we had the resources to figure out what is rational to do. In such contexts, what determines our response may depend on various other factors in our cognitive and psychological economy. It is these contexts to which the notion of *dispositions to transition* primarily applies.²³

Of course, *dispositions to transition*, too, will plausibly be heavily context-dependent. Moreover, the conditions of manifestation that are characteristic of such dispositions will include a variety of factors besides what the subject believes. Among these, plausibly, would be factors such as the subject's current distribution of attention, cognitive capacities, possible time constraints, which parts of her background view are particularly salient to her in the context at hand, what mood or emotional state she is in, and to what extent she possesses the resources required to adequately contemplate her situation.²⁴

²² This view would capture the plausible thought that as we respond to our experience, we often form beliefs, issue judgments, and act, quasi-automatically. Such automatisms can be, and have been recognized as, problematic. On the view of moral vision developed by Iris Murdoch, for example, moral progress requires overcoming such automatisms, which in turn is facilitated by the subject's efforts to engage in just and selfless attention. See Murdoch 1970, Murdoch 1992, and Rosenhagen *ftnc.* for discussion.

²³ Finding out that one's actual behavior is governed by dispositions of that kind may be psychologically useful. Suppose, for example, that you are told that in stressful situations, you unfortunately tend to respond to certain kinds of experiences—e.g. experiences you have when well-meaning colleagues offer some constructive feedback—by transitioning to beliefs to the effect that your colleagues treat you in a belittling way, and by consequently engaging in excessively angry behavior towards them. Receiving this information may enable you to become more sensitive, whenever you feel angry, to the possibility that your anger may be triggered by stress, and not an adequate response to a belief that is in turn a rational response to your experience. And becoming more sensitive to this possibility might be an important step on the way of modifying the disposition.

²⁴ In manifesting her actual behavior, subjects may thus not respond to their experiences in a way that is rational in light of their background view as a whole. Even so, their responses can still be rational relative to the parts of their background view that are, at the time the response is issued, particularly salient. In the context of considering subjects that act in ways that appear to be less than rational, or operate under various constraints, assessments regarding

Let us take stock. In this chapter, I sought to corroborate that the conception of experience as making rational view-dependent transitions to beliefs, judgments, and actions is perfectly compatible with Hanson's account.

As I illustrated by drawing on the cases of Elijah and Lea, the conception is compatible with his account of empirical constraint suggested in 2.4 and allows us to characterize how such constraint may operate. Relatedly, it can be combined with various ways in which changes in a subject *S*'s background view could in turn affect *S*'s subsequent experience—changes, that is, that in turn result from *S*'s way of resolving conflicts that may arise from having experiences that make it rational to transition to beliefs, etc. that are incompatible with some of the subject's standing beliefs.

As we saw, such changes could a) modify the phenomenology of *S*'s experience while leaving the *dispositions of amalgamation* unaltered, b) leave the phenomenology of *S*'s experience unaltered, but affect the *dispositions of amalgamation* or, c) leave both the phenomenology of *S*'s experience and the *dispositions of amalgamation* unaltered. In all cases, changes in the background view will modify what beliefs, judgments, etc., on the basis of having an experience, it is rational for the subject to transition to.

Finally, we can acknowledge that subjects do not always transition to the beliefs, etc. that in the context they inhabit, it would be rational for them to transition to. This, I suggested could be modeled by way of introducing a further level of dispositions, so-called *dispositions to transition*, which govern not what it would be rational for a subject to do, but what subjects actually do in various contexts and under various limiting constraints.

Incidentally, I do not claim to have provided a full account of **Amalgamation**. But I suggested that on the plausible assumption that there is some initial procedure by which various kinds of

whether a given subject forms beliefs, judgments, or acts in a way that is rationally blameless, given the background view we attribute to her and her experience, may thus depend on one's assessment of how much of the relevant parts of her background view the subject could have been reasonably expected to consider in the circumstances at hand. Of course, on the view under consideration, neither another subject's background view nor their experience will be available to the assessing subject. Accordingly, coming up with assessments of another subject's actions that does justice to their situation will potentially be extremely difficult. This, I think, is a very plausible consequence of the view under consideration.

phenomenology come to be amalgamated with kinds of *seeing as*,²⁵ we can develop a view on which such amalgamation is context-dependent and that, rather than being set in stone, may well change along with the subject's background view, even though some such dispositions may be more stable than others. More would have to be said, e.g. in order to explain what may determine whether a given disposition is more or less stable.²⁶ But arguably, the project of developing such an account further would be a fruitful project to pursue.

The result, again, would be a Hansonian version of what, in 7.1.5, I dubbed the **Variable Content View**. On the specific version of this view sketched in the previous paragraphs, the subject's background view a) may, as it changes, lead to a modification of pre-existing *dispositions of amalgamation* and thus modify what content a given phenomenal state, had in a given context, is associated with,²⁷ and (given Hanson's broadly holistic account of content) b) settles what it is for an experience to have the specific content it does.

a), I contend, constitutes a significant step on the way towards addressing one of the major problems we took to beset Hanson's view in the first chapter, the problem of **Amalgamation**—a problem that, arguably, is structurally analogous to the problem that mars Siegel's account: the lack of an account of **Non-Arbitrariness**. As for the second feature, we were already familiar with it from our initial assessment of Hanson's view. Of course, Hanson's broadly holistic account of experiential content is far from complete and may have to be developed further in several respects. But as I suggested, by providing such an account in the first place, Hanson's view is superior to e.g. Siegel's and enables him to explain something she currently does not: how both Tycho and Kepler can see the sun, see it as the sun, and yet have experiences that differ in content.

²⁵ Roughly put, setting up the relevant *dispositions of amalgamation* may be the result of the training that is a natural part of what is involved in becoming part of a community of language users.

²⁶ Moreover, and clearly, the sketched account of *dispositions to transition*, understood as governing how instances of *seeing as* and beliefs, judgments, etc., are actually (not rationally) related in a subject's mental economy could be expanded, too. Such an account, I suppose, could be useful in the context of analyzing various psychological conditions.

²⁷ Note that changes in background views can also bring about modifications of *dispositions to transition*. If Elijah comes to believe that may be irrational to believe that young black men are what he *sees* them *as*—i.e. as dangerous—this belief need not only change what beliefs it is *rational* for him to transition to upon seeing a young black man as dangerous. Rather, it may well modify what beliefs he is *actually* disposed to transition to.

Let me emphasize again that the conception of the general role of experience I recommend, if combined with Hanson's account, still allows that in the context of a suitable background view, having a given experience can well make it rational to transition to beliefs or judgments that are in fact justified. In this regard, Hanson's account of empirical content is again helpful. For if what the concepts figuring as complements of the *seeing as* locution mean to the subject is to be understood in terms of how the concept is inferentially articulated in the subject's background view, the same facts that specify the inferential articulation of a concept are also facts about what else, from the perspective of the subject's background view, would follow if things are the way she *sees* them *as*. Accordingly, if the background view is sufficiently correct, the way beliefs and concepts are inferentially related in it will largely reflect how properties of objects are actually related to each other and how facts in the world do actually hang together. And in the context of such a view, *seeing* something *as* something will be intelligible in terms of beliefs that are actually justified. And if one accepts, for good reasons, that in one's current circumstances, things are the way one *sees* them *as*, then in the context of such a view, the beliefs one will be rational to transition to will be true and justified. That said, it may be that arriving at beliefs that are in fact justified is a rare feat, or one that if not rare, it is hard to recognize. Perhaps, some will think that a more optimistic conception of the justificatory role of experience should be had. But if so, I contend, the burden is on them to show how such a conception is possible and what, on that conception, must be in place on the part of the subject to make it possible for their experience to play such a role.²⁸

One way of proceeding from here would be to use the account of **Modifiable Amalgamation** just sketched and Hanson's broadly holistic account of experiential content to try and supplement either Siegel's own view or the view suggested in 7.3. More specifically, one might use these accounts as a model to develop Siegelian accounts of **Non-Arbitrariness** and experiential content that are structurally analogous to it. Rather than engaging in this particular exercise, however, I will show, in

²⁸ I return to this issue briefly in my response to the *Receptive Knowledge* complaint in chapter 10.

the next chapter, that defending a conception of the general role of experience on which it makes rational transitions to view-dependent beliefs, judgments, etc. allows us to move yet further away from Siegel than the **Hansonian Variable Content View** does. For as the position recently developed by Anil Gupta illustrates, this conception allows giving up the idea that experience has content altogether. Moreover, Gupta's account adds a crucially important piece to the picture: for Gupta proposes an account of the phenomenology of experience that, I will suggest, if slightly modified, is compatible with all possible cases of **DVEP**.

9.0 GUPTA'S PRESENTATIONALISM¹

One long-standing dispute between proponents of representationalist views of experience and proponents of the relational view revolves around the question whether experience has content. If we ask what motivates this dispute, a plausible response is that representationalists and relationalists differ on what must be the case for experience to play its role.

Both representationalists and relationalists typically think about this role in terms of providing justification or knowledge about the world. The former think that experience can play this role only if it has content. Relationalists, on the other hand, insist that to play this role, experience need not have content. Instead, it must make the mind-independent items we can acquire knowledge about available to us, so that we may refer to, think, and reason about them. Thus, relationalists think that the nature and the primary role of experience, that on which its epistemic function rests, is to put us in touch with such items, which in turn, when it happens, constitutes experiential phenomenology.²

Representationalists may of course be happy to accept that to provide justification or knowledge, experience must—at least sometimes, often perhaps—be a relation to particular mind-independent items. But they need not think that every experience must be construed as such a relation. And even

¹ Gupta calls his view **Dual-Component Presentationalism**, or Presentationalism, because on it, experience consists two separable components: the *presentational complex* and the *phenomenology* (cf. Gupta 2019, §209). Both these concepts will be introduced in due course.

² Again, relationalists, too, think that experience, construed as a relation, puts one in a position to gain knowledge—be that by way of providing knowledge by acquaintance or, as Brewer thinks, by providing reasons for belief, or in virtue of making the objects of such knowledge available to us. In my discussion, I have for the most part side-stepped the discussion of how, on relationalist construals of experience, the latter might play such a role. I was primarily interested in their notion of phenomenology and interested in whether relationalists can provide such an account and accommodate cases of doxastic variation. Since the appurtenant discussion served to cast severe doubts on the various notions of experiential phenomenology that relationalists propose, a discussion of the epistemic role that experiences construed in terms of such notions might play seemed otiose.

with respect to experiences that involve such relations, they may insist that the way experiencing subjects are related to the relevant mind-independent items must be understood not in terms of experiences having a phenomenology, but by way of drawing on the idea that experiences have content.³

A conciliatory attempt to resolve this dialectic is to suggest that to some extent, relationalists and representationalists are both right. Experience may put us in touch with mind-independent items, often even, albeit not always. Moreover, doing so may serve to co-generate the subject's experiential phenomenology. Also, experience may even represent these items as what they are, and then play an important role in the process of justifying beliefs or in gaining knowledge. The **Hansonian Variable Content View** sketched in the previous chapter can be understood as an attempt to provide the outline of such a conciliatory attempt—even though one will reasonably expect that without an account of the phenomenology, relationalists will not be satisfied with it.⁴ As for justification, the account affords room for the following idea: if the experiencing subject has a suitable background view, having an experience can make it rational for her to transition to beliefs and judgments that are in fact justified. Moreover, if a subject in fact transitions to what she is rational to transition to, given her experience and her view, the resulting beliefs and judgments will also be justified conditional on that view.

As for the idea that experience puts us in touch with mind-independent items, recall that for Hanson, what makes the idea of empirical constraint possible is that the phenomenology of experience is at least in part independent of what we believe. We still lack an account of how to think about the phenomenal dimension of experience. But clearly, what Hanson needs is a weaker version of the idea that relationalists insist on as crucial. He needs an account on which the phenomenology of experience is brought about—at least in part, i.e. not necessarily fully—by the mind-independent items the

³ McDowell 2013 makes a suggestion along these lines, as does Schellenberg 2014. For a critical discussion of Schellenberg's account, see e.g. Vuletić 2015.

⁴ As I will suggest below, nothing should prevent us from supplementing the Hansonian view outlined in the previous chapter with Gupta's presentationalist account of the phenomenology of experience. Relationalists, however, are likely to remain dismayed because Gupta eschews, as I think we should, the relationalist commitment to **Constitution**.

subject's experience relates her to. As our extended consideration of various cases of doxastic variation brought out, problems arise regardless of whether we take it, as most relationalists do, that perceptual experience *must* be explained in terms of relations to mind-independent items, or if we take experience, with standard representationalists, to provide, by default, justification based on its putative content. As I argued, none of the relationalist views can satisfactorily deal with all conceivable cases of doxastic variation. As for Siegel, it is, with respect to some possible effects on the phenomenology, unclear whether she can accommodate them and how. And to the extent that Siegel's view succeeds in accommodating cases of doxastic variability, doing so comes at the price of introducing a revisionary and, I suggested, unnecessary conception of epistemic powers, of endorsing a counterintuitive conception of what subjects are rational to do in response to their hijacked experience, and generally a view on which hijacked experiences seem to lack any positive rational epistemic role.

Incidentally, note that if it is right that the conception of experience shared by standard representationalists is centered on a conception of the role of experience as providing justification, Hanson may not be a standard representationalist. He never denies that experience may serve to justify beliefs or knowledge. But arguably, the central problems he seeks to address are different, i.e. that of understanding how experience can be epistemically significant in the first place and that of how observations that are thoroughly theory-laden may still serve to provide empirical constraint. And as I showed in the previous chapter, his answers to these questions are quite compatible with the conception of the general role of experience that I recommend we adopt: that of making rational background-view relative transitions to beliefs, judgments, and actions.

However, as the last chapter brought out as well, to develop the **Hansonian Variable Content View** further, some further work is required. For one, what is needed is a more comprehensive account of **Amalgamation**. How are the relevant dispositions of amalgamation initially set up? If they are modifiable, are all of them modifiable to the same extent? If not, what account should be given of why certain of these dispositions are more robust than others? Moreover, how are we to think about the way in which concepts operate in *seeing as*? If, with Hanson, *seeing as* is construed as being part of experience itself, an account is needed of how, in instances of *seeing as*, concepts are deployed

instantaneously and, perhaps, passively. But even if each of these issues were resolved, we still need an account that neither the representationalists nor the relationalists we considered had to offer: we still need a satisfactory account of the phenomenology of experience.

None of these issues, I think, is unsurmountable. When in what follows, I provide an outline of a view recently developed by Anil Gupta, doing so serves several purposes. For one, I think that the detailed account of experiential phenomenology that Gupta offers is independently interesting since providing such an account addresses one of the major issues that we saw besets each of the views we have so far considered.

Second, I think that Gupta's account can easily be modified such as to be combined with a Hansonian view. For Hansonians, I think, working out such an account would both be possible and attractive, since it addresses one of the Hansonian view's major weaknesses. However, Gupta's own account also suggests that we can avoid some of the tasks that Hansonians face. For Gupta drops the idea that experience has content altogether. In this regard, Gupta's presentationalism is simpler than the **Hansonian Variable Content View**. As I will argue later (in 9.2.3), on Gupta's view, too, *seeing as* talk can serve a useful purpose within empirical debate. Recognizing this function of *seeing as* talk, however, does not entail a Hansonian conception of *seeing as*, i.e. a conception on which concepts are operative in experience itself.

Third, Gupta's account shows that the conception of the general role of experience I recommend, and that I adopt from him, if combined with his account of the phenomenology of experience, yields a powerful account of experience that achieves something none of the views we considered so far could: once we modify it slightly (see 9.1.2), it can fully accommodate the idea that experiential phenomenology may be doxastically variable, while at the same time holding on to the claim that experience plays its role no matter what. As we will see, Gupta's account, too, raises further questions, especially regarding its central notions of presentation and linkages. And though I will not offer much in terms of suggestions as to how to further develop the notion of presentation, I think that with respect to understanding the notion of rational linkages, progress can be made (see 9.2.3).

In sum, I will argue that Gupta's account is both powerful and provides interesting opportunities to develop it further, which may, but need not take the shape of integrating it into a Hansonian framework.

Gupta's presentationalist account is rather complex. For our purposes, it suffices to draw on two of its crucial elements: his account of the phenomenology, couched in terms of the notion of *appearances*, and his idea that background views contain not just beliefs, but also linkages to appearances. In what follows, I sketch and evaluate both these ideas with respect to our topic (9.1 and 9.2) and then sum up the discussion in (9.3).

9.1 APPEARANCES

For relationalists it is, arguably, their commitment to the idea that the nature of experience is to relate the experiencing subject to mind-independent items in her environment that motivates them to develop accounts of experiential phenomenology that are based on an account of **Constitution**. To the extent that these accounts were developed, we found each of them problematic. But at least it was not difficult to discern what the shape of those accounts is supposed to be.

With respect to the representationalists we considered, things were less clear. As we saw in chapter 7, Siegel's notion of the phenomenology of experience is very thin; we learn very little about it besides the fact that experience is said to have a felt character and that phenomenal states are said to be individuated by their phenomenal character—by *what it is like* to have the experience in question. That Siegel does not focus much on experiential phenomenology is, to some extent, unsurprising. After all, on the **(Rich) Content View** she defends, the phenomenal states themselves are that which does the representing. And *qua* representationalist, she takes it that an experience's content is its epistemologically crucial feature. Accordingly, she focuses her attention not on giving an account of what she thinks bears such content—the phenomenal states that, she grants, experience invariably and characteristically involves—but rather on developing an account of what kinds of properties may

constitute the content she takes phenomenal states to convey to the subject. But we learn little not just with respect to which properties phenomenal states are taken to present as instantiated, but also with respect to the question to what extent the properties thus instantiated depend on the mind-independent items in the experiencing subject's environment. Accordingly, on Siegel's view, the relation between contents and mind-independent items remains unclear as well.⁵

Hanson, too, thinks that its content is an experience's crucial feature—after all, it is this content, he thinks, that enables experiences to be epistemically significant. Accordingly, like Siegel, he, too, spends much more energy on developing his specific notion of content in terms of *seeing as*. And though he does indicate, that he thinks of the phenomenal dimension of experience in terms of iconic representation and in terms of a visual field containing elements, he leaves us without a full account of how such iconic representations are to be construed, how they come about, how and to what extent they depend on the mind-independent items in the subject's environment, and how they relate to the conceptual dimension of experience.⁶

Gupta develops his rich account of the phenomenology of experience—which he thinks of in terms of appearances—in the sixth and seventh chapters of his forthcoming book on *Conscious Experience*. To get a grasp of its fundamental features, we need to get an understanding of its central notions: **Subjective Identity**, **Appearance**, **Manifestation**, and, finally, **Phenomenology**.⁷

9.1.1 Subjective Identity, Color Appearances, Projection Effects, and Expert Vision Proper

Beginning with Gupta's notion of **Subjective Identity**, let us observe that he characterizes it as a six-place relation—schematically: $\text{SubjIdentity}(\langle i, p, s \rangle; \langle i^*, p^*, s^* \rangle)$.⁸ The relation thus relates two triples,

⁵ As far as I can see, this hold with just one exception. For as we saw, Siegel claims that only veridical experiences can have objectually singular contents (cf. 7.1.4.2). However, this claim concerns only the role of *object*-concerning content. It teaches us nothing about the properties Siegel takes to be presented, in experience, as instantiated.

⁶ As I suggested in the first chapter, some of this may be due to the dialectic setting from within which Hanson developed his arguments.

⁷ Following Gupta's exposition, I will, at first, use the notions of 'appearance' and 'manifestation' in an intuitive sense. Further details, including his definitions of these notions are provided and discussed in 9.1.2.

⁸ See Gupta 2019, §144. Angle quotes are added for legibility.

indicated by the angle quotes, each of which contains an item (i and i^* , respectively), a perceiver (p , p^*), and a perceptual situation (s , s^*). The schematic characterization, Gupta suggests, may be read as follows:

- (1) the presentation of item i to person p 's consciousness in perceptual situation s is subjectively identical to the presentation of item i^* to person p^* 's consciousness in perceptual situation s^* (Gupta 2019, §144).

Subjective Identity, so construed, is a specific relation that can obtain between two (or more)⁹ instances in which some item is presented, in a specific perceptual situation, to some subject's consciousness, where for an item i to be presented to the consciousness of a given subject p , in a given context s , is for i to *manifest* an *appearance* to p 's consciousness. And if we now let 'Appearance $_s(i, p)$ ' denote the total appearance manifested by i to p 's consciousness in situation s , Gupta stipulates, appearances are governed by the following principle:

- (2) Appearance $_s(i, p) = \text{Appearance}_{s^*}(i^*, p^*)$ iff SubjIdentity($\langle i, p, s \rangle; \langle i^*, p^*, s^* \rangle$)
(Gupta 2019, §145, angle quotes added)

The idea this principle captures is a familiar one: the phenomenology of two experiences can be subjectively identical or—as we put this earlier—phenomenally identical.¹⁰ Consider a white piece of chalk looked at in red light with a red piece of chalk looked at in ordinary sunlight, and a yellow piece of chalk looked at through a magenta filter. In suitable circumstances, to a given subject,¹¹ all three

⁹ Since the relation is an identity relation, it is transitive, reflexive, and symmetrical. Cf. Gupta 2019, §150, fn. 4.

¹⁰ It was one of the issues we raised against Fish's view that it provides no obvious way of accommodating the notion of phenomenal identity. Since on Brewer's view, different items can stand in the same similarity relations, Brewer's view avoids the issue. With respect to Genone, matters remain somewhat less clear; his account of the phenomenology of experience is simply too rudimentary to assess it in this regard. If, however, the phenomenology of experience, as he claims, is constituted by the phenomena one encounters in them, it may be that accommodating and explaining phenomenal identity is difficult for him as well. (Cf. chapter 6, fn. 17.) As we will see further below, Gupta, unlike the relationalists, is not committed to the idea that the phenomenology of experience must be constituted solely by the subject's being related to mind-independent items. Accordingly, Gupta is under no special obligation to account for phenomenal identity of appearances in terms of what may constitute them. That some experiences are subjectively identical can thus be drawn upon as a brute fact.

¹¹ As we saw in 4.3, Fish patently presupposes that the phenomenology of experience upon having experiences with at least partly overlapping presentational characters will at least partly be the same across different (time-slices of) subjects. Note that on Gupta's view, there is no need for the assumption that the appearances one and the same item manifests, in otherwise identical conditions (including not just envioning conditions, but also what subjects believe), to the consciousness of different (time-slices of) subjects must be the same, even if these subjects belong to the same species. Accordingly, while it may well be that a similarity in physiological makeup of different subjects is at least in part what underlies a corresponding similarity in what appearances a given item may manifest to these subjects in suitably similar conditions, on Gupta's account, there is no requirement to assume that this must be so.

items can look exactly the same; they can, that is, manifest the same appearances to the subject's consciousness. Just in case they do, the presentations of these various items to the subject's consciousness yield total appearances that are subjectively identical.¹² The notion of subjective identity between appearances, Gupta suggests, can be relativized to dimensions such as e.g. color, shape, or texture (Gupta 2019, §§146-7). With such relativized notions in hand, it is possible to hold that two appearances are subjectively identical in the dimension of color, but not in the dimension of shape, say. Moreover, presentations of items can stand in other relations as well, such as that of comparative similarity. And such relations, too, Gupta maintains, can be relativized to specific dimensions.

Note that there is something potentially misleading about labeling certain appearances *color* appearances, *shape* appearances, etc.: it could tempt one into thinking that labelling them that way implies that the appearances in question must be appearances manifested by color qualities, shape qualities, etc. Gupta, however, resists this implication:

- (3) Manifestation of color appearance does not require the presence of color quality. If the color of an object is present, though, then the color appearance of the object is identical to the appearance of the color quality. (Gupta 2019, §146)

Focus, first, on the first sentence of passage (3). It acknowledges the following: the manifestation of a color appearance does not require the presence of a color quality. It is, I contend, important in at least two respects. For one, it allows that other things besides color qualities of perceived items can bring about the manifestation of color appearances to the experiencing subject's consciousness. In the context of our discussion, this matters because it makes the resulting position appear to be quite compatible with *projection effects*.¹³ For if color appearances do not require the presence of color qualities, it is conceivable that what accounts for its manifestation is neither the presence of a corresponding color quality nor, perhaps, any kind of mind-independent item at all. In some cases, it could be something else, e.g. some feature or condition of the subject's visual apparatus, a desire she

¹² As Gupta emphasizes, subjective identity differs from subjective indistinguishability. For one, two subjectively identical appearances can nevertheless be distinguishable—e.g. if the subject knows what she is experiencing. Conversely, two subjectively indistinguishable experiences may fail to be subjectively identical, e.g. if the indistinguishability is due to a limitation of attention or memory. Cf. Gupta 2019, §150 for discussion.

¹³ As we will see below, on the account as it stands, this compatibility may have its limits.

harbors, a mood she is in, her distribution of attention, or, and importantly, what she believes. For another, and relatedly, Gupta's acknowledgement allows us to separate so-called color appearances from color qualities even more radically. For the following case seems conceivable: Assume, for simplicity, that due to the similarity in your and my physiological and cognitive makeup, the appearances items manifests, in similar circumstances, to your and my consciousnesses, respectively, are roughly the same. Next, consider an imaginary being whose physiological and cognitive makeup differs from ours significantly. Further, suppose that an appearance is manifested to that being's consciousness that is subjectively identical to what for us is a color appearance.¹⁴ However, for that being, the appearance may be one that is standardly manifested to her consciousness upon being presented with certain shapes. Accordingly, it could be that if you or I were to have an appearance of that sort, it would in ordinary circumstances¹⁵ be rational for us to transition to beliefs and judgments about the *color* of the item we see (supposing there is some such item). For our imaginary being, in contrast, it would, in ordinary circumstances, be rational to transition to beliefs and judgments about the shape of the item it sees (supposing, again, that there is one).

Calling appearances *color* appearances, *shape* appearances, etc. thus betrays a certain bias towards taking the appearances in question to be appearances manifested by colors, shapes, etc. However, if we acknowledge, with Gupta, that having color appearances does not presuppose the presence of color qualities, we should also acknowledge that for Gupta to label them *color* appearances is a matter of expository convenience, not a way of judging prematurely that appearances we group into a specific class must generally be appearances that are typically manifested by a specific kind of item or quality.¹⁶

¹⁴ Gupta explicitly acknowledges that the same appearance may be manifested to two creatures belonging to different species that are separated by a vast stretch of spacetime (cf. Gupta 2019, §148). Moreover, he briefly considers a similar kind of case in the context of his discussion of the relativity of perception (cf. *ibid.*, §159).

¹⁵ More specifically: in circumstances in which we take circumstances to be normal.

¹⁶ Accordingly, it is compatible with Gupta's view that kinds of appearances that in your and my case may be tied together via similarity relations so as to form the set of e.g. *color* appearances or *shape* appearances, could be grouped differently in the consciousnesses of other beings, e.g. beings whose physiological and cognitive makeup differs from ours. They may even be grouped differently in members of the same species (see 9.2.3 for a brief discussion of such a case). In this context, note also the following passage, in which Gupta distinguishes the generality of appearances from that of qualities: "[s]hape appearances are not shapes, and color appearances are not colors. Appearances are like qualities in that they, too, are general items [...]. The generality of appearances, however, is of an entirely different kind than that of qualities. The generality of qualities pertains to the similarities in things, in how things are. The generality of appearances, in contrast, pertains to the similarities in presentations of things to a subject's consciousness.

Returning to passage (3), note that while the first sentence makes room for **projection effects**, the second sentence can seem to rule them out. For suppose it is true, as Gupta claims, that if the color quality of an object is present, the color appearance of the object is identical to the appearance of the color quality. If so, how then could the banana object, once adjusted to an achromatic gray, say, still has an appearance such that subjects form the judgment that it is yellowish?¹⁷

The apparent problem dissolves once we acknowledge that just like other items than color qualities can bring about the manifestation color appearances, such factors can also be part of the perceptual situation in which a given color quality is presented. “In general,” Gupta holds,

- (4) appearances manifested by objects depend on a multitude of factors beyond the object’s properties and relations, including the state of the subject’s sense organs, the subject’s beliefs and desires, and the subject’s attention and actions (Gupta 2019, §145).

If, as per passage (4), what appearance an item manifests can depend on e.g. one’s beliefs, then it can be true that the color appearance of the gray banana object is identical to the appearance of the color quality (where the color quality is gray), while it is also true that this appearance is such that subjects standardly transition to the judgment that the color of the banana object is (still) yellowish. For crucially, from the identity in question nothing follows with respect to what the appearance of the color quality must be. *A fortiori*, it does not follow that the appearance manifested by the gray banana object must be such that subjects form the judgment that the banana object is in fact gray. For in a perceptual situation that contains further factors—a modified visual system, color filters, funny lighting, or, importantly, beliefs—the color appearance of the banana object that is the appearance of the banana object’s color may well be such that subjects form the judgment that it is not gray, but some other color, say, or no color at all. Thus, if we acknowledge that appearances are appearances

[...] [I]f the things manifest the same appearances, then the experiences are subjectively identical. Nothing follows, however, about the qualitative identity of the things or even about their qualitative similarity” (ibid, §152). The last sentence in particular supports the reading suggested.

Incidentally, note that the question how appearances are connected not to the items that manifest them to a subject’s consciousness, but to judgments concerning what they are appearances *of* raises an issue that is structurally analogous to the problems of **Amalgamation** and **Non-Arbitrariness**, respectively. I return to this issue at the end of 9.2.1.

¹⁷ For ease of exposition, I am ignoring that literally, achromatic gray is not a color.

manifested in perceptual situations, and that the latter may contain various modifying factors, we can hold on to the claim that on Gupta's view, **projection effects** are indeed possible. With this in hand, note that Gupta adds some further observations about appearances, suggesting, *inter alia*, that appearances can contain other appearances as constituents, but that there may be no specifiable class of appearances out of which all others can be built (cf. Gupta 2019, §148). The latter allows Gupta to make room for accommodating a more specific effect that we encountered in our initial discussion of Hanson's view (see 2.3.2). Among the effects Hanson draws attention to, recall, is one that occurs when we recognize objects, or alter our way of apprehending them. As we do, the elements of the visual field, as Hanson puts it, can snap into perspective and begin to cohere, perhaps in new or different ways than before.

Back in the second chapter, we had to leave it open whether such effects could be classified as effects on the experiential phenomenology proper. Hanson's account of the phenomenology was simply not rich enough to settle the issue and he himself seemed undecided. However, if, like Gupta, we explicitly drop the idea that the identity of appearances must be construed in terms of their being constituted by certain atomic appearances, there is room for the idea that appearances can contain the same appearances as constitutive elements and yet differ in other ways, e.g. in how the constituting elements cohere.

By including such effects among the possible effects beliefs could have on the phenomenology of the subject's experience, and by granting, in general, that what appearance various items manifest can be shaped by other factors such as the subject's standing beliefs, Gupta is thus also in an excellent position to accommodate cases of **expert vision proper**.¹⁸ Regardless of whether the expert's beliefs affect the individual appearances items manifest to her consciousness or the way these appearances might cohere, Gupta's view provides ample conceptual leeway to accommodate such cases.

Contrast the relationalists. Suppose relationalists grant that expert vision proper is possible and that it may involve a difference between the phenomenology of the expert's experience and that of

¹⁸ For the distinction between expert vision proper and expert judgment, see 6.3.2.

the layperson in how the elements of their experience cohere. If so, the relationalists we considered would have to account for such effects by way of assuming that the expert a), by passively deploying her sophisticated conceptual capacities, lifts special mind-independent properties into the presentational character of her experience (Fish), b) registers visually relevant similarities that the layperson does not (Brewer), or c) perceives appearance properties that typically (but perhaps not necessarily) escape the layperson, or—perhaps—attends to them in a way that the layperson (typically) does not (Genone).

Gupta, on the other hand, is not limited to these options. He is not forced to insist, that is, that the difference in the expert's experiential phenomenology must be explained by drawing either on the putative fact that the expert perceptually relates to different mind-independent items or on a difference in the expert's attention patterns. Of course, such explanations are open to him as well and perhaps, they are at times quite plausible. But Gupta can also accommodate the possibility that such effects are brought about by other factors, e.g. the subject's background beliefs concerning what she faces.¹⁹

9.1.2 Appearances and Manifestation, Total Hallucinations, the Item Requirement on Appearance, and Projection Effects Again

Gupta thinks that appearances figure in perceptual situations broadly construed, i.e. both in experiences that result from one's being perceptually related to mind-independent items and in experiences that are illusions or hallucinations. Thus, unlike Fish, Gupta is not committed to the claim that in hallucinatory experiences, there are no appearances, but only erroneous beliefs to the effect

¹⁹ As Gupta points out, while it is possible that *we* are constituted in such a way that we can only have experiences in which appearances are such that their elements cohere in certain ways if we possess certain concepts (or beliefs), there is no need to assume that the possession of such (or any) concepts serves as a *general* constraint on what appearances could be manifested in a sentient being's experience. Concepts and conceptual items, he thinks, may shape appearances, but are not constitutive of them. Cf. Gupta 2019, §170. Suppose it is true that for us, as we look at a photograph, the phenomenology of our experience is such that the various elements constituting it can cohere in specific ways *only because* we hold certain beliefs concerning the items depicted in the picture—e.g. that one could go around them and that in doing so, the phenomenology of our experience would change in predictable and characteristic ways. Gupta's point, then, is that even if this were true of us, it need not be true of sentient beings in general.

that one has an experience with a particular phenomenology that one would have if one did in fact see what one merely takes oneself to see. Moreover, for Gupta, there is no need to construe hallucinatory phenomenology in terms of subjective indistinguishability. For since there is no need for him to endorse a relationalist account of **Constitution**, there is no corresponding need to treat appearances that are manifested in the context of a hallucination as dependent upon appearances that are manifested in non-hallucinatory experiences.²⁰ As I will argue below, some work is needed to make Gupta’s account of hallucination fully compatible with the possibility of **projection effects**. First, however, we need to introduce some more terminology. So far, we have surveyed Gupta’s notion of **Subjective Identity**, but we have also made ample use of his notions of ‘appearance’ and ‘manifestation.’ Here, then, are the principles that, Gupta stipulates, serve to define both these notions:

- (5) x is **manifested in p ’s consciousness in situation s** iff, for some item i , x is a constituent of $\text{Appearance}_s(i, p)$
- x is an **appearance** iff, for some subject p and some situation s , x is manifested in p ’s consciousness in situation s . (Gupta 2019, §148)

Note that on Gupta’s stipulation, any item i is an item that is *presented* to a person’s consciousness. If so, it follows from these principles that for every appearance, there must be some item that is presented to the consciousness of the subject in which the appearance is manifested. Let us call this commitment the **Item Requirement on Appearances**—or **IRA** for short.

IRA raises several questions. For one, it raises the question how Gupta accommodates total hallucinations. After all, one may well think that in such cases, no suitable items are available that could manifest appearances in the subject’s consciousness. In response, Gupta offers a very liberal

²⁰ Local dependencies may and perhaps do often obtain. It could, for instance, be that an appearance that is manifested in a subject’s consciousness in the context of a hallucination is manifested in part due to an erroneous belief about what to expect in the context at hand. The banana case could be construed that way. Accordingly, that the banana object, once adjusted to what is actually an achromatic gray, manifests an appearance that in the test subjects’ mental economy is linked with judgments and beliefs to the effect that the perceived object is yellowish, could be explained in part by drawing on the following fact: having appearances associated with, and making rational transitions to, beliefs and judgments to the effect that the object seen is yellow is the default situation in non-hallucinatory experiences of bananas. To the extent that this fact about non-hallucinatory cases plays an explanatory role in what generates the phenomenology of the hallucination, that phenomenology depends on facts about non-hallucinatory cases. It is, however, equally conceivable that a subject could have a hallucinatory experience that is partly or fully constituted by appearance for which, in the subject’s mental economy, there are no (or no default) non-hallucinatory counterparts.

view on what the items that manifest appearances can be. Importantly, he claims that such items are not limited to external items. Rather, they can also be internal items such as mental images or brain states (cf. Gupta 2019, §143; §163). Moreover, he also maintains, in line with his explicitly empiricist outlook, that the question which elements are presented in a particular hallucination can be determined only empirically. “A logico-philosophical inquiry,” he contends, “must stay silent on the issue” (Gupta 2019, §163; similarly: §143). I confess that I am not sure how one would determine empirically that the item presented in a total hallucination is a mental image. Moreover, while I can well imagine that a brain state might *cause* a total hallucination, I am less certain how to understand the sense of *presentation* on which, in a total hallucination, a brain state could be *presented* to a subject’s consciousness.

In general, Gupta spends a lot of effort on developing a liberal account of presentation. In chapter 5 of Gupta 2019, he carefully separates ‘presentation’ from ‘acquaintance,’ argues against restrictions on ‘presentation’ issuing from the so-called *transparency of experience*, and later, in chapter 6, insists that the presentational directedness of experience differs from the intentional directedness of thought (for the latter, see Gupta 2019, §164). In light of these efforts, the worry that arises in the context of his suggestion how to accommodate total hallucinations can be put as follows: if presentation is construed as liberally as Gupta suggests, the contours of the concept ‘presentation’ become less distinct. Put somewhat pointedly, the more effort Gupta spends on elucidating what presentation is *not*, the less clear it becomes what remains there for presentation to be. Accordingly, when Gupta entertains it as an empirical possibility that the items that, in a total hallucination, are presented to the subject are mental images or brain states, it is not clear what that suggestion amounts to.

Let us consider a few conceivable responses. A simple way of dodging the issue of total hallucinations entirely would be for Gupta to claim that total hallucinations are impossible. However, he explicitly rejects this strategy. For one, he acknowledges the Charles Bonnet Syndrome as possible evidence for the occurrence of visual hallucinations in the blind—taking it, apparently, that such hallucinations do not involve the presentation of external items. Moreover, and more importantly, he reiterates his earlier point: a logical inquiry should not take a stand on factual matters (cf. *ibid.*, §161,

fn. 14).²¹ Here is an alternative response: it could be held that what the case of a total hallucination caused by a brain state indicates is that the *presentation* relation just is a specific subspecies of the *causal relation*, perhaps one that meets some further conditions. If so, then for a brain state to cause a hallucination could be perfectly compatible with its being an item that is presented in the total hallucination it causes. However, for this to be an informative response, we still need an account of what, according to Gupta, the conditions characteristic of presentation are such that brain states that cause total hallucinations can in doing so count as being presented to the subject’s consciousness.²²

A third response would be to drop **IRA**. However, since **IRA** follows from the definitions provided in passage (5), doing so would require modifying them. There are several shapes such a modification could take. For one, instead of suggesting, as Gupta does, the following biconditional

- (i) x is manifested in p ’s consciousness in situation s **iff**, for some item i , x is a constituent of $\text{Appearance}_s(i, p)$,

Gupta could defend a weaker claim, such as the following conditional:

- (ii) x is manifested in p ’s consciousness in situation s **if**, for some item i , x is a constituent of $\text{Appearance}_s(i, p)$.

Doing so would allow that appearances can be manifested in a subject’s consciousness in other ways than via presentation. However, for Gupta to embrace (ii) would leave him both without a definition of ‘manifestation’ and—given the way in which, according to passage (5), the notions of ‘manifestation’ and ‘appearance’ are interrelated—without a complete definition of ‘appearance’ as well. Accordingly, a more attractive response might be to hold on to the biconditional form of (i), but add a further disjunct to its right-hand side.

²¹ How the Charles Bonnet Syndrome is to be characterized remains a contentious matter. Accordingly, it could turn out that in the relevant hallucinatory episodes, items *are* presented to the subject’s consciousness after all, e.g. via other modalities. For the purposes of the following discussion, I will bracket this concern. I anyway agree with Gupta that the possibility of total hallucinations is a factual matter that a philosophical inquiry should not prejudge.

²² A related point is the following: though Gupta mentions non-existent items, fictional particulars and uninstantiated sensible profiles as examples that cannot be presented to a subject’s consciousness in experience (cf. Gupta 2019, §164, some further restrictions can be found in §204), he leaves it open what principle determines whether items can or cannot be presented to consciousness. In light of this fact, characterizing presentation as a specific kind of causal relation would already be instructive. For on the assumption that neither neutrinos, abstract objects, or a fully transcendent god can causally interact with us, it would then follow that neither of the above could be presented to consciousness, either.

Before we consider a suggestion of that shape, we need to introduce two further notions: that of the *phenomenology* of an experience and the notion of *presentational complex* Π_e that it draws on. ‘Presentational complex’ is merely Gupta’s label for the totality of items presented to consciousness in an experience e . Again, his conception of what such items can be is very liberal. They “may be physical or mental; they may be external to the subject’s body or internal to it. Even brain events and processes may be presented in an experience” (Gupta 2019, §143). Here, then, is his characterization of ‘phenomenology.’

- (6) The phenomenology of e (notation: Φ_e) may now be characterized thus: it is the appearance manifested in e by the presentational complex Π_e :

$$\Phi_e =_{\text{Df}} \text{Appearance}_e(\Pi_e). \text{ (Gupta 2019, §149)}$$

On the resulting notion, the phenomenology of an experience is constituted by the appearances manifested in it. And given that the notion of manifestation we get from (i) entails **IRA**, it follows that there can be no appearances in the absence of items that are presented to the subject’s consciousness. Consequently, there can be no experience with a phenomenology unless some item is presented to the subject’s consciousness. **IRA** is thus a distant cousin of the **General Constraint on Thin Looks** discussed in 5.3 and, more fundamentally, a way for Gupta to retain the broadly relationalist idea that for experiential phenomenology to occur, there must be some item the subject is related to.²³

For our purposes, this is especially significant since **IRA** entails a restriction on the possibility of **projection effects**: on the assumption that beliefs do not typically—or maybe in us cannot—figure as elements of the presentational complex, Gupta’s view, as it stands, rules out that a total hallucination could be such that while no items are presented to the hallucinating subject’s consciousness, the subject still undergoes a hallucinatory experience, one caused directly by her beliefs.²⁴

²³ Relationalists and Gupta spell out this idea differently, however. First, on relationalist accounts, the item in question must be a mind-independent item, whereas Gupta’s account of what such items could be is more liberal. Second, for relationalists, the relevant relation is typically that of acquaintance. For Gupta, it is that of presentation.

²⁴ Pending further restrictions on the notion of presentation, there may be nothing in principle that would rule out beliefs as elements of the presentational complex. However, if we ask how it is that beliefs may affect what appearances being presented with some items are manifested in the subject’s experience, there is no need to assume that an answer must draw on the assumption that beliefs are part of the presentational complex itself. A more plausible response (which Gupta confirmed in conversation) is the following: various factors may affect what appearances a given set of items may manifest. These may also include what beliefs one holds. Note, however, that in the kind of

Again, it could turn out that such hallucinations do not, or for some reason could not, occur. But if, with Gupta, we insist that a logical inquiry should not take a stand on factual matters, there is some motivation to accommodate such cases. Accordingly, there is some *prima facie* motivation to drop **IRA**.

This brings us back to the question how (i) could be modified. Here is an example:

(i*) x is manifested in p 's consciousness in situation s **iff** there is either some item i such that for i , x is a constituent of $\text{Appearance}_s(i, p)$ or some non-empty set of beliefs B that brings about x as a constituent of Φ_e .

Accepting (i*), however, is a non-conservative solution to the problem and will have further consequences. For one, the definition of the phenomenology of experience provided in (6) would have to be adjusted to accommodate the possibility that the total phenomenology may be partly or fully constituted by appearances caused by beliefs. ' $\Phi_e =_{\text{Df}} \text{Appearance}_e(\Pi_e)$,' in other words, would have to be replaced by a suitably modified alternative, such as, e.g. " $\Phi_e =_{\text{Df}} \text{Appearance}_e(\Pi_e)$ and $\text{Appearance}(B)$,' where ' $\text{Appearance}(B)$ ' would stand for appearances brought about by some suitable set of the subject's beliefs. Relatedly, accepting this proposal may force Gupta to accept a somewhat bifurcated strategy of capturing the way beliefs may affect appearances in various conditions. Presumably, in cases where actual worldly items are being presented to a subject's consciousness anyway, effects had by beliefs would be modeled by way of listing the relevant beliefs among the factors that jointly determine the perceptual situation. In total hallucinations caused by beliefs, in contrast, such beliefs would not figure in the perceptual situation parameter, but separately, and thus be attributed a more autonomous role.²⁵

This last observation leads to the fourth and, I suggest, most attractive way of addressing the issue. According to it, an empty presentational complex constitutes a merely formal item that can nevertheless be presented to a subject's consciousness. This is the most attractive strategy since pursuing it is maximally conservative with respect to Gupta's extant account. For one, it leaves all of Gupta's definitions intact. And on a modified characterization of what items can be that includes an

case we are considering, this suggestion does not help. For *ex hypothesi*, in the kind of total hallucinations we are considering there are no items that are presented to consciousness, whose appearances beliefs could then affect.

²⁵ There need to be nothing wrong with pursuing such a strategy, of course. Having a uniform account, such as in the next suggestion, would certainly be more elegant, but good solutions need not be elegant.

empty presentational complex as a merely formal item, the proposal also respects **IRA**. At the same time, projection effects that result in total hallucinations are no longer be ruled out. In line with Gupta's insistence that factual matters should not be prejudicated philosophically, **IRA**, on this construal, imposes no constraints on the possibility of **projection effect** at all. Moreover, the bifurcated strategy of capturing how beliefs may affect appearances that was noted in the third suggestion is avoided as well. For if being presented with a merely formal item—an empty presentational complex—is taken to yield the manifestation of an appearance as well, the beliefs that ultimately account for the total hallucination can be modeled as usual: as figuring in the situation parameter.

Finally, if we also allow that a person's brain states can be part of the perceptual situation parameter, the solution that works for hallucinations that are caused by projection effects should carry over to hallucinations caused by brain states as well. In other words, total hallucinations caused by brain states could simply be the appearances manifested by the presentation of an empty representational complex, which is then modified by the brain state.

Of course, a lingering question remains: is Gupta's account of presentation compatible with accommodating empty presentational complexes as items? To answer this question, arguably, a more explicit account of the positive features of presentation is still needed.

This concludes our brief sketch of Gupta's account of appearances. As we saw, as it stands it already accommodates a large variety of **projection effects** and can be modified so as to be fully compatible with them, i.e. also with the possibility that **projection effects**, too, could in some cases be what accounts for total hallucinations. Moreover, the view also provides room for the kind of effects discussed in 2.3.2—effects that concern, in Hanson's terms, how the elements of the visual field *cohere* or *pull together* and that may well be a feature characteristic of **expert vision proper**. Like Hanson's account aspires to be, Gupta's account, if modified as suggested, thus turns out to be fully compatible with the doxastic variability of experiential phenomenology. What allows Gupta's account of the phenomenology of experience to accommodate such effects is that, like Hanson, he is not committed to the relationalist idea that experiential phenomenology must be constituted solely by the

subject's being related to mind-independent items. Such relations may play an important role in bringing about the appearances that constitute experimental phenomenology, often even, but they need not always do so, nor need such relations be the only factor that can play such a role.

Unlike Hanson, Gupta provides a much richer account of how to understand experiential phenomenology. Crucially, unlike Hanson's account, Gupta's account makes it intelligible in what way experiential phenomenology depends on the mind-independent items in the subject's environment, since in many if not most cases, it will be these items that account at least in part for the appearances manifested in consciousness. Accordingly, we can combine the revamped Hansonian account discussed in the previous chapter with Gupta's presentationalist account of experience. Doing so is simple: we simply propose that the *dispositions of amalgamation* introduced in the previous chapter take as input experiences as construed on Gupta's presentationalist account. And on the resulting view, we can fully cash out the notion of empirical constraint in a way that on Hanson's original account was impossible. For supplementing Hanson's view with Gupta's presentationalist account of experience allows us to explain how the phenomenology of experience can develop in ways that are independent of the subject's expectations.

Gupta's notion of presentation, I suggested, stands in need of further precisification. Still, I think that Gupta's account of the phenomenology of experience is powerful, interesting, and rather versatile. As suggested, it can be used to supplement the revamped Hansonian view developed in 8.1, which remedies the last remaining deficiency we listed with respect to Hanson's view at the outset of chapter 8. Similarly, together with an account of **Non-Arbitrariness**—modeled, perhaps, on the Hansonian account of **Modifiable Amalgamation** we discussed earlier—one may try to use Gupta's account to supplement the Siegelian account discussed in 7.3 or even the account Siegel suggests. As for the relationalist accounts, we will have to observe that Gupta's account is incompatible with them since in contrast to them, he has no need for a commitment to **Constitution**. Moreover, on the modification I argued we should accept, the relationalist core tenet that experience is inevitably a relation between subjects and mind-independent items is dropped for good. Still, for relationalists who, like Genone, are willing to embrace an account of experience (not just of perception) that

endorses phenomenal pluralism, modeling their account of experiential phenomenology more closely on Gupta's account of appearances could be a fruitful strategy to develop their views further.

In the context of our inquiry, going back to these various views and trying to develop them further would be a distraction. Instead, I will end this investigation by focusing on the conception of the general role of experience as of making rational view-dependent transitions to beliefs, judgments, etc. In the next section, I sketch how on Gupta's account, this conception operates. Doing so requires that we understand how Gupta addresses the question that drove Hanson to endorse an idea Gupta eschews—viz. that concepts must be operative in experiences themselves. This question, to wit, is the question how experience can be epistemically significant. To understand Gupta's response, it will be crucial to understand his conception of *rational linkages*.

9.2 LINKAGES

Since the conception of the general role of experience as of making rational view-dependent transitions to beliefs, judgments, etc. is due to Gupta, the question we need to address in what follows is not primarily whether it is compatible with his account, which we will grant, but rather, how on his account, this conception interact with his account of appearances discussed in the previous subsection.

How, then, is it, on Gupta's view, that in the context of having a certain background view, for a subject to undergo a certain experience makes it rational to make certain transitions to beliefs, judgments, etc.? A crucial part of Gupta's answer is that according to him, background views are more than just a set of beliefs. Here is how Gupta puts it in a footnote in Gupta (2018):

- (7) A view includes beliefs, conjectures, and other propositional attitudes. It also includes linkages to experience, which cannot be captured through propositional attitudes. (Gupta 2018, p. 35, cf. also Gupta 2019, §100)

Such linkages, Gupta asserts are “rational” and they are “established” (Gupta 2006, p. 81) or “instituted by an experience” (Gupta 2018, p. 36). Similarly, he states the following:

- (8) Because of your visual experience, a *rational linkage* obtained between your view and your judgment, which made your *move* to the judgment rational. The experience did not render your judgment rational; it rendered your transition, your move, to the judgment rational (Gupta 2019, §73).

As these passages indicate, Gupta endorses the following three theses:

Linkages in Views

Rational linkages are components of background views.

Linkage Institution

Rational linkages are instituted by experience.

Ineffability

Rational linkages between views and experiences cannot be captured through propositional attitudes.²⁶

The first thing to note is that like on the Hansonian Variable Content View we considered in the previous chapter, on Gupta's view, too, for experience to play its general role, whether the phenomenology of the subject's visual experience has been affected is completely irrelevant. Provided that the subject's view contains rational linkages that relate the relevant appearance to beliefs, judgments, etc. that upon having the relevant experience it would be rational for the subject to transition to, experience will play its rational role—no matter what the experience is or how it came about.

On Gupta's account, the concept of *rational linkages* has not received as much attention as, I think, it deserves. In the following sections, I will thus comment on the three claims listed above. In doing so, I hope to arrive at a better understanding of what these linkages are, how they come to be, in what sense we may or may not be able to talk about them, and how in views, linkages relate to beliefs.

²⁶ The concept of rational linkages, I think, is interesting, but stands in need of further elaboration. In Byrne et al. 2018, I note, in effect, that if we accept both **Linkages in Views** and **Ineffability** and also hold, as Gupta does, that views can be accepted, the question arises how we are to understand what it is to accept such ineffable linkages. In response, Gupta suggests that to accept does not mean that we accept linkages directly. Rather, he asserts "the acceptance of these linkages is reflected in observational uses of concepts and in the issuance of perceptual judgments" (Byrne et al 2018, Response to Rosenhagen). Further questions concern how linkages are related to the other components a background view is said to contain. Do they jointly determine which linkages a view contains or could two views be the same and yet contain different linkages? Conversely, does the presence of certain linkages constrain a view's further components? If so, how? In 9.2.3, I offer the beginning of a response to some of these issues.

Let me acknowledge that the ensuing considerations remain incomplete in at least two important respects. For one, I do not consider all the various linkages that Gupta explicitly accommodates. In particular, I completely ignore his highly interesting discussion of the linkages he thinks views contain between experiences and ostensive definitions (see Gupta 2019, chapter 8).

For another, the suggestion I offer in 9.2.3 of how rational linkages could be construed as being contained in a view remains tentative. That said, since Gupta, too, owes us an account of how rational linkages relate to the other components he takes views to contain, even tentative suggestions should count as progress.

9.2.1 Linkages in Views

The idea that views contain linkages to experiences is a crucial component of Gupta's position. It is an essential element of his account of how experience can be epistemically significant while lacking content. Consider what it would be for a view to lack linkages to experiences. Suppose, that is, we took a view to be nothing but a body of beliefs, conjectures, suppositions, and other propositional attitudes. Moreover, suppose we accepted Gupta's account of experience in terms of appearances. Now consider that some items are presented to a given subject's consciousness, so that she undergoes an experience and has appearances manifested in her consciousness. How, then, could these appearances have any kind of bearing on the subject's view? Without the notion of linkages, this would remain a completely open question. Just like Hanson suggested, experience, construed in terms of appearances, would amount to nothing but kaleidoscopy. To explain how experience can be epistemically significant, then, experiences and views must be linked in some way.

Linkages, Gupta claims, are components of views. What linkages? Arguably, linkages between views and experiences come in various flavors. For instance, some linkages between experiences and views may be such that having certain experiences *causally* triggers view-relative transitions to certain beliefs, judgments, etc. Linkages of that kind would be such that the view-relative relations they establish between appearances and transitions to beliefs, judgments, etc. would be dispositional.

In this context, the following passages are instructive:

- (9) A perceptual judgment such as “that is a yellow banana” possesses [...] a phenomenological profile: appearances whose manifestations *prompt* you to judge, for example, “that is a yellow banana” [...] (Byrne et al. 2018, Response to Rosenhagen, emphasis added).
- (10) Manifestation of different appearances will now *prompt* you to issue the judgment “that is yellow.” Your new view is now constituted by different experiential linkages (Byrne et al 2018, Response to Rosenhagen, emphasis added).

Moreover, consider the following passage in which talk of dispositions figures explicitly:

- (11) Your present view contains, for example, links between certain kinds of experiences and the concept “bird,” links in virtue of which you are *disposed* to predicate the concept “bird” of some objects when you undergo those kinds of experiences. (Gupta 2019, §77, emphasis added)

Taken together, these passages strongly support a dispositional conception of how manifestations of appearances in the subject’s consciousness are linked to transitions to perceptual judgments and, as passage (11) indicates, predications of concepts.

If construed in dispositional terms, the relation Gupta takes to obtain between appearances and transitions to perceptual judgments (etc.) appears to be very much like the relation between perceived appearances and judgments as Genone construes it (at least on the causal-dispositionalist reading, see 6.4.3). Likewise, it is similar to the relations between phenomenal states and beliefs, judgments, etc. that I suggested can be taken to obtain on the **Hansonian Variable Content View** discussed in the previous chapter. More specifically, if linkages are dispositions, then on Gupta’s account, such dispositions would seem to play a role that is analogous to the joint effect had by *dispositions of amalgamation* introduced in 8.1.4 and the *dispositions of transition* introduced in 8.2.

To reiterate, recall that on the **Hansonian Variable Content View**, having a phenomenal state is construed as triggering, in the subject, (view- and) context-relative dispositions, *dispositions of amalgamation*, to *see things* certain ways. Moreover, the instances of *seeing as* thus triggered are in turn part of the set of conditions that jointly trigger context-relative *dispositions of transition*, whose manifestation in the subject includes the transition to certain beliefs, judgments, etc. Analogously, Gupta’s account could be interpreted as involving a commitment to the following idea: in the context of a given view and the (dispositional) linkages to experiences involving specific appearances that it

contains, having an experience with a certain phenomenology triggers transitions to certain beliefs, judgments, etc. Since Gupta has no need for a notion of *seeing as*, he may have no corresponding need for *dispositions of amalgamation*. On his view, *dispositions to transition* would thus take a different input than on the Hansonian conception. *Inter alia*, such inputs would involve not instances of *seeing as* that are themselves triggered by suitable *dispositions of amalgamation*, but rather experiences directly or—more specifically—the various appearances these experiences involve. Still, like proponents of the **Hansonian Variable Content View**, Gupta, too, seems to hold that *dispositions to transition* to certain beliefs, judgments, etc. are part of what governs a subject's responses to her experience.²⁷ For Gupta, however, linkages connecting views to experience could not exclusively be linkages of the dispositional kind just proposed. For on the interpretation just offered, linkages connect experiences and views in a merely *causal* way. As such, they may well govern what transitions experiencing subjects *actually* exhibit. If these dispositional linkages were the only kind of linkage tying views to experiences, it would remain unclear why Gupta characterizes linkages as *rational*. More generally, it would remain mysterious how experience could be playing what according to Gupta (and I following him, since chapter 7.3) is the central role of experience: to make rational view-dependent transitions to beliefs, judgments, etc.

To get a notion of rational linkages, we must thus assume that having certain appearances, in the context of a view, not actually, but *rationally* prompts certain judgments, beliefs, etc. (what is actually prompted and what is rationally prompted may of course come apart). Let us add one more passage to the ones we have already noted:

²⁷ It may, however, not be plausible to construe such linkages as linkages that obtain between experiences and a subject's *view*. For recall that on the analogous account sketched in 8.2, among the conditions of manifestation, I listed not just beliefs, but all sorts of other factors such as desires, hopes, time constraints, cognitive resources, or moods. And at least according to Gupta's standard characterizations of what a view is (see, for example, Gupta 2019, §77), some of these factors will not be included. A broader and to that extent more helpful notion to specify this particular kind of linkages might thus be the one Siegel favors: the notion of an *outlook* on the world—if we understand this notion to capture more than propositional attitudes of various kinds. The relevant linkages could then be characterized as dispositions to respond to an experience, given an outlook and, perhaps, further factors such as e.g. time constraints. I think that if we consider how experience operates in the context of other areas of philosophical thinking, e.g. when we think about moral perception or try to reconstruct how experience may have contributed to the process of conceptual and theoretical change in specific episodes from history of science, having a broader notion than that of a view is essential. For present purposes, however, I will bracket the issue.

- (12) It is the character of a view that determines which judgments are *perceptually entailed* by an experience: the view links experiences with certain judgments. It is because of these linkages that the *occurrence* of an experience renders rational transitions to certain judgments. (Gupta 2019, §77, emphasis added)

This passage confirms our suspicions. In it, the relevant relation between having an experience and perceptual judgments cannot be merely causal-dispositional—Gupta’s reference to perceptual entailment forbids a construal in purely causal terms. Instead, the idea is the following: for every possible experience, a view contains a set of linkages that determine what, if an experience with a certain phenomenology were had, it would be rational to transition to.²⁸ Accordingly, once a specific experience is had, there will be some response that it is rational for the subject to transition to.

Again, recall that a view may, but need not determine one single response as the rational one, nor need responses that would be rational go beyond that of suspending belief or issuing the uninformative judgment that an experience was just had (cf. the corresponding remarks in 8.2). Furthermore, as we saw in our discussion of empirical constraint in 8.1.2, the responses that having a specific experience makes rational to transition to, in the context of a given background view, need not support that view. A view, in other words, also contains linkages to experiences that make it rational to transition to judgments, etc. that would conflict with the view. Thus, as a result of transitioning to e.g. beliefs that, in the context of a background view and upon having a certain experience, it is rational to transition to, the subject may come under rational pressure to revise the view in some way to resolve the conflict.

Again, the important upshot of the assumption that views contain linkages of this kind to experiences makes it intelligible how experiences can bear on our beliefs in the first place. It is thus this very assumption that enables Gupta to respond to Hanson’s implicit challenge—the challenge that on views on which experience lacks content, it is mysterious how experience could be epistemically significant. And in contrast to relationalist responses to this challenge, on Gupta’s view,

²⁸ Perhaps more plausibly, linkages may link perceptual judgments, beliefs (and, incidentally, non-propositional components of the latter: i.e. concepts) not (or not just) with total experiences, but with individual appearances such experiences contain. For our purposes, this complication can be bracketed.

Let us observe that the assumption that a view contains rational linkages to *every* possible appearance is crucial. If we had reason to assume that linkages to some appearances were absent, such reasons would be reasons to assume that there are some cases—viz. cases that involve having experiences that involve the manifestation of untethered appearances—in which experience could not play its rational role.

there is no need to assume that the epistemic significance of experience must in every case rest on its ability to put us in touch with mind-independent items, or in its ability to provide reasons, justification, or knowledge by acquaintance.

On the resulting view, thus, views²⁹ will contain at least two kinds of linkages to experience: a) linkages that *actually* and linkages that b) *rationally* prompt transitions from having various experiences involving various (perhaps even all possible) appearances to responses on the part of the subject.³⁰ With this distinction in hand, we are ready to move on to the next claim: **Linkage Institution**. Before we do, let us note in passing that the idea that views contain linkages to all possible experiences raises a question structurally analogous to questions we raised for both Hanson and Siegel.

On Hanson's view, recall, conceptual elements must be hooked up with phenomenal states, which gives rise to the problem of **Amalgamation**. Analogously, on Siegel's view, phenomenal states must be related to the properties they are taken to present, which gives rise to the problem of **Non-Arbitrariness**. On Gupta's view, finally, experiences must be hooked up, via linkages, both with actual responses and with responses it would, on the view in question, be rational to transition to upon having such experiences. Accordingly, for Gupta, the question how **Amalgamation** and **Non-Arbitrariness** are initially set up has an obvious counterpart. To have a name for it, we can call it the question of **Linkage Setup**—the question, that is, how linkages are initially set up.

As we saw in the previous chapter, if Hansonians endorse an account of **Modifiable Amalgamation**, the problem of Amalgamation can, to a certain extent, be made less pressing. For on

²⁹ Again, perhaps 'outlooks' is the better expression (see fn. 27).

³⁰ Such linkages may link views with various responses, such as judgments, beliefs, and actions. As indicated in the introduction, Gupta explicitly acknowledges further linkages between views and to acceptance of beliefs and views, to recognitions of commitment, and to ostensive definitions (see Gupta 2018, fn. 6; Gupta 2019, chapter 8). In the context of the latter, note that the notion of linkages may serve to develop a fuller account of conceptual content. On such an account, conceptual content would involve not just the way the relevant concepts are inferentially articulated, but also linkages between these concepts and appearances. Arguably, such linkages would constitute what Gupta calls phenomenological profiles (cf. Gupta 2018, section 32, passage (9) quoted from Byrne et al 2018 above, as well as Gupta 2019, §§189-190; §271, and in general: Gupta 2019, chapter 8, for his account of the relation between experience and concepts). Such an account, I think, could well be used to supplement e.g. the broadly holistic notion of content that figures in the **Hansonian Variable Content View**. It was the possibility of supplementing that account that explains why I kept insisting (mainly in footnotes) that while a concept's inferential articulation in a given subject's background view is, on Hanson's view, an essential part of what that concept means for that subject, inferential articulation may not yet provide the complete account. Developing such an account, however, goes beyond the purview of the current project, though I will briefly return to the idea in 10.3.1 and in 10.4.

the assumption that there is some way in which, perhaps as part of the natural process of learning one's first language, the relevant *dispositions of amalgamation* are set up initially, a story can then be developed as to how such these dispositions can change in response to one's experience, including one's interactions with others, as the discussion of Elijah's case brought out. If this move is open to Hansonians, Gupta can, of course, make it, too. As the following passage indicates, he does:

(13) The idea behind the Ur-View is this: We humans come into the world not only with a particular sensory apparatus that shapes our perception but also with a tendency to take the world to be a certain way. Nature endows us with a view. There is variation here, to be sure, just as there is variation in sensory apparatuses. Still, the variations cluster around a center, and I am calling this center *the Ur-View*. This is the view that children acquire at an early age. It is also the view that evolves into a commonsense view as the human child explores the world and that, later, can evolve into a sophisticated scientific view as the child receives an education (Gupta 2019, §365).

The idea of such an Ur-View, Gupta acknowledges, is a fiction, but, he claims, a useful one (cf. Gupta 2019, §365, fn. 7). Importantly, it will be useful if supplemented with a story how such an Ur-View can evolve by way of integrating beliefs, judgments, etc. that subjects rationally transition to in response to their experience and that may require them to revise their views. It is a large and important part of Gupta's overall project to provide such an account of view revision, albeit a part that here, we need not review.³¹ For present purposes, what matters is that on each of the accounts we considered, the question how an initial view is established is one that remains to some extent left unanswered. And to the extent that the more general question can be raised whether there are any features that something must have in order to be a view in the first place, this question remains open to be further explored as well.³² A final question that, for now, remains open, is the question how exactly it is that linkages are parts of views. I will return to this issue in 9.2.3.

³¹ The relevant account of empirical revision is already present in in Gupta 2006 and is supplemented in Gupta 2019, especially in chapters 9-11.

³² I briefly return to this issue in 10.3.1 and in 10.4. It should be acknowledged that Gupta accepts, both in Gupta 2006 and in Gupta 2019, that there are at least three a priori requirements that govern views that are admissible starting points for a process of view-revision: coherence, non-rigidity, and receptivity. See Gupta 2006, chapter 4, and Gupta 2019, §95. for discussion. That said, these constraints are imposed on initial views based on the argument that views that are inadmissible, if confronted with possible streams of experience, exhibit a dynamic behavior that prevents revision. These views behave, as it were, like the pathologically vain Vivek in that they are incapable of accepting certain revisions. Importantly, however, on Gupta's view, the restrictions on initial views flow from assumptions on what dynamic behavior a view must exhibit to be such as to serve the goals of empirical inquiry (see Gupta 2006, pp.

9.2.2 Linkage Institution

According to **Linkage Institution**, rational linkages are instituted by experience. In this context, I wish to make two observations. First, given that the linkages referenced in **Linkage Institution** are *rational* linkages, we can ignore the other linkages discussed in the previous section—linkages, that is, that we can construe as a Gupta-style variant of Hansonian *dispositions to transition*. Second, note that when he talks about what experience institutes, Gupta’s usage is not completely uniform; in some instances, for instance, he refers to what the given in experience institutes not in terms of rational linkages, but as rational transitions (cf. Gupta 2019, §75, §82).³³

To begin with, let us consider again passage (8) (with one sentence added in the beginning):

- (14) [T]he rational role of experience is to render rational *transitions* from antecedent views to judgments. Because of your visual experience, a *rational linkage* obtained between your view and your judgment, which made your *move* to the judgment rational. The experience did not render your judgment rational; it rendered your transition, your move, to the judgment rational (Gupta 2019, §73).

In the context of this passage, Gupta emphasizes that by itself, visual experience does not provide one with any entitlement to perceptual judgments. After all, on his view, experience is a matter of appearances being manifested to a subject’s consciousness. And since appearances by themselves neither constitute a notion of experiential content nor provide any information as to what they are appearances of, it is unclear how experiences, so construed, should provide entitlement. What is needed to get such entitlement, Gupta suggests, is an antecedent view. And it is only in the presence

159f. for remarks to this effect). I think that in the context of Gupta’s larger project of elucidating the role experience plays in empirical debate, this way of justifying criteria of initial admissibility is perfectly legitimate. However, I strongly suspect the following: if we ask what conditions must be in place for *any* social practice to be such as to justify the attribution that members of the relevant practice endorse something that can intelligibly count as a view, it is likely that the criteria of admissibility Gupta endorses—and perhaps further ones—could be justified as falling out from such an account. Pending such an account, I will only state that I think that such an account would supplement, rather than contradict, Gupta’s assessment with respect to the criteria he lists.

³³ Furthermore, he sometimes says that it is views that institute links between experiences and judgments (see Gupta 2019, §83). The question this raises, again, is one of the questions raised in fn. 26 above, i.e. how to think about the rational relations between the various components of views—especially between beliefs and linkages.

Note that observing that what Gupta calls ‘the given in experience’ or, alternatively, ‘the hypothetical given,’ is just the conception of the general role of experience that we have been working with since 7.3. For a less fully developed version of the conception, cf. Gupta 2006, for the fully developed version cf. Gupta 2019, chapter 4.

of such a view and the rational linkages that, as we saw in the previous section, such views contain that having an experience can provide one with conditional entitlement to beliefs, judgments, etc.—entitlements that are conditional on the view.

The characterization so far is familiar and, I think, unobjectionable. The claim that experience *institutes* either rational transitions or rational linkages, however, is, I think, potentially misleading, for ‘institute’ can be understood as ‘establish’ or ‘originate.’ As we discussed in the previous section, linkages, as Gupta construes them, are an integral part of views already. Accordingly, it is *prima facie* unclear how experience should serve to institute them.

Moreover, recall passage (12). According to it, the occurrence of an experience makes it rational for the subject to transition to some response or other. But arguably, such an occurrence does not *institute* a rational transition. Rather, we should say upon having a specific experience that, in the subject’s view, must already be coiled up in the rational linkages the view contains, the fact that for the subject to make a specific transition would now be the rational thing to do becomes, as it were, rationally salient (it need not become salient to the subject). In other words, in the context of the fact that one’s background view must already contain linkages between all possible experiences and responses that it would be rational to transition to if the respective experiences were had, having a specific experience confers on certain transitions the status of actually being rational, given the context at hand. We may then say that having the experience institutes the status of certain transitions as being the ones that in the context at hand are actually rational. This, I think, is an acceptable reading. It is, however, different from saying that experience establishes such rational transitions in the first place.

Next, consider a case in which, upon having an experience, the subject of that experience realizes that the belief that it is now rational for her to transition to, given her background view, conflicts with that view. In such a case, having undergone the experience is vitally important for what should happen next: a modification of the view and its linkages. Without having had the experience and without having transitioned (or perhaps: having imagined what it would be to transition) to what, in the context at hand, having the experience makes rational to transition to, the subject may not have come under

any imminent pressure to resolve the resulting conflict.³⁴ But having had a suitable experience, such pressure will arise—though the subject may for various reasons fail to acknowledge it. Suppose, next, that the conflict is recognized and resolved. If so, the subject’s view will be modified. And although a full account of how linkages and beliefs are rationally related is still pending, it is obvious that in many cases—e.g. the cases of Elijah and Lea discussed in the previous chapter—the linkages to experience the revised view contains will to some extent differ from those contained in the antecedent view.³⁵ Arguably, then, perceptual experience can play a vital and often indispensable role in the process of establishing new linkages. However, even in cases in which experience does play an indispensable role in bringing about the relevant conflicts that rationally prompt revision, it still depends massively on the details of the view how such a conflict will be resolved.³⁶ Accordingly, while it can be granted that for many cases in which new linkages are being instituted, experience plays an important role, it cannot play this role in and of itself.

In sum, I think that **Linkage Institution** should be rejected. At the very least, it should be taken with a grain of salt. I do not think that for Gupta to concede this point would be in any way damaging to his account—it is a friendly suggestion, not a grave objection. But I do think that institution talk is misleadingly suggestive in that it invites an interpretation that I suspect Gupta, too, would wish to resist: that experience, in and by itself, could serve to establish either transitions or linkages. Let us move on and discuss the last remaining claim: **Ineffability**.

³⁴ Some conflicts that can be revealed by way of having a recalcitrant experience (i.e. an experience that makes rational to a belief that conflicts with one’s antecedent view) may be such that one could also have noticed such a conflict upon reflection on one’s view. However, not every possible conflict will be of that kind that experience is only one way of discovering it. In the absence of experience, I cannot, for instance, figure out through reflection that my strong belief that it will rain in Pittsburgh this afternoon conflicts with the belief I form upon spending what turns out to be a sunny afternoon in the office.

³⁵ It would be an interesting result if it could be shown that every change in the beliefs contained in a view entailed a change in what linkages the view contains. I think it is very plausible that this is true for the subset of changes that are triggered by conflicts that arise in response to one’s experience. I am not entirely sure, however, that it is also true for changes in beliefs more generally. Conceivably, changes in one’s beliefs about the relations between various highly abstract mathematical objects could leave the vast majority of extant linkages unaltered. That said, even such changes will affect what judgments one will be rational to transition to in response to reading an essay about the relevant objects. I will remain neutral on the issue.

³⁶ More plausibly, it will depend on the outlook, which, again, includes other factors besides propositional attitudes, as well as on further factors such as time constraints.

9.2.3 Ineffability

According to **Ineffability**, recall, rational linkages between views and experiences cannot be captured through propositional attitudes. There is, I think, something right, but also something very wrong about this claim.

What is obviously right is that rational linkages themselves are not propositional attitudes. Moreover, it is also right that there is a sense in which we cannot directly talk about what appearances items manifest to our respective consciousnesses. There is a sense in which I cannot communicate to you the phenomenology of my experience, nor can I ever find out what the appearances are that various items manifest to your consciousness. I cannot point my appearances out to you, nor is it entirely clear what it would be to engage in some process of internally pointing them out to myself.

In this context, note that all of this is compatible with Gupta's repeated insistence that appearances are not private. For in making this claim, he is merely insisting on the following: it is possible that you and I, upon seeing the same or different items, can have subjectively identical appearances. It is, however, also possible that your and my appearances diverge.³⁷

Importantly, such divergence, if it obtained, would not need to be problematic. For recall that appearances do not wear on their sleeves what they are appearances of. They do not, in and of themselves, inform us about anything in our environment. Suppose that the appearances a given item manifests in the consciousness of two different subjects, in identical circumstances, differ. Still, they are appearances of the same item. Thus, even if the appearance a given item manifests in your consciousness were to differ significantly from the appearance it manifests in mine, nothing stands in the way of the assumption that we are still able to communicate, and "pick out," as Gupta asserts, "with the aid of experience, common objects to think about and to disagree about" (Gupta 2019, §208).

³⁷ In conversation, Gupta suggested to me that it may turn out that if two subjects are physiologically constituted in the exact same way, their appearances are identical, perhaps necessarily so. This need not be so, he granted, but there is nothing in principle that rules out that same constitution yields, or must yield, sameness in appearances in identical circumstances (see also Gupta 2019, chapter 12).

Different appearances can play the exact same functional role in the mental economy of different subjects and as such correspond to each other. Of course, such correspondence may often be less than perfect so that candidate corresponding appearances may not play exactly the same roles in the different subjects' respective mental economies. As we have repeatedly insisted, on the conception of the general role of experience we are considering, if your and my background views differ, looking at the same items in identical enviroing circumstances can make rational transitions to different judgments, beliefs, etc. Accordingly, even on the assumption that all of the appearances an item manifests in our respective consciousnesses are subjectively identical, this alone entails nothing with respect to what function they play in our respective mental economies. Discovering and sorting out differences in how, given our respective views, we do and should respond to our experiences is an important part of what empirical debate allows us to do. But for such resolutions to be possible, it is not a requirement that the experiences we have as we perceive various items be subjectively identical, nor that the functional roles they play in our respective mental economies correspond fully. Patently, without *some* common ground, communication will fail. But in the context of some common ground, conducting an empirical debate to enlarge common ground will become possible and differences in appearances will not entail “an entrapment of the participants in their respective private worlds” (Gupta 2019, §311).

Again, what is right about **Ineffability**, I think, is that we cannot, as it were, capture and convey what appearance given items manifest to our consciousnesses by way of somehow directly specifying them.³⁸ Consequently, we cannot specify the rational linkages that views contain by directly specifying a specific appearance and then proceed by claiming that in the context under consideration, some rational link obtains between the appearance thus singled out and certain beliefs, judgments, etc. Such a procedure must fail at the first step: appearances cannot be directly specified.

³⁸ The notion of ‘direct specification’ is supposed to label the kind of specification that would enable you to gain some intimate understanding of which appearances these items manifest to me, an understanding identical to whatever understanding I may have when appeared to in such ways. Again, I take it that the idea that there is a specification that could possibly achieve something like this is erroneous. Moreover, I also doubt that the thought that I could have an understanding of my appearances is particularly clear.

What rubs me as misleading about **Ineffability**, as stated, is that it invites the interpretation that rational linkages between views and experiences cannot be made discursively available at all. If that were accepted, they could not be subjected to explicit rational critique.³⁹ They could at best be modified as a by-product of the process of view-revision.⁴⁰ If this interpretation is part of what **Ineffability** is supposed to express, I think we should reject it. For even if we accept that we cannot specify appearances directly (whatever that would come to), it does not follow that we cannot meaningfully talk about them at all.

Surely, rational and non-rational linkages that connect appearances and responses transitioning to which would be rational upon having them will to a large extent be implicit in the views we hold (I return to this further below). Also, if views contain linkages to every possible appearance, there number must be legion. Further, as we noted before, the question what, given a view, it is rational to transition to upon having a given experience can be hard to find out. But we can have views about what is rational to transition to, views that may be mistaken. Indeed, figuring out what in the context

³⁹ In an unpublished paper presented to the Wilfrid Sellars Society at the Eastern APA 2017 in Baltimore (Kremer ms.), Michael Kremer argues for the following thesis: what unites the conceptions Wilfrid Sellars, in his seminal 1956 lectures on Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind, attacks as mythical is the idea “that there is some element or aspect of our cognitive [life] that can be *taken for granted* – that is beyond rational criticism, cannot be put into question” (Kremer ms., p. 1). And somewhat more concisely, at the end of the essay, he talks about “the impossibility of the kind of status that the Myth of the Given insists on conferring on some or other inner aspect of our cognition – a status as somehow within the space of reasons, yet immune in advance to rational criticism and revision.”

Another reading of the myth, one that focuses on the epistemological given, provided by deVries and Triplett (cf. deVries and Triplett 2000), is this: “the broadest characterization of the given is that it is an element in experience that has positive epistemic status simply in virtue of the occurrence of that experience,” where knowledge of this given is both epistemically independent and epistemically efficacious.

In my discussion so far, I have throughout avoided framing my arguments with reference to the so-called given. The correct characterization of the given is itself a contentious issue and getting embroiled in the relevant debates seemed like a distraction. Here, I just add two notes for participants of that particular debate, without providing further explanation as to what I take notions like ‘the given’ or ‘space of reasons’ to denote: first, note that on neither characterization of the given, there is anything mythical about Gupta’s appearances. Regarding the former, appearances cannot be mythical they are not within the space of reason. Regarding the latter, by themselves, they do not have any positive epistemic status.

Second, on Kremer’s characterization, linkages, if they are part of the space of reasons, would come out as mythical if linkages cannot be thematized and thus made available for rational criticism. I thank Michael Kremer for challenging me, in conversation, to think about whether linkages are mythical in his proposed sense. His question is in part what prompted me to write this section.

⁴⁰ Gupta’s response to my request to clarify the way in which rational linkages can be rationally modified in Byrne et al. 2018 can be read as pointing to this possibility. I agree with Gupta that the idea of automatic adjustment of rational linkages in the context of view revision is perfectly acceptable. What I am suggesting in what follows is that this may not be the only way for such linkages to be rationally modified.

of a given view one would in fact be rational to transition to can itself be an important part of empirical debate. Rational linkages that are contained in views are like inference tickets that are implicit in our views and whose function is to rationally license transitions from various experiences to e.g. perceptual beliefs. And in the course of an empirical debate, what we take to be the relevant transitions that having specific experiences would license can be made explicit and become the topic of debate.

Doing so cannot and of course does not require the impossible: there is, again, no need to specify appearances directly. But we can specify appearances by way of providing view-dependent descriptions. Such specifications can be descriptions using phenomenological concepts such as color and shape concepts (“I am having an appearance as of a red ball”), but there is no need to impose a restriction on the relevant descriptions to the effect that in them, phenomenological concepts must figure. For if, as Gupta concedes, “I have a white appearance” can be a view-dependent way of describing one’s experience, nothing should prevent us from holding that “I have an x-ray tube appearance” can be such a description, too.⁴¹

I think that both in empirical debate and in other contexts, we make explicit, and thus make available for discussion, what we take to be the relevant rational linkages quite frequently. Consider a scientist, Mia, who is about to design an experiment. As she does, Mia may consider what she takes to be the various observations that she may make in the course of the experiment along with what, in light of these various experiences, would be the rational responses to transition to, respectively. Take *a* and *b* to be view-dependent descriptions of one’s experience and *p* and *q* some suitable beliefs. If so, Mia might, as she designs her experiment, engage in considerations like the following: “Were I to observe *a*, I should conclude that *p*. However, in case I observe *b*, believing *p* would not be rational. In such a case, I should believe *q* instead.”

Furthermore, suppose that Mia tells her colleague Thea about the experiment that she is about to design, its possible outcomes, and about what in case of the various possible outcomes she takes

⁴¹ Gupta thus, too, acknowledges the category of phenomenological description (cf. Gupta 2019, §192), grants that they can be used to communicate something about how one is appeared to, and, finally, that descriptions of how one is appeared to need not be (and often would not be usefully) couched in phenomenological terms (cf. *ibid.*, §199). As far as I can see, he does not consider the possibility of issuing such descriptions for making explicit rational linkages.

herself to be entitled to infer. Now, several things can happen. Thea might of course simply agree with Mia's assessment. But Thea might also have further ideas about possible outcomes or disagree with the inferences Mia thinks she would be rational to draw in the various scenarios under consideration. The latter disagreement could in turn arise for different reasons. It could be that Mia and Thea have various theoretical disagreements which lead to different assessments of what inferences would be warranted in the various scenarios. Accordingly, in the ensuing debate, they could try to uncover and sort out their theoretical differences. If things go well, this could involve making progress with respect to arriving at an improved conception of what, upon having experiences that both would describe in the same way, it would be rational to do.⁴²

But their disagreement could also have a different source. For simplicity, let us suppose that upon seeing the same items in the same conditions, the appearances these items manifest to their respective consciousnesses are subjectively identical. Even so, it could still be that Mia's and Thea's respective views are slightly different in how they group color appearances into similarity classes. In suitable circumstances, such a difference in similarity grouping could be the source of their disagreement.⁴³ But if they come to an agreement (which they may not), then arguably, doing so will be facilitated by way of spelling out what each takes to be rational in light of the possible various experiences, which will bring the disagreement to light and put them into a position to resolve the issue.

⁴² One way in which Gupta characterizes the role of experience is to make rational transitions from a subject's *acceptance* of a view to the subject's acceptance of a belief, etc. In light of the fact that what the rational linkages are that a view contains will be opaque to the subject (because they are difficult to determine and because there are a vast number of them—one for each possible appearance), we should acknowledge that for a subject to accept a view will standardly be an act that occurs in a context in which the precise shape of the view is not, and probably cannot be, fully understood. Accepting a view and developing it further through processes of revision may thus be construed as a process during which the subject gains an increasingly better understanding of what the view she accepts is.

⁴³ To illustrate, consider a rather simple case. Suppose that in the experiment Mia is considering, the test subjects' task is to pull an apple out of a bag and eat it on the condition that it is pink, and receive a reward for eating it, but refrain from eating it if it is red (and receive a reward for not eating it). Suppose, further, that the bag contains a number of uniformly colored apples and that each apple's color lies somewhere on the spectrum between pink and red. Now, as Mia and Thea look at the variously colored apples, the following disagreement may arise:

Mia: If subjects ate this apple (pointing at one of them), they would receive no reward.

Thea: Why, of course they would!

Mia: No, they would not. After all, it is red.

Thea: No, it is not. I see it as pink – don't you?

At this point, Mia and Thea, having arrived, aided by their experience, at the core of their dispute, should now in principle in a position to find a way of settling it.

Relatedly, I think that in the context of making explicit what we take the rational linkages between possible experiences and beliefs to be, the notion of *seeing as* may serve a helpful function after all. For Mia might as well think: “Were I to *see* the item in question *as F* or as exhibiting activity *U*, I should conclude *p*, otherwise *q*.”⁴⁴ *Seeing as*, in other words, serves to form view-dependent descriptions of experiences that can in turn figure in characterizations of what one takes (correctly or not) to be the rational linkages one’s view contains. Such characterizations take the shape of (indicative or subjunctive) conditionals.⁴⁵ Arguably, they allow us to make available for rational discourse an important stratum of the inferential relations we take, within our view, to obtain between our view-dependent empirical descriptions and further beliefs—inferential relations that contribute to giving our views their distinctive shape, and that are, on Hanson’s broadly holistic view, part of what determines what to the subject who employs them, the concepts that figure in the descriptions of her experience mean. To emphasize, our conceptions of what the rational linkages are that are implicit in our views, in other words: what, given what we believe, we are rationally committed to judge, belief, or do in light of having a certain experience, may be wrong. But in empirical debate, this is something we can find out. Through empirical debate, our understanding of what we are indeed committed to can improve.

In this context, let us note that in a footnote, Gupta remarks that he does not reject the notion that experience has content as illegitimate. Here is what he says:

(15) Indeed, the hypothetical given, which I have argued for, enables one to assign a content to experience: the subject’s view together with her experience yields a content that can be associated with the experience. [...] I believe that the content of experience—though a legitimate notion—is, from the logical point of view, otiose. (Gupta 2019, §223, fn. 31)

In the context of the suggestion just offered, one could think that the last sentence should be rejected as too strong. For suppose I am right that the notion of *seeing as* can serve an important role in making explicit the rational linkages that we take our views to contain, where such linkages are understood as

⁴⁴ Note again that *seeing as* does not involve any commitment to the belief that things are as one sees them as.

⁴⁵ Again, with Brandom, I take it that subjunctive conditionals serve to express commitments that are robust across various contexts.

being implicit in the inferentially articulated structure of the beliefs that co-constitute our views.⁴⁶ However, recall that the motivation for Hanson to claim that *seeing as* must involve concepts depends on his thought that only if concepts are involved in experience itself can experience be epistemically significant. On Gupta's proposal, however, the significance of experiences does not depend on the idea that concepts are somehow operative in experience itself. Accordingly, it is open to defenders of a Gupta-style view to argue as follows: granted, *seeing as* talk can play a fruitful role. This role is to form view-dependent descriptions of experiences that in turn can figure in characterizations that serve to make discursively available which view-dependent inferential linkages between experiences and beliefs, judgments, etc. we take our views to contain. But to say that *seeing as* talk can play this important expressive role is not at the same time to accept that the experiences thus characterizable must also be understood as in fact involving the concepts that in characterizing them we employ. *Seeing as* talk can thus be recognized as important, but the idea that experience must be an instance of *seeing as* in Hanson's sense, where this requires for concepts to be operative in experience itself, can be rejected.⁴⁷

In sum, then, I think that **Ineffability** should be rejected. Moreover, I think that once we acknowledge that rational linkages can be construed in terms of inference tickets that are implicit in our view and determine what, given our view and upon having experiences that we take to fall under various description, we ought to transition to, we benefit in two ways. For one, we see that negotiating what we take the inference tickets actually licensed by our views to be is an important part of empirical debate.

Second, we gain a better understanding of the sense in which the rational linkages Gupta thinks obtain between experiences and judgments, beliefs, etc. depend on and are part of the subject's view. They are part of the view in that they form an important stratum of the inferential commitments that are implicit in the inferential articulation of those among our concepts that can figure in empirical

⁴⁶ Of course, the notion can also be employed to make explicit *actual* linkages, which, as I suggested, need not be rational. Making these discursively available is an important part of empirical discourse, too, since doing so makes them available for criticism.

⁴⁷ Note that on the resulting position, the question we faced in the previous chapter, i.e. how to understand what it could be for concepts to be employed in experience in an instantaneous and passive way, no longer arises.

descriptions. And though they are implicit, our conceptions of them can be made discursively available, and consequently improved, with the help of view-dependent descriptions of one's experiences that can be formed by way of using the *seeing as* locution.

9.3 TAKING STOCK

As I acknowledged at the end of the introduction to this chapter, Gupta's view is rather complex. Still, I contend that even though we only considered two (albeit important) components of his view—his account of appearances and his notion of rational linkages—we are left with a good sense both of the view's potential and of some areas in which further development may be needed.

In 9.1.1, I presented Gupta's view of appearances, forestalled a few misleading interpretations, and showed that in principle, Gupta's account is compatible with both *projection effects* and cases of *expert vision proper*, including cases of the kind introduced in 2.3.2, in which beliefs bring it about that, as Hanson puts it, the elements of the visual field cohere in new or different ways.

In 9.1.2, I showed that in its current form, Gupta's view prompts questions with respect to the notion of presence. These arise in the context of his suggestion that total hallucinations could be construed as cases in which mental images or brain states are presented to the subject's consciousness. One question is how we are to construe the notion of presentation so as to allow that e.g. brain states can be so presented. I also showed that his account of appearances, since it is committed to the idea that having appearances requires that some item be presented to the subject's consciousness (**IRA**), appears to impose a restriction on what projection effects are possible. Assuming that Gupta, too, will prefer an account that does not prejudicate factual matters, and that beliefs cannot, at least not for us, be elements of the presentational complex, I offered various ways in which the account could be modified so as to allow projection effects to be what cause total hallucinations. The most attractive and most conservative strategy, I suggested, is to construe the empty presentational complex as a formal item that can be present to consciousness and thus manifest appearances to consciousness.

This allows that beliefs, being part of the perceptual situation, can modify such appearances. I also suggested that this solution may be helpful more generally in that it may carry over to other problematic kinds of total hallucinations as well.

In 9.2, I began by highlighting that Gupta's account of the general role of experience applies to experiences generally, i.e. independently of whether the experience in question has been modified by doxastic effects. I then centered my discussion on the consideration of three claims: **Linkages in Views**, **Linkage Institution**, and **Ineffability**. In 9.2.1, I emphasized the importance of the notion of linkages for Gupta's overall account and considered two kinds of linkages that views can contain. In doing so, I drew on parallel considerations offered in chapter 8 and noted that the Hanson's problem of **Amalgamation** and Siegel's problem of **Non-Arbitrariness** have a counterpart in Gupta's view: **Linkage Setup**.

In 9.2.2, I turned to the claim that rational linkages or transitions are instituted by experience. Overall, I suggested that the claim should be rejected or at least taken with a grain of salt. The reason: talk about institution invites erroneous interpretations concerning how linkages and transitions come about. In 9.2.3, finally, I argued, that there is an important sense in which the claim that rational linkages between views and experiences cannot be captured through propositional attitudes should be rejected. For I suggested that making discursively available what one takes to be the actual and rational linkages one's view contains is both possible and an important aspect of empirical debate. In this context, I suggested that the Hansonian notion of *seeing as* that Gupta eschews can serve the important role of making discursively available the conceptions we have of such linkages in the shape of conditionals from view-dependent descriptions of experience, formed with the aid of the *seeing as* locution, to beliefs, judgments, etc. Moreover, I suggested that we can understand these linkages to be part of the view in that they form an important stratum of the inferential commitments that are implicit in the inferential articulation of those among our concepts that can figure in empirical descriptions.

In the next and final chapter, I will provide an extended summary of the discussion conducted in this book and provide an eight-point list of the most important lessons learned. I then consider a

challenge and a complaint, which will serve to direct us towards a number of ways in which the project pursued in this book can be developed further. In closing, I provide a recap of what these ways are and briefly indicate how the lessons we learned may be fruitfully applied to a variety of areas of research—in philosophy and beyond.

10.0 CONCLUSION

If what we believe shapes our experience, experience is doxastically variable. If we ask what the forms are that experiential doxastic variability can take, our answer will depend on what we take experience to be. But if we ask whether the doxastic variability of experience is a feature of experience that we can accept and accommodate or a problematic feature of experience that we need to explain away or against which we need to mount defenses, the answer, I have suggested, depends on what we take its role to be. In this book, I have argued that once we adopt the right and general conception of what the role of experience is, various accounts of experience can be devised that meet the two constraints that have been guiding our inquiry from the beginning: first, the accounts are fully compatible with doxastic variability. Second, they accommodate a notion of rational empirical constraint.

In the following, I begin by providing a detailed summary of the preceding chapters (10.1). Next, I provide an eight-point report of the most important results of our inquiry (10.2). I then comment on what I call the *No Phenomenology* challenge and the *Receptive Knowledge* complaint (10.3). In closing, I provide an overview of ways in which I think the project begun in this book can be pursued further, and a list of areas in which the lessons we learned can be fruitfully applied (10.4).

10.1 SUMMARY

In the preceding chapters, we examined various kinds of views that offer accounts of the nature and the role of experience. Throughout, our guiding questions was the following: can the view accommodate phenomena of doxastic variability and make sense of the notion of empirical constraint?

This question turned out to be a rather effective diagnostic tool. Assessing whether the respective accounts can accommodate putative instances of doxastic variability required taking a very close look at what, on these accounts, experience is taken to be. In some cases, doing so revealed severe problems already, which were often further aggravated when we asked how, on the view under consideration, cases of doxastic variation could be accounted for.

Hanson's original position on the theory-ladenness of observation provided a first example. His notion of experience, we found, is in important ways underdeveloped. He lacks a satisfactory account of its phenomenal dimension and faces the issue of **Amalgamation**—the question how, in experience as he understands it, the conceptual and phenomenal are fused.

Still, analyzing Hanson's view yielded important tools and insights. *Inter alia*, we extracted from it two very different notions of how our beliefs could affect experience: beliefs could affect either experiential phenomenology or experiential content. The former, Hanson suggested, comes in two main flavors. One comprises effects that may be characteristic of many cases of **expert vision**: this comprises selection effects (which we mostly ignored), but also effects on how, as Hanson puts it, in one's visual field, the various elements cohere (though Hanson concedes that such effects are hard to classify). The second flavor comprised what I labeled **projection effects**, which modify the elements in one's visual field more directly, e.g. by modifying their color, shape, size, or other features, even which elements are present.

While Hanson thinks that such broadly causal effects beliefs may have on experiential phenomenology are both possible and actual, he spends most of his efforts on examining the semantic determination relations that he takes background beliefs to stand in with experiential content. As we saw, that such relations obtain follows from Hanson's broadly holistic account of conceptual content. On it, the concepts operative in experience, i.e. concepts that complement the *seeing as* locution, derive an essential part of what they mean to the experiencing subject from the way they are inferentially articulated in the subject's overall doxastic context.

Sketching an account of this shape enabled Hanson to address one of the main puzzles he sought to address: how different subjects—such as Tycho and Kepler—can see the same object: the sun, can

profess to *see* that object *as* the same thing: the sun, and yet see different things. Hanson's solution, we saw, is this: in Tycho's and Kepler's respective doxastic contexts, the concept sun is inferentially articulated in significantly different way. Therefore, for each, utterances such as "This is the sun." take on a different meaning. In the following regimented sense, thus, they see different things: they see the same object, but each sees it as the kind of thing that figures in his specific theory.

While analyzing Hanson's broadly holistic account of experiential content, we noted that Hanson's idea that *seeing as* is intelligible only in terms of *seeing that* entails another interesting claim: any doxastic contexts in which the concepts complementing the *seeing as* locution acquire their meaning must contain beliefs that are knowledgeable even by our own lights. Hanson's idea, I held, is defensible. For if we assume, of an experiencing subject, that she lacks beliefs that we take to be knowledgeable entirely, we can no longer make sense of what, for her, it could be to *see* anything *as* anything.

Another important piece I extracted from Hanson's view was the shape of his response to the worry that doxastic effects on experience could be damaging in such a way as to rule out that experience can still constrain our beliefs. By drawing on Hanson's way of treating cases of illusions, I showed that the idea that experience is doxastically variable does not, *eo ipso*, rule out that experience can provide empirical constraint. To make constraint possible, what is needed is the assumption that the experiencing subject's beliefs do not determine the phenomenology of her experience completely. If our experiential phenomenology is such that what we see behaves in ways that diverge from the expectations associated with what we *see* things *as*, such divergences—the doxastic embodiment of empirical constraint—may in turn rationally prompt modifications of one's doxastic context.

On Hanson's view, this latter idea could not be cashed out. Again, Hanson spends a lot of energy on giving an account of what he takes to account for the epistemic significance of experience: its alleged content. His account of the phenomenal dimension of experience, however, is hardly developed. It does not enable us to see how experiential phenomenology could both be subject to doxastic variation and at the same time be constituted by the mind-independent items. But plainly, it is the latter whose characteristics must be what accounts for the fact that experiential phenomenology

can deviate from our expectations. Initially, Hanson's view thus turned out to be deficient. In chapter 8, I showed that there are interesting ways in which it can be developed further. To get into a position in which I could begin to improve the view, however, further lessons had to be learned, and alternative views to be rejected.

Prompted by the realization that Hanson's account is wanting in that it does not contain an account of experiential phenomenology that explains how such phenomenology could at least in part be independent from the subject's beliefs, I turned to a thorough analysis of various relational views. For the proponents of these views purport to offer just that: an account on which the phenomenology of experience is constituted by the subject's being related to various mind-independent items.

Before I turned to the relational view, I distinguished, in chapter 3, the two flavors of doxastic variability operative in Hanson's account that in the remainder of the book we returned to repeatedly—**Doxastic Variability of Experiential Content (DVEC)** and **Doxastic Variability of Experiential Phenomenology (DVEP)**.

Next, I introduced the basic structure of the relational view and suggested that it is best understood as a combination of three theses: **No Content**, **Acquaintance**, and **Constitution**. Due to their commitment to **No Content**, it was obvious that relationalists cannot accept **DVEC**, nor **Beliefs May Co-Determine Experiential Content (BMCC)**. But I suggested that relationalists who are sympathetic to a broadly holistic account of conceptual content might accept the more general thesis that **Beliefs May Co-Determine Content (BMCC)**, which on their view would be a thesis not about experiential content (since they take there to be none), but about the content of e.g. perceptual judgments and beliefs.

Relationalists who accept both **BMCC** and the broadly holistic account implicit in Hanson's position, I argued, incur an explanatory debt. For presumably, relationalists will also want to say that the content of judgments, etc. is at least partly constituted by the mind-independent items experience relates us to. If so, they must show how this idea and a broadly holistic account of content go together. The same, I indicated, may be true of Hanson as well. For if he thinks that the phenomenology of experience contributes to experiential content, it is unclear what this contribution would look like.

The parallels between Hanson and the relationalists, I argued, extend even further. On the one hand, I suggested that Hanson seems to be in a comparatively better position to explain how experience may bear on our beliefs than the relationalists. For on the assumption that experience itself is endowed with content, it is not mysterious that experience so construed could bear on other contentful states. Conversely, it is less clear how experience, if construed in terms of a relation that constitutes a phenomenology, could do the same. On the other hand, however, I showed that both Hanson and the relationalists must address the same structural questions: a) how does experiential phenomenology related to worldly items, and b) how does experiential phenomenology to the conceptual? The former clearly arises for both. The latter arises too, just in different places. For the relationalists, it appears as the problem how to connect experience with perceptual beliefs and judgments. For Hanson, it assumes the shape of the problem of **Amalgamation**, i.e. of how *in* experience, the phenomenal and the conceptual are fused.

As we recap the problems besetting the various relationalist accounts we considered, let us start with **Fish's** account. Fish, recall, has no obvious way of accommodating the notion of phenomenal identity, unless he resorts to claiming that such identities are a matter of brute fact. Also, he assumes without argument that the phenomenology of experiences that different subjects undergo in the same circumstances is the same.¹

Further, he provides no account of the visual recognitional capacities that would allow us to understand which properties can and cannot figure in the presentational character of experience, what these properties are, how they relate to the mind-independent properties in the subject's environment, how the latter are to be understood, how, accordingly, to construe expert vision, and how the

¹ As we saw in 9.1.1, on Gupta's presentationalism, there is no need for such an assumption. Arguably, Fish might try and adopt a similar approach as Gupta, drop the idea that the phenomenal properties that the experiences of different subjects in identical condition have are the same, and substitute the idea for it that in the mental economy of different subjects, the phenomenal properties of their respective experiences play corresponding functional roles.

Note, however, that by the lights of Gupta's account and the Hansonian account we considered, this is still too strong an assumption. For on them, differences in the subjects' background views will often entail that the functional role of various experiences—i.e. what upon having them the subject would be rational to transition to—will differ as well. What is needed is merely some significant enough overlap in the experiences' functional roles that allows the different subjects to single out items to jointly talk about.

experience of the expert and that of the layperson can have something perceptually in common. Finally, his account seems to be at odds with **Basic Acquaintance** and as the discussion of the banana case illustrated, he has no way to accommodate projection effects, nor can he explain them away.

There is a number of respects in which **Brewer**'s account improves over Fish's (cf. 5.5). But it, too, turned out to be problematic. For one, we noted that the notion of visually relevant similarity relations that his account of thin looks rests on is ambiguous. While most of the time, it appears that he holds that these similarity relations obtain between objects, at times, Brewer seems to think that they are relations between proximal stimuli or ways of visual processing.

Furthermore, we found that in general, his notion of looks is hard to place. Are ways things look properties of objects (ways *things* look) or properties of experiences? And how is it that visually relevant similarity relations *ground, explain, or constitute* them?

Further, how are we to understand Brewer's claim that registering visually relevant similarity relations yields a change in the subject's experiential phenomenology? How is such a change triggered exactly and what does it amount to? Is there really a phenomenally relevant distinction that the notions of thin and thick looks tracks? How are the alleged two kinds of phenomenology related and why does Brewer feel compelled to reject the claim that there is a single uncontroversial notion of visual phenomenology on which it makes perfectly good sense to ask, and it is always possible to answer, whether two experiential conditions are phenomenologically identical *tout court*? Finally, Brewer's account, like Fish's cannot neither accommodate projection effects nor explain them away.

Genone's account, while interesting and potentially powerful, was problematic, too. First, the notion of entirely mind-independent appearance properties that lies at the core of his account remains less than clear. Second, his account of experiential phenomenology and of how it is constituted is rudimentary at best. Third, Genone has no account of expert vision. I suggested, however, that his account of misleading appearances affords the resources for developing an account of **expert judgment** and that an account of **expert vision proper** could be constructed by drawing on the idea that effects that fall under expert vision proper are mediated by attention. Of course, both the details and the viability of such an account depend on whether Genone can make his account of appearances

and his account of constitution work. If that could be achieved, however, the prospects of developing an account of expert vision might be quite good. Moreover, such an account would seem to be better than those proposed by Fish or Brewer in that it would not obviously suffer from the same problems besetting the latter.

With respect to **projection effects**, I suggested, fourth, that there are two strategies Genone could pursue: the first is to endorse phenomenal pluralism, the idea that the phenomenology not of perception, but of total experience, may contain multiple layers of phenomenology that differ in their respective etiologies. This suggestion, I argued, raises further difficult issues.

For one, it undermines the relationalist core tenet that experience is a relation to mind-independent items. Accordingly, relationalists like e.g. Fish and Brewer will resist Genone's proposal and suspect that experience so construed may not fit into the relationalist epistemological framework.

Second, and similar to an issue we saw arise for Brewer, the proposal leaves it open how the putative layers of phenomenology interact. Pursuing this first strategy, accordingly, tasks Genone with providing an account of experiential phenomenology that shows how these issues can be addressed.

The second strategy I suggested Genone might pursue to address projection effects involves exploiting the resources his account of misleading appearances already provides. On this strategy, in putative cases of projection effects, what shifts is not the phenomenology of experience, but rather the way in which perceiving such appearances and judgments are hooked up within the perceiving subject's mental economy. That is is a possible strategy on Genone's account, I suggested, makes it superior to Fish's and Brewer's view in that it allows Genone to potentially explain away each and every projection effect. That said, for the strategy to be acceptable, more work is required. Apart from the desolate status of his account of appearances and of experiential phenomenology, Genone would have to address the following issues:

First, it is not clear that phenomenal pluralism can be rejected in general.

Second, on the strategy suggested, the subject's background view plays a major role in determining whether the judgments subjects issue based on their experiences are true or justified. If the background view is given as much weight as proposed, then experience will be able to play a justificatory role only

if the background view is suitably correct and if perceptions of appearances and judgments are hooked up in the right kind of way. Whether that is something relationalists who want to credit experience with playing a significant role in providing justification and knowledge will find acceptable can be doubted. At the very least, a story will have to be told of what needs to be in place on the part of the subject—in terms of beliefs, conceptual capacities, and ways in which perceiving appearances is hooked up with judgments—to make acquiring knowledge and justification possible.²

Third, I showed that Genone leaves it unclear how to construe the relation between perceived appearances and judgments. His statements are ambiguous between causal-dispositional and broadly epistemic interpretations. Both raise further questions that Genone does not address. If the relation is causal, questions arise concerning how to understand its epistemic import. If the relation is epistemic, it is unclear how perceiving appearances can provide experiential premises, reasons, or otherwise serve to normatively constrain the experiencing subject's judgments and beliefs. Moreover, and finally, that the specifics of the relation depend on the subject's background view is something Genone claims, but provides no account of.

In the end, my **verdict on relationalist accounts** was this: as things stand, they must be rejected. They cannot help us understand how mind-independent items constitute experiential phenomenology and fail to accommodate various phenomena falling under **DVEP**. As my discussion of Genone's account illustrates, issues as to how to accommodate expert vision may not be unsurmountable. With respect to projection effects, however, problems run deeper. For the possibility of such effects undermines the relationalists' core tenet that experience is a relation thanks to which we are put in touch with mind-independent items. Accordingly, the relationalists' default strategy in dealing with putative projection effects must be to assume a defensive stance; they need to explain them away.

Ultimately, the relationalists' problems with accommodating projection effects thus rest on their commitment to a specific conception of what experience is and what it does for us. It is their conception of experience as inevitably putting us in touch with mind-independent items that forces

² We will encounter the same kind of questions in 10.3.2, when we consider the *Receptive Knowledge* Complaint.

them to take a specific stance on whether projection effects are actual or possible—on a matter, as Gupta would say, that a logical inquiry should not and could not settle. But once the overly restrictive relationalist conception is dropped, as in Siegel’s, Hanson’s, and—for the most part—Gupta’s view, accommodating projection effects becomes possible. Simultaneously, the overwhelmingly plausible idea that experience may often play the role of relating us to mind-independent items can be preserved.

Leaving relationalist views behind, I turned to **Siegel’s** (Rich) Content View. Arguably, Siegel’s position is the most sophisticated recent representationalist account of experience that takes not just doxastic effects very seriously, but effects that may be exerted on experience by cognitive and psychological background states more broadly. However, Siegel’s view, too, turned out to be problematic.

First, I showed that the argument she provides for it, her *Argument from Appearances*, begs the question against Hanson, against the relationalists, and against proponents of what she calls two-factor views of perceptual experience. But not only is Siegel’s **Content View** insufficiently motivated, she also leaves us, second, without an account of **Experiential Content** and, third, without an account of how phenomenal states and the properties she takes such states to present as instantiated are related, and of the sense in which they are related, as she puts it, *non-arbitrarily*. This lack of an account of **Non-Arbitrariness**, as I dubbed it, is unfortunate since Siegel seems to accept both that the same kind of phenomenal state can bear different contents and that different kinds of phenomenal states can bear the same contents. At the same time, she takes it to be a serious objection against opposing views that they allow the association between phenomenal states and representational contents to potentially vary drastically. Given such statements, questions concerning not just how to individuate the properties she takes to constitute such contents, but also what governs which properties a given phenomenal state presents as instantiated become pressing.

After the assessment of Siegel’s (Rich) Content View, I turned to the account of the rational role of perception that she develops in Siegel 2017. This account rests, first, on the idea that the default rational role of experience is that of providing justification and, second, on the idea that one’s beliefs, desires, biases, and other cognitive and psychological background states can influence the way things

look to one. Taken together, these two ideas give rise to the following familiar worry: experience that has been influenced by e.g. irrational or false beliefs could serve to illicitly strengthen those beliefs. As I noted in 7.3.2, the strategy Siegel pursues in addressing such cases shares a feature with that of the relationalists: like the latter, Siegel's approach is primarily defensive. Beliefs that are due to expertise are an exception, as they are said to lead to an increase of justificatory power. But from Siegel's point of view, other effects of doxastic variation pose a serious threat. They threaten to undermine the alleged default rational role of experience, again: that of justifying beliefs. Accordingly, such effects are grouped together with effects had by irrational states on experience and are said to yield experiences that are *hijacked* by the subject's outlook.

Siegel, I pointed out, makes two crucial suggestions: first, experiences have an epistemic charge and an accompanying epistemic power to justify beliefs, which in hijacked experiences is reduced. Second, the rational thing for a subject to do in response to her hijacked experience is to suspend judgment. Both these suggestions are integral elements of her overall defensive strategy, as both are tailored to render hijacked experiences epistemically harmless. In virtue of the first suggestion, hijacked experiences are taken out of the justification business, as it were, in that they are stripped off their alleged epistemic powers. Second, they are outlawed by being classified as irrational, so that even though subjects may not be in a position to realize it, they had better disregard them. In the noble realm of epistemic progress and rational comport, hijacked experiences are thus demoted to second-class citizens, with no voting rights and with no other positive role to play, either.

Siegel's defensive strategy, I emphasized, is both revisionary—in virtue of its account of epistemic powers—and counterintuitive—due to its verdict on what a subject of hijacked experiences would be rational to do. Siegel accepts this. But I argued that we should not and need not join her.

First, I found it impossible to accept Siegel's suggestion that for subjects undergoing hijacked experiences, the rational thing to do is suspend belief. I agreed that doing so might, in some contexts—and certainly from our doxastic context, in which the hijacking is known to occur—be the most rational thing to do overall. That said, I insisted that from the experiencing subject's perspective, suspending judgment will in many cases look highly irrational. A more satisfactory account of

empirical rationality, I take it, must accommodate the important sense in which the rationality of subjects is perfectly unimpaired when they do what is rational by the lights of the perspective provided by the best doxastic context that in the context at hand is actually available to them—the one they in fact inhabit.

Second, I suggested that accepting Siegel's proposal saddles us with the consequence that possibly countless of the experiences we undergo in our social interactions with others are hijacked, so that we should suspend judgment on them. Furthermore, the account we would have to give of the cultural, intellectual, and moral evolution of contemporary society would not be a story of how our experience assist us in rationally overcoming false, irrational, and biased beliefs. Instead, it would be a story on which cultural, intellectual, and moral progress mysteriously occurs against the background of numerous failures to respond to hijacked experiences in the way that on Siegel's view we should: by suspending belief.

Again, at its core, Siegel's strategy is defensive. It serves to protect her conception of the default rational role of experience. For just like putative cases of projection effects undermine the role *relationalists* take experience to play, experiential hijacking, including that due to projection effects, undermines the default role standard *representationalists* take experience to play: that of justifying beliefs.

The response to the relationalists was to drop the idea that experience must inevitably play the role of relating us to mind-independent items. In 7.3.3, I thus suggested that with respect to the standard representationalist conception, we can make an analogous move. For once we acknowledge that on Siegel's account, hijacked experience does not play its alleged default role anyway, and that for all we know, experience may not play that role very often, we can see that there is some motivation to drop the standard representationalist conception of experience as well.

As soon as we entertained this suggestion, it became obvious that most of the measures Siegel takes to mount her defense against what she thinks are the epistemically pernicious effects of experiential hijacking appear necessary only if one has already accepted the standard representationalist conception of experience as serving to justify beliefs. Once this standard conception is eschewed, however, the worry that hijacked experiences might provide illicit justification for false or irrational

beliefs simply evaporates. It is then possible for us to entertain the idea that since providing justification is not what such experiences do for us anyway, they may well have a positive role. And *pace* Siegel, uncovering that role does not require taking measures designed to explain why hijacked experiences are sapped off their default epistemic powers first.

Eschewing the standard conception allowed us to reinstate hijacked experiences as ordinary denizens of what above I dubbed the noble realm of epistemic progress and rational comport. We can grant that merely in virtue of having such experiences, subjects manifest an irrationality that is ultimately rooted in the specifics of their cognitive and psychological background states. But we can still take seriously that there is a role such experiences play for subjects that undergo them: that of making rational view-dependent transitions to judgments, beliefs, and actions.

Endorsing this general conception of the role of experience, that of making rational view-dependent transitions to judgments, beliefs, etc., which I adopted from Gupta, was a move that for the rest of the inquiry was absolutely crucial. I first combined this conception with a view that still remains rather friendly towards Siegel's own account. For though it involves dropping her commitment to a notion of epistemic charge and, crucially, the idea that a subject's most reasonable response to her hijacked experience is to suspend belief, it retains her commitment to the **Content View**. Then, after a recap of the strengths and weaknesses of the views considered up to that point, I fused the general conception of experience with a subsequently revamped version of Hanson's view.

In doing so, I highlighted that dropping Siegel's **Content View** and adopting Hanson's conception of experience in terms of *seeing as* puts us in a better position with respect to addressing an issue that on Siegel's view (like on Fish's) remains unaddressed: how to understand **Experiential Content** in the first place. To accept Hanson's broadly holistic conception of content and, thus, the semantic dimension of Hanson's account of theory-ladenness, was to leave further behind the relationalists' and Siegel's defensive stance towards doxastic variability. For as we had already noted in the second chapter, on Hanson's position, theory-ladenness, in this semantic sense, is not a contingent threat that needs to be rendered harmless. Rather, it is an essential feature of experiential content—or rather, of conceptual content in general. For according to Hanson, the intelligibility of

such content essentially rests on how such content is inferentially articulated with other contents. Having taken on board Hanson's broadly holistic account, I focused on his account of empirical constraint and showed, in more detail than in the second chapter, how implausibly strong the assumptions are that one must endorse to argue that experiential hijacking rules out the idea of rational empirical constraint. By drawing on the cases of Elijah and Lea—whose responses to their respective experiences I couched throughout in terms of the general conception of the role of experience I recommend—I argued for the following: subjects of illusions and even of experiences modified by projection effects may still come to acknowledge tensions between their standing beliefs and the beliefs that having their experiences makes rational to transition to. For subjects to be able to realize such tensions, I noted, requires that their condition not be pathological, so that they can remain sufficiently open to the possibility that they may be wrong in how they see and characterize things, and open to what others may have to say. At any rate, I took it for granted that for a subject to realize the presence of such a tension, she comes under some rational pressure to resolve it. And while doing so may happen in various ways and while which resolution the subject chooses may, but need not be rationally settled by the subject's background view, in many if not most cases, such a resolution will entail some revision—a change in the subject's view.

Making the need for such revisions salient naturally raised the question what effects such revisions might in turn have on the subject's subsequent experience. In response, I distinguished various possible effects. First, I suggested that the phenomenology of the subject's experience might shift towards having a phenomenology that is anyway amalgamated with different kinds of *seeing as*, i.e. kinds whose content better matches the updated beliefs of the subject about what she sees. In the case of projection effects, for example, such a shift could be a shift towards an experiential phenomenology with respect to which projection effects are reduced and that is amalgamated with instances of *seeing as* that correspond with suitably modified contents. Second, I suggested that changes in the background view could leave the phenomenology of experience unaltered and instead modify what contents the relevant phenomenology is amalgamated with. Doing so, in effect, was to suggest that amalgamation need not be set in stone, but may be modifiable.

The idea of **Modifiable Amalgamation** invited a comparison with Genone's account of misleading appearances. Drawing on this comparison, I then suggested that Hansonians can construe instances of *seeing as* as manifestations of what I dubbed *dispositions of amalgamation*. These, I stipulated, are heavily context-dependent, background-view dependent and potentially modifiable dispositions subjects have to enter into certain conceptually contentful non-committal states (i.e. specific instances of *seeing as*) as they undergo experiences with various kinds of phenomenology.

Dispositions of amalgamation, I suggested, may differ in how stable they are. But even in cases in which experiences are stably hijacked, I argued, suitable changes in the subject's background view will still affect what, upon having such an experience, it is rational for her to transition to, and may even make rational transitions to beliefs that are in fact justified—which is a possibility that on Siegel's account, due to her defensive stance towards hijacked experiences, could not properly come into view. I also noted a complication: the construal of instances of *seeing as* in terms of manifestations of *dispositions of amalgamation*, and the assumption that such dispositions can be quite stable, while arguably in line with Hanson's general account, requires that we take the operation of these conceptual capacities in instances of *seeing as* to be to some extent autonomous from the subject's background view. It requires that we devise a conception of how, in experience, conceptual capacities are quasi-autonomously and passively deployed.

Instead of pursuing this issue further, I suggested that in addition to *dispositions of amalgamation*, a Hansonian might accommodate a further set of dispositions, which I called *dispositions to transition*. The latter, too, I stipulated, are heavily context-dependent and modifiable view-dependent dispositions that take as input, *inter alia*, states of *seeing as* and trigger transitions to beliefs, judgments, etc. Reference to such dispositions, I suggested, can be used to model and explain how subjects *actually* behave in various contexts, which may diverge from how they would behave if they did what, upon having their experience and given the doxastic context they inhabit, is in fact rational.

In closing, I emphasized that on the revamped Hansonian account, it remains possible for experiences to play a role in arriving at beliefs that are indeed justified. For the conception of experience as making rational transitions to judgments, etc. is general enough to allow us to subsume

what Siegel and standard representationalists endorse as default conception as a special case. If circumstances are suitably correct, experiences can indeed play an important role in justifying beliefs. That said, it may be that arriving at beliefs that are in fact justified is a rare feat, or one that, if not rare, may be hard to recognize. (If that does not seem enough, I add here, one must show how more can be had.)

In leaving the revamped Hansonian view, I indicated that the considerations concerning **Amalgamation** and Hanson's account of **Experiential Content** could in principle be used to supplement the view sketched in 7.3 and even Siegel's own view. However, I left this task to aspiring Siegelians and instead turned to an examination of Gupta's presentationalist account of experience.

Gupta's account, I suggested, is interesting in several respects. For our purposes, the most crucial feature is that it provides a detailed account of experiential phenomenology. On this account, experiential phenomenology is constituted by appearances that are manifested in the subject's consciousness as environing items are presented to the subject's consciousness. Gupta, like the relationalists, eschews the notion of experiential content altogether, but is not committed to the core relationalist idea that every aspect of experiential phenomenology must be accounted for in terms of the subject's relation to mind-independent items. Nevertheless, for appearances to be manifested at all, Gupta requires that some item be presented to the subject's consciousness, which is what I called the **Item Requirement on Appearance (IRA)**. To be fully compatible with conceivable projection effects, more specifically, with total hallucinations that are brought about by such effects, this part of Gupta's view, I argued, should be modified. After considering several options, I proposed that the most conservative way to do so which also respects, in a sense, **IRA** as well is to allow that an empty presentational complex can serve as a formal item that can be present to consciousness. Thus modified, I think, Gupta's account is far superior to the relationalist accounts we considered earlier. Not only does it drop the idea that experience must inevitably be a relation to mind-independent items entirely, it is also fully compatible with all possible cases of **DVEP**, including total hallucinations that are based on projection effects.

Gupta's account, I noted, contains an interesting and crucially important element that he himself does not focus on much, but that, I suggested, is worth exploring: the notion of *rational linkages*. It is in virtue of these linkages that all experiences a subject could possibly have are hooked up with beliefs, judgments, etc. that it would, in the context of a given view, be rational to transition to if any of the various possible experiences were had. Accordingly, only in the presence of a view that contains such rational linkages, experience can play the general role that, on the conception that Gupta proposes and that I accept, it is taken to play.

In my discussion of these linkages, I distinguished *rational* from *actual* linkages, argued that we should reject as misleading an assertion Gupta occasionally makes, i.e. that experience *institutes* such linkages, and suggested that the notion of *seeing as* can be drawn upon to make our (fallible) conception of these linkages explicit and thus available for empirical debate. I also suggested that we construe such linkages as inference tickets from view-dependent descriptions of experiences to judgments, beliefs, etc. that upon having such experiences, it would be rational to transition to. Doing so, I claimed, provides us with a better understanding of how it is that these linkages are contained in the view: they form an important stratum of the inferential commitments that are implicit in the inferential articulation of those among our concepts that can figure in empirical descriptions.

Accepting the modified version of Gupta's account of appearances constituted the second crucial move of our inquiry. It provided the last missing piece necessary for constructing a kind of account that meets both constraints that guided our inquiry: to be fully compatible with doxastic variability and yet to be able to provide empirical constraint. In the next section, I will sum up the lessons that I think we have learned.

10.2 LESSONS LEARNED

Again, the aim of this inquiry was to find an account of experience that is fully compatible with the doxastic variability of experience in its various possible flavors and that at the same time has room for the thought that experience plays an important role in constraining our beliefs.

As we think about which lessons we learned, the results of our inquiry can be roughly divided into ones that are destructive, and ones that are constructive, and ones that concern open questions. I return to the latter in 10.4. Here I list, first, five major destructive and then three constructive results.

First, Hanson’s original account is flawed. It lacks an account of **Amalgamation** and an account of experiential phenomenology to undergird the proposed account of empirical constraint.

Second, relationalism, in its current state, is entirely unfit to meet our two constraints. Not only are the various notions of phenomenology we examined problematic (if not borderline unintelligible), they are also mostly incapable of accommodating expert vision and projection effects. The latter in particular is not incidental to the views we considered. Rather, it is due to relationalism’s fundamental tenet: that the nature and the role of experience is inevitably to relate subjects to mind-independent items.

Third, Siegel’s **Content View** is ill-motivated and deeply problematic in that it lacks an account of **Experiential Content**, an account of experiential phenomenology, and an account of how phenomenal states and experiential contents are related: an account of **Non-Arbitrariness**.

Fourth, standard representationalist accounts, on which the default role of experience is taken to be that of serving to justify beliefs, are in trouble when trying to accommodate putative cases of doxastic variation. They need to explain how it is that experiences that are affected by background views cannot play that default role. As our analysis of Siegel’s view illustrated, doing so may force them to go on the defense and take some fairly revisionary and unintuitive steps.³

³ I acknowledge—thus the ‘may’—that not every representationalist will see the need to even mount the kind of defenses that Siegel mounts or—for that matter—any defenses at all. I imagine, for instance, that John McDowell will respond to the possibility of doxastic effects on experience by remaining completely unperturbed and by shrugging them off. Rejecting any particular pressure to mount defenses, he would, I suspect, insist that though

Granted, we have only examined Siegel's account and the number of representationalist accounts is legion. But arguably, the problems we found are not incidental to Siegel's account. Ultimately, they rest on their conception of the default role experience plays for us, and on their idea that in order to play that role, experience must have content. To the extent that other representationalists share these commitments, on their views, similar problems will plausibly arise. Other representationalists, too, will need an account of **Experiential Content** that explains the Tycho-and-Kepler case, an account of experiential phenomenology, an account of **Non-Arbitrariness** that explains how the phenomenal and the conceptual relate, and a way of dealing with doxastic effects that shows that they do not undermine the default role standard representationalists take experience to play.

Fifth, and relatedly, given that relationalism and standard representationalism are currently the two dominant kinds of accounts of experience, the result that proponents of both camps struggle with accommodating such effects is highly significant. If it is true, as I suggested, that the difficulties we found are not merely incidental to the views we examined, numerous contemporary accounts of experience must be rejected.

The first constructive result is that, **sixth**, plenty of views that meet the two constraints are conceivable. I indicated repeatedly that the lessons we learned in chapters 8 and 9 could be used to supplement earlier views. The partial account of **Amalgamation** sketched in chapter 8 (and, relatedly, the account of empirical constraint and the account of modifiable amalgamation) could serve as a model for an account of **Non-Arbitrariness**, Hanson's account of **Experiential Content** could serve to supplement Siegel's view and the Siegelian view sketched in 7.3, and Gupta's (slightly modified) account of the phenomenology of experience could be used to supplement the Siegelian view and Siegel's view, and can easily be used to supplement Hanson's account, which solves the two major problems we found with Hanson's view in chapter 2. And if we drop Hanson's commitment to the idea that *seeing as* must be understood in terms of concepts that are operative in experience (the alternative conception was discussed in 9.2.3), the resulting view dodges the problem how we are to

perception is a capacity for acquiring knowledge, we must surely grant that this capacity is fallible and that there are circumstances in which we cannot exercise it non-defectively. I comment on this stance in 10.3.2.

think about the idea that in experience, conceptual capacities are quasi-automatically and passively deployed. Incidentally, Hanson's account of **Experiential Content** could also be used to supplement Gupta's view, who lacks a fully developed account of conceptual content.

The resulting view meets the two constraints that guided our inquiry. Moreover, quite possibly, further views can be developed that do, e.g. the views that we would get by fusing Gupta's presentationalist account with a) a Hansonian account that retains the idea that concepts are operative in experience, b) a Siegelian account roughly modeled on what was discussed in 7.3 (suitably complemented), or even c) Siegel's account. Neither of them settles in advance whether cases of doxastic variability are actual or physically possible or not. Whatever turns out to be the case, the resulting account will be compatible with it. Crucially, however, to meet the two constraints, the accounts mentioned need to adopt the general conception of experience in terms of making rational transitions to beliefs, judgments, etc. For if they adopt or retain a conception of experience on which experience, by default, serves to justify beliefs, or one on which it inevitably serves to put us in touch with mind-independent items, the problems discussed above crop up again.

Seventh, as the potpourri of views mentioned in the last paragraph indicates, the possibility of devising an account that meets the two constraints is entirely independent of whether one commits to the idea that experience has content.

Granted, the idea that Hansonians will insist on, e.g. that in experience, conceptual capacities are deployed automatically and passively, must be spelled out further. But if that can be done, representationalists would be in a good position to develop their account. And if one suggests that by comparison, Gupta's account is better off since it does not face this problem, recall that the positive characteristics of his notion of presence are not entirely worked out, either.⁴ Relationalism, on the other hand, is pretty much ruled out. That said, Gupta's presentationalism may serve as a substitute since it preserves many of the ideas relationalists hold dear: the idea that experience has no content,

⁴ Of course, this would be a problem that representationalists who endorse Gupta's presentationalist account may have, too. But maybe not. For they could argue that to make proper sense of the notion of presentation required, what is needed is exactly the idea that they insist on and that Gupta rejects: that in experience, conceptual capacities are passively deployed. I will officially remain neutral with respect to this issue.

that it cannot, thus, be erroneous, that the phenomenology of experience is important, and (like Genone) that what subjects may judge in response to their experience depends on their background view.

Eighth, and relatedly, the long-standing dispute between relationalists and standard representationalist concerning the question whether experience has content may in an important sense fail to get to the heart of the matter. Arguably, neither view can satisfactorily deal with doxastic variability. But this has nothing to do with their commitment in favor or against the notion of content. What really matters is getting the conception of the role of experience right. Once we do, the content/no-content dispute that has been dominating the contemporary debate for roughly two decades turns out to be secondary, at least with respect to this issue.⁵

There are more lessons we learned, but these, I take it, are the most important ones. In 10.4, I will list ways in which the project begun in this book can be pursued further. To bring some of them into focus, I consider, in the following section, two possible challenges to the kind of account of view I have been developing.

10.3 THE NO PHENOMENOLOGY CHALLENGE AND THE RECEPTIVE KNOWLEDGE COMPLAINT

In this section, I consider a challenge and a complaint. The former arises from a suggestion, offered by Robert Brandom, that we endorse a view that drops the notion of phenomenal experience entirely, and that we can do so without explanatory loss (10.3.1). The latter is a complaint John McDowell might raise: that the conception of experience we have been working towards fails to accommodate what he insists we must accommodate: a notion of receptive knowledge (10.3.2).

⁵ The latter concession reflects the fact that in light of what I noted in the previous footnote, a possible way of resisting the claim that the distinction is secondary *tout court* is to argue that the notion of presence can only be made sense of by way of drawing on the idea that presence requires the operation of concepts.

10.3.1 The *No Phenomenology* Challenge

If we look back at our discussion since chapter 7, we can see it as developing along the following trajectory: beginning from Siegel's **(Rich) Content View**, the discussion moved gradually further away from it by subsequently dropping various of Siegel's commitments.

Throughout, we sided with Siegel's claim that experience could be affected by beliefs, but also by various other forms of cognitive and psychological background states. Other parts of her view, however, were subsequently eschewed. The first and most important step was to drop Siegel's emphasis on justification and instead adopt a conception of the general role of experience as making rational view-dependent transitions to beliefs, etc. And since eschewing the focus on justification removed the motivation to accept Siegel's account of epistemic powers and her particular take on what subjects of hijacked experiences are rational to do, we dropped these as well.

The second step was to transition to a revamped Hansonian conception, the Hansonian Variable Content View. Doing so, in effect, involved dropping Siegel's problematic commitment to a notion of experiential content in terms of properties that are presented as instantiated, in and by experience. Since Siegel provides no account of how to understand such properties, adopting Hanson's broadly holistic account of content determination was a significant improvement. By providing such an account, his view is more powerful than Siegel's in at least the following respect: it allows him to address cases like the Tycho-and-Kepler case, whereas on Siegel's account, it is not obvious how this can be done.

The third step was to transition to a discussion of Gupta's presentationalist account, to analyze his conception of experience as involving the manifestation of appearances, and to ultimately embrace a slightly modified version of it that allows that appearances can be manifested in a subject's consciousness even if no item is presented to that subject's consciousness. Doing so involved dropping another one of Siegel's commitments: that to a very thin and rather uninformative account of experiential phenomenology. The consideration of Gupta's account then brought into view the option of dropping yet another one of Siegel's commitments: not just her commitment to a specific

conception of experiential content, but the commitment to the more general idea that experience has content in the first place. (I will hasten to add that for reasons indicated in the previous section, this move is not forced.)

As we review this trajectory, we might wonder why one should be moved to accept Gupta's conception of phenomenology in the first place. Since we are in the business of dropping unnecessary commitments anyway, why not drop the commitment to a notion of phenomenal experience altogether and propose an account on which all epistemic and rational work is done by a combination of the subject's background view and causal inputs that in turn trigger dispositions to make certain judgments, form certain beliefs, or take certain actions, say? After all, one could propose, all we need to get the process of world-driven view revision off the ground is a conception on which mind-independent items can help bring about beliefs or judgments that conflict with some standing beliefs contained in the antecedent view. If all experience does is to play the functional role of being that which brings about suitable beliefs or judgments (rationally or not), why not suggest that causal stimuli can play that role just as well and that accordingly, the notion of phenomenology construed in terms of appearances becomes otiose? And if such a view were equipped with a broadly holistic account of content, it would also retain the insights contained in the semantic aspect of Hanson's account of theory-ladenness as well.

Call a conception with that kind of shape the **No Phenomenology View**. The challenge it raises is this: why favor a presentational conception of experience over the **No Phenomenology View**?

We can grant that the notion of phenomenology is difficult to spell out. I, too, argued at length that relationalist accounts of experiential phenomenology are problematic in numerous ways. Also, and clearly, neither Hanson nor Siegel provide anything close to a satisfactory account of experiential phenomenology. Gupta's account, I contend, constitutes a major improvement in this respect. And yet, I argued that the notion of presentation Gupta relies on may need to be refined further. For one, it needs to be slightly modified so as to be fully compatible with projection effects. More importantly, however, it may need to be circumscribed more fully so as to delineate its positive characteristics more clearly and thus to distinguish it from—or perhaps characterize it as a specific subset of—ordinary

causal relations. In sum, if eschewing the notion of phenomenology altogether is motivated in part by the assessment that extant accounts of experiential phenomenology are not fully satisfactory, we may grant that such an assessment has some force.

However, it is one thing to say that there are respects in which extant accounts of x are still wanting, and quite another to claim that this renders the notion of x unnecessary or, stronger even, unintelligible. As for the stronger claim, arguably, even the notion of experiential phenomenology in terms of ‘what it’s like’ to have an experience can be further restricted so as to remove the subject’s responses to her experience from its scope and thus point us towards what remains, i.e. to that which arguably, Gupta’s notion of appearance is intended to capture. Further, suppose that like Hanson, someone were to talk about the phenomenal dimension of experience in terms of image-like elements that represent pictorially or, as some relationalists do, in terms of *looking some specific way*, e.g. *F*. We may resist such characterizations for sound theoretical reasons. But dismissing them on the grounds that it is completely unclear what they are supposed to capture constitutes a much more radical move. It involves a radical break with a common conception of experiential consciousness on which being conscious involves not just the actualization of conceptual capacities, but at least *also* a kind of phenomenal awareness that is distinctive of experience and absent in thought.

Again, we should concede that there are good reasons why one might reject some specific accounts of experiential phenomenology. I provided my own reasons why some such conceptions should be rejected. Another reason, briefly discussed in 2.3.1, is that on accounts that most contemporary philosophers reject (as did Hanson), phenomenal states are taken to be perceptions of epistemological intermediaries, i.e. sense-data, that play a very distinct epistemological role: that of providing, somehow, a sort of basic and indubitable knowledge. If one then also tries to draw on knowledge of such intermediaries in an attempt to ground knowledge about mind-independent things, the specter of skepticism looms large. Also, such accounts constitute what many consider a prime example of the so-called Myth of the Given. Consider the following characterization of this myth offered by Robert Brandom:

- (1) [t]he Myth of the Given is the claim that there is some kind of experience the having of which does not presuppose grasp of concepts, such that merely *having* the experience counts as *knowing* something, or can serve as *evidence* for beliefs, judgments, claims, and so on, that such a nonconceptual experience can *rationally ground*, and not just causally occasion, belief. (Brandom 2002, p. 93)

Let us begin by noting that though both Hanson and Gupta could well agree that being in phenomenal states need not *presuppose* the grasp of concepts (though Hanson will insist that having *epistemically significant* experiences does presuppose such grasp), neither thinks that being in such phenomenal states can by itself provide knowledge, evidence, or rational grounds.

As for Hanson, our discussion in 2.3.1 brought out the following: given his conception of what makes experience epistemically significant—the involvement of concepts in the form of instances of *seeing as*—and the constraint that he takes to govern the intelligibility of such concepts—that some beliefs that we, too, would count as knowledgeable be already involved in the subject’s background view—he thinks that for one to epistemically capitalize on one’s experience, a background view that contains knowledge so construed must already be in place. Also, on his view, the content of experience is not propositional in form. Thus, gaining knowledge from experience would at the very least require that the subject also endorse that things in fact are the way she *sees* things *as*—and that she do so for good reasons. For Hanson, thus, to think that some knowledge could be derived from experience—from scratch, as it were—is both to mistake what it takes for experiential content to be intelligible and to ignore the fact that such content is not propositional and thus not a content that could so much as petition us to endorse it. Hanson’s account, in sum, does not fall into the Myth of the Given as Brandom characterizes it.

It is also a crucial element of Gupta’s view that experiential phenomenology in and of itself does not and cannot provide knowledge. Having an experience, on his view, is not to gain knowledge by acquaintance, e.g. of appearances. Also, as experience has no content, it cannot serve to provide one, on its own accord, with propositional contents. Like for Hanson, for Gupta, too, experience cannot play its role in isolation: to play it, a background view that contains linkages to experience needs to be in place. Gupta’s view, too, avoids the Myth of the Given as Brandom characterizes it.

Finally, while it is true that both on Gupta's view and on the Hansonian Variable Content View sketched in chapter 8 experience plays the role of rationally grounding something—viz. transitions to certain judgments, beliefs, etc.—again, it cannot do so in isolation. For experience to play that role, a suitable background view that contains the requisite rational linkages must be in place.

If it seems counterintuitive and radically revisionary to reject Hanson's and Gupta's notions of experience on the grounds that they are unintelligible, and if, moreover, neither falls into the Myth of the Given as specified, one can still try to defend the following claim: these notions are unnecessary since they serve no explanatory purpose. We might still feel significant pressure to accommodate the idea that experience has a phenomenology. Again, giving up this idea is at odds with philosophical and, arguably, ordinary conceptions of consciousness that are thoroughly entrenched. But suppose it was granted that our human constitution happens to be such that when the world causally impinges on us, such impingement is accompanied by some distinctive experiential phenomenology only contingently. One could still insist that this phenomenology, however one cares to specify it, plays no significant explanatory role. Put this way, the proponent of the **No Phenomenology** view—the **Contra-Phenomenologist**—challenges us to spell out what good the notion of phenomenology does for us and insists that as long as no answer is provided, the notion had better be dropped.

Let us consider a proposal that some Contra-Phenomenologists embrace: all one needs to issue an observation judgment is two distinguishable sorts of practical know-how. Here is how Brandom, a professed Contra-Phenomenologist, characterizes them:

- (2) First, one must have acquired a *reliable differential responsive disposition*: a disposition reliably to respond differentially to some kind of stimulus. Which stimuli we can come differentially to respond to depends on how we are wired up and trained. [...] Second, one must have the capacity to produce *conceptually articulated* responses: to respond to red things not just by pecking at one button or closing one circuit rather than another, but by *claiming* that there is something red present. (Brandom 2002, p. 96)

Again, the suggestion the Contra-Phenomenologist offers is that having such dispositions to respond in a conceptually articulated way is all we need to make sense of the idea that by causally eliciting such conceptually articulated responses in us, the world can exert empirical constraint on our beliefs. The notion of experiential phenomenology serves no explanatory purpose.

I contend that a defender of the idea that the notion of phenomenology *is* useful—a **Pro-Phenomenologist**—can do more than resorting to intuitions about the nature of consciousness (no matter how widely these are shared) or than insisting that at least her notion of experience avoids the Myth of the Given. Instead, she can point to the fact that there are multiple possible combinations of environing items, properties, and subjective states such as brain states, states of the visual system, or cognitive and psychological features, including beliefs, that can elicit, in a given subject and in suitable circumstances, the same conceptually articulated response. In other words, wildly different stimulus conditions can each trigger the same response. And in suitable circumstances, responding to such different stimuli in the same way can be a perfectly rational thing to do.

To have an example, suppose that you are presented, first, with a piece of red chalk in ordinary sunlight, second, with a piece of white chalk in red light, third, with a piece of yellow chalk seen through a magenta filter, fourth, with a piece of chalk that is yellow, but due to some futuristic device or hypnotic technique, you are suddenly saddled with the irrational, but irresistible belief that all pieces of chalk must be red. Then, fifth, you have a total hallucination as of a red piece of chalk.

Suppose, moreover, that you have no idea of what the various conditions are that you find yourself in—you know nothing about lighting conditions, nor about any filters that may have been placed between you and the piece of chalk, nor are you aware of the fact that suddenly, an irrational belief intrudes your mental economy, or that you are having a total hallucination. In each case, let us assume, you form the following belief: this piece of chalk is red. (Obviously, only in the first of the scenarios, the judgment you arrive at is true, in the others, it is false.) What, the Pro-Phenomenologist can ask, serves to explain that you are disposed to give identical responses in these very different cases?

I confess that I am uncertain what answer the Contra-Phenomenologist can offer. To insist that it is simply a brute fact that you have dispositions to respond to various actual and possible conditions that yield the same output—i.e. a judgment to the effect that some piece of chalk is red—is to reject the demand for an explanation. To say that in these various scenarios, the causal chains have some common element that serves as trigger for the disposition seems rather ambitious, given that the situations are so different (and more radically different ones could be devised). At the very least, it

incurs the burden of providing a way of specifying that common element. If, in contrast, we ask the Pro-Phenomenologist, she has an answer readily available: on her view, all these cases share a common feature. In each of them, the various items presented to your consciousness—and in one case, the absence of such items, conjoined with whatever causes the hallucination (a belief or a brain state, say)—are such that in the perceptual situation at hand, the appearances that are manifested in your consciousness are subjectively identical. On the assumption that the subject's background view does not significantly change between the presentations of chalk pieces, having an experience with the same phenomenology will thus (actually or rationally) prompt the same response.⁶

The Pro-Phenomenologist thus offers a specific conception of what it is that the reliably differential responsive dispositions Brandom refers to are dispositions to respond *to*. According to this conception, they are responses to what appearances are manifested in the subject's consciousness. At the same time, the Pro-Phenomenologist will happily assert that having experiences with a certain phenomenology need not always trigger the same response. Since the relevant dispositions to respond are view-dependent, in different situations or (time-slices of) subjects, having experiences with the same phenomenology can trigger (either actually or rationally) very different responses. To take one of Brandom's own examples, having two experiences with the same phenomenology can trigger, against the backdrop of one doxastic content, the judgment that there is a characteristically shaped track in a cloud chamber, while against the backdrop of another doxastic context, it can trigger the judgment that a mu meson is present.

There may be other ways in which the notion of phenomenology is explanatorily helpful. One way that we have not discussed is provided by Gupta's account of ostensive definitions. On it, roughly, having certain experiences can make it rational for subjects to transition to the stipulation of an ostensive definition (see Gupta 2019, chapter 8). By way of issuing such definitions, the concepts

⁶ For the fourth case, this assumption could be false. However, suppose that the strong irrational belief has a very local effect. It could affect either the appearance presented by the yellow chalk such as to turn it into an appearance that makes rational the judgment that the chalk is red, or determine what, given an appearance as of a yellow chalk, it is rational to transition to: viz. the judgment that it is red. The former would be an instance of a projection effect, the latter a background-view induced change in the rational linkages the subject's background contains. Since what I need for my example is subjective identity, not change in linkages, I stipulate that the case at hand is a projection effect.

ostensively defined get to be associated with various appearances—in part by being associated with some of the appearances that are, when the definition is issued, manifest in the subject’s consciousness, in part by becoming suitably related to appearances that are already associated with the concepts that figure in the ostensive definition.⁷ If we call the sum of such associations a concept’s *phenomenological profile*, this notion can serve to enrich the notion of conceptual content and undergird a distinction between concepts that have—on the view under consideration and in specifiable circumstances—observational uses and concepts that lack such uses.⁸ At the same time, such associations, too, need not be robust and could be subject to change. Moreover, if we reject **Ineffability**, we can argue, as in the case of rational linkages discussed in 9.2.3, that by drawing on the notion of *seeing as*, the associations constitutive of a concept’s phenomenological profile can be made explicit and thus be made available for rational criticism.

In sum, the claim that the notion of phenomenology is explanatorily otiose is not obviously true. And while I do not pretend to have fully settled the issue, I propose the following: if we take into account that rejecting the notion of experiential phenomenology is a highly revisionary move and that some strong motivations for dismissing specific such notions do not apply to Hanson’s and Gupta’s respective views, to step further away from Siegel’s view by rejecting the notion of phenomenology altogether is a step that takes us too far. Put in a more conciliatory fashion: to the extent that what motivates the Contra-Phenomenologist’s rejection of the notion of phenomenology is the worry that by accepting such a notion one would endorse the existence of something that is taken to do some explanatory work and at the same time cannot be subjected to rational criticism, it can be conceded that such a worry would have force. But with respect to Gupta’s account of phenomenology, particularly in the context of rejecting **Ineffability**, such a worry, I claim, would be misplaced.

⁷ Note that according to Gupta, ostensive definitions cannot occur in the absence of a view. Thus, and emphatically, they do *not* provide a way of addressing the problem of **Linkage Setup**.

⁸ For the notion of phenomenological profile, see Gupta 2019, chapter 7, esp. §188f. Phenomenological profiles are similar to what, in my discussion of the Hansonian Variable Content View, I called *dispositions of amalgamation* in the following respect: both serve to associate concepts with phenomenal states or appearances.

10.3.2 The *Receptive Knowledge* Complaint

As he comments on Gupta 2006, John McDowell claims that to devise an account on which empirical rationality is intelligible “we *must* find a way to make sense of receptive knowledge,” (McDowell 2009a, p. 468), where receptive knowledge is obtained if one can recover from individual experience how things are in the world. In saying that one *perceives* that such-and-such is the case, McDowell points out, one claims epistemic credentials of a certain sort for believing that such-and-such is the case. But on Gupta’s view, he insists, such credentials cannot be exhausted by what one’s experience gives one. Rather, “they have to be reconstructed out of that plus something not given by the experience itself” (McDowell 2009a, p. 468). And this, McDowell urges, is no truism.⁹

Moreover, he claims, citing Rödl (2007) for support, that if we fail to make sense of receptive knowledge, knowledge immediately yielded by experience, we make empirical rationality unintelligible. (ibid., p. 468) The worry, then, is that an account that, like Gupta’s, implements the idea that the role of experience is to make rational view-dependent transitions to beliefs, judgments, etc. has no room for receptive knowledge.

In what follows, I respond to this worry in two ways. First, I give an overview of some of McDowell’s most recent statements pertinent to the conception receptive knowledge and raise some questions concerning the conditions that on his own view must be in place to make such knowledge possible (10.3.2.1).

Second, I will provide some pointers as to how, on a Hansonian Variable Content View that has been enriched by Gupta’s presentationalist account of experiential phenomenology, such conditions would have to be specified (10.3.2.2). I suggest that if we accept McDowell’s claim that a satisfactory account of experience must allow us to make sense of receptive knowledge, the view we have been considering does provide some resources to implement such a notion. Since the notion may turn out

⁹ In the introduction to Gupta 2006, Gupta cites it as a truism that the same subjective character of experience can be brought about by the collaboration of very different factors. (see the section entitled *The Multiple-Factorizability of Experience*, Gupta 2006, beginning on p. 5). Thus, Gupta suggests, if the subject is just provided with an individual experience that has some subjective character, she cannot recover any knowledge about the world or the self.

to merely play the role of a regulative ideal, it may well be that McDowell remains dissatisfied. Settling the issue, I suggest, requires an account that neither Gupta nor McDowell provide: an account of what conditions need to be met for something to intelligibly count as a view.

10.3.2.1 McDowell on Receptive Knowledge Perception, McDowell's holds, is first and foremost "the capacity for knowledge through impacts of reality on the senses" (McDowell 2018, p. 89). Knowledge yielded by perception, he contends, is empirical rationality at work. To understand empirical rationality, i.e. how experience relates rationally to judgment, McDowell suggests that we must begin by understanding non-defective operations of empirical rationality in what he calls its *fundamental mode*. In such non-defective operations of empirical rationality in its fundamental mode, the subject engages in self-conscious acts of issuing judgments that are knowledgeable. She issues such judgments on the basis of her perceptual experience—"on the ground that it is manifest to her in her experience that things are as she judges them to be" (McDowell 2018, p. 90). For that is what experiences that are perceptions do for us, McDowell asserts, they make ways things in fact are in the world perceptually manifest to the subject. Moreover, it is, he claims, internal to perceptual experiences that they are potentially a ground for perceptually knowledgeable judgments (*ibid.*, p. 91). For experience to make ways things in fact are perceptually manifest to the subject, which is for them to be such potential grounds, involves, McDowell claims, an actualization of the same conceptual capacities that in their complete actualization involve the issuing of knowledgeable judgments.

The actualization of these capacities in perceptual experience makes available what McDowell elsewhere calls *intuitional content* (cf. e.g. McDowell ms.), which, like judgments, owes its specific unity to the faculty of concepts and is non-discursive, since as of yet unarticulated content. But it is due to the form it possesses by virtue of the unity it has that such content is potentially conceptual content—content, that is, that can figure in discursive operations. For one can, by issuing a judgment, articulate such content and thus make it discursively available (or parts thereof, since articulation, McDowell remarks, brings loss of specificity). And if judgments are grounded on the perception of how things in fact are, they *entail* that things are as they are judged to be, and are thus truly knowledgeable.

There are various subtle aspects of McDowell's position which in the present context we can ignore. But against the background of our previous discussion, even this brief sketch raises a number of questions. More specifically, it raises questions concerning what McDowell thinks needs to be in place, on the part of the subject, for it to possess the kind of capacity for receptive knowledge he thinks one must make room for to make the notion of empirical rationality intelligible in the first place. *Inter alia*, such questions concern what determines what it is that the conceptual capacities that McDowell, like Hanson, takes to be operative both in (human) experience (broadly construed) itself and in issuing judgments, are conceptual capacities *for*.

To make this more vivid, consider the case Hanson discusses: both Tycho and Kepler look at the sun, in identical circumstances, and *see it as* the sun. If Hanson is right, their judgments express different propositions, since for each of them, the concept sun has a different meaning. Suppose each of them issues the following judgment: "This is the sun," or the token judgments p and p^* , for short. How are we, on McDowell's view, to characterize what is going on as they issue their respective judgments?

First off, are the judgment tokens issued by Tycho and Kepler, respectively, instances of empirical rationality operating in its fundamental mode? Perhaps not. For note that McDowell distinguishes empirical rationality in its fundamental mode from empirical rationality that is "at work in judgments *inferentially grounded* on things the judging subject perceives to be the case" McDowell 2018, p. 90, emphasis added). Moreover, McDowell recognizes that experiences can ground knowledge in such a way that the subject non-defectively employs her fallible capacities to *recognize* what her experience makes manifest to her *as* falling under certain concepts. And the contents of the judgment issued by way of non-defectively employing such recognitional capacities need not themselves figure in the intuitional content that is yielded by the actualization of the conceptual capacities that make how things in fact are manifest to the subject. Perceptual knowledge that we gain by recognizing cardinals or tables, say, does not require that the intuitional content of our experience contains the content cardinal or table.

Given this distinction, whether the judgment tokens Tycho and Kepler issue count as instances of empirical rationality operating in its fundamental mode, or as instances of empirical rationality at work in judgments inferentially grounded on things Tycho and Kepler perceive to be the case, or as instances of empirical rationality at work in judgments that they issued by way of employing certain recognitional capacities will depend, on McDowell's view, on what distinguishes these various ways for empirical rationality to be at work, and to which kind of way, accordingly, the token judgments that we imagine Tycho and Kepler as issuing count as belonging. Suppose one's background view concerning contained a significant number of beliefs about the sun, each of them knowledgeable. Would that fact make the conceptual capacity that is involved in one's issuing judgments about the sun a capacity that could figure in non-defective operations of empirical rationality in its fundamental mode? Or are the capacities whose actualization count as operations of that specific kind limited to certain kinds of conceptual capacities? To make this distinction clearer, what is needed is an account of what the intuitional content of an experience can possibly be.

A related question concerns what it takes for the actualization of such a capacity to be non-defective. Suppose that we take the conceptual capacities involved in Tycho's and Kepler's token judgments p and p^* to be recognitional capacities. What needs to be the case for one to be able to exercise this capacity in a non-defective way?

A simple but largely uninformative answer is that one needs to be able to self-consciously issue knowledgeable judgments about the sun, and to do so on the ground that one recognizes that the ways things in fact are that are made manifest in one's experience are such that the thing perceived falls under the concept sun.

But what is required for one to have this ability? Suppose we assume, again, that all the many beliefs a subject S holds about the sun are knowledgeable. Presumably, having some such knowledgeable beliefs would have to play at least *some* role in co-constituting S 's capacity to issue judgments about the sun that are either non-defective operations of empirical rationality in its

fundamental mode or non-defective operations of a suitable *recognitional* capacity.¹⁰ Suppose so. But what if we were to now remove one knowledgeable belief about the sun from *S*'s background view, what if two, three, four, etc.? If so, would the remaining beliefs still serve to co-constitute a recognitional capacity that can provide knowledge? The question has a somewhat absurd ring to it. Having a recognitional capacity for acquiring receptive knowledge with respect to some object, it seems, should not be taken to depend on the number of knowledgeable beliefs one holds about that item. And yet, it also sounds right that for co-constituting such a capacity, having too few of such beliefs might be insufficient.

Alternatively, let us ask what would happen if we made one, two three, or more of *S*'s beliefs about the sun false or irrational? Would that deprive her of the recognitional capacity? Depending on how one answers this question, the conception of what is required for one to possess conceptual capacities necessary to acquire knowledge about the sun can turn out to be very demanding.

Arguably, we should construe Tycho's and Kepler's respective token judgments *p* and *p** as being issued from within a doxastic context that contains at least some false beliefs about the sun. Accordingly, with respect to *p* and *p** we can ask: can they still count as non-defective exercises of empirical rationality at work (in either of its modes) in such a way that the resulting judgments are knowledgeable? Or are we to say that *p* and *p** could not have been fully or properly grounded on what has been made manifest in their respective experiences, because both these judgments and the conceptual capacities that in issuing such judgments are actualized are intelligible only in a context that contains false beliefs? Do Tycho and Kepler, in issuing *p* and *p**, respectively, exercise their extant recognitional capacities to recognize the sun defectively or are we to say that given their false beliefs, Tycho and Kepler lack the capacity to recognize the sun altogether?

If either of these options is accepted, it seems that we should say that their respective token judgments do not count as instances of receptive knowledge. Of course, if asked how they know that the sun has risen, each of them would say that this is the kind of thing they can know because they

¹⁰ For simplicity, I am ignoring the third option, i.e possibility that this could be a case of empirical rationality at work in judgments *inferentially grounded* on things the judging subject perceives to be the case.

can see it. Still, since what they take themselves to be seeing will differ from what is actually there to be seen—certainly in Tycho’s case and perhaps to some extent in Kepler’s as well—the propositions expressed by p and p^* , respectively, should not be knowledgeable.

Suppose we approach the example from a different angle and ask what individuates the conceptual capacities that are actualized in p and p^* , respectively, and what individuates the capacities actualized in their having their respective experiences in the first place.

As for the former, let us assume again, that we construe them as fallible recognitional capacities. These capacities—are they the same in both Tycho and Kepler or are they different? If they are the same, what makes them the same? That they target the same physical object? If they are different, is that fact a function of the differences in the views they hold about what kind of thing the sun is?

As for the latter, the capacities actualized as Tycho and Kepler have their respective experiences and that that account for the *intuitional* content of their respective experiences—are they the same in both or different and what determines the answer to this question? Moreover, are these capacities such that *their* actualization puts Tycho, Kepler, or both in a position, in principle, to acquire at least *some* receptive knowledge of the sun on the ground that it is, due to the actualization of these capacities, manifest to them in their respective experiences that things are as they could judge them to be (even if they do not)?

To deny this would be to deny that they perceive the sun, which rings implausible. Not to deny it, however, raises the question what the conceptual capacities are that make manifest to them, in their respective experiences, ways things in fact are with the sun. And if some way of specifying these capacities is proposed, we can ask, further, whether for *those* capacities to be available to the subject to actualize them in experience depends on further conditions that their background views meet, e.g. that they hold a sufficient number of knowledgeable beliefs about what these capacities are capacities for or, perhaps, that in the experiencing subject’s background view, the relevant concepts are articulated in some suitable way.

If so, one would again like to know what the conditions are that the background view must meet for the capacity to make manifest ways things in fact are, in experience, to be one that the subject

counts as possessing. And if neither the presence of suitable knowledgeable beliefs (again: which ones? how many?) nor a suitable articulation of the relevant concepts in the subject's background view is what is required for a subject to possess a capacity that enables her to gain receptive knowledge, the question arises: what then?

Which conceptual capacities account, by their being actualized in experience, for the intuitional content that can serve as potential ground for knowledgeable judgments? On one view, the relevant conceptual capacities that could be actualized in non-defective operations of empirical rationality in its fundamental mode that make available potential grounds for knowledgeable judgments are restricted to the conceptual capacities necessary for acquiring knowledge of, say, secondary and perhaps some primary qualities such as color, shape, or movement. Alternatively, one could think of them as of also including conceptual capacities necessary for acquiring perceptual knowledge of middle-sized material things of forms of the living (see McDowell ms.; McDowell 2009).

Some answer to this question is needed, but no matter how we answer it, the more pressing question is how we are to think about these capacities. It is an open, but pressing question what needs to be in place for the capacities that *do* make available, by being actualized in the subject's experience itself, potential grounds for knowledgeable judgments, to in fact *be* such capacities, i.e. capacities that enable one to acquire receptive knowledge. It seems highly plausible that at least part of what needs to be in place is that the subject hold a background view that meets certain minimum requirements. If so, one would like to know what, according to McDowell, these requirements are.¹¹

In this section, I began by providing a sketch of McDowell's notion of receptive knowledge and suggested that to assess whether a given notion of experience can accommodate such a notion, many questions need to be addressed first about what the possession of the capacity for acquiring such knowledge entails about the subject's mental economy. Instead of trying to determine what

¹¹ These are only some of the questions that arise if we look at McDowell's own position. Further questions arise if, e.g. like Hanson and Siegel, one takes it that the content one's experience makes available to one is amalgamated or non-arbitrarily associated with certain kinds of phenomenal states. For it could be that for one's conceptual capacities to be such as to enable the subject to issue knowledgeable judgments on the ground that ways things are manifest to her in her experience, the relevant concepts must be associated with such states in the right kind of way.

McDowell's answers to these various questions might be, I will, in the next section, provide a sketch of what, on the kind of account that we have been considering, would have to be in place for receptive knowledge of the kind that McDowell insists we must make room for to be possible.

10.3.2.2 Hansonian Receptive Knowledge In 10.1, I claimed that accounts of experience that fully accommodate the doxastic variability of experience and that at the same time leave room for the idea that experience can constrain our views can be constructed regardless of whether one accepts the idea that experience has content. Since McDowell does accommodate a notion of content, I will frame the following in terms of a view that involves a commitment to experiential content as well, i.e. by drawing on the Hansonian Variable Content View, supplemented by Gupta's presentationalist account of appearances as manifested in the experiencing subject's consciousness.¹² Analogous considerations, I contend, could be given just in terms of Gupta's presentationalism as well.¹³

In the last section, the overarching question raised was the following: how must we think about the conceptual capacities that are operative both in the subject's experience and in the subject's response to it for receptive knowledge to be possible?

As we think about how to address this question from the perspective afforded by the revamped and supplemented Hansonian view we are considering, recall, first, that on such a view, if a subject *S* undergoes an experience, it can happen that what undergoing the experience triggers are *dispositions to transition* to beliefs and judgments that in light of *S*'s view it is not in fact rational to transition to. Since in such a case, *S* may respond to her experience in a way that is neither rationally required nor permissible, we will have to say that the resulting judgments cannot be non-defective exercises of

¹² For what follows, it is irrelevant that, as I argued in 9.1.2, Gupta's presentationalism may need to be slightly modified so as to be fully compatible with the idea that projection effects could be what brings about total hallucinations.

¹³ I am assuming, whereas Gupta is not, that the inferential articulation of concepts accounts for an essential part of a concept's content. Accordingly, to the extent that in the following, I draw on the idea the content of experience (which, recall, Gupta thinks is an otiose notion) and the content of the judgments that the subject, in response to her experience, transitions to, is co-determined by the inferential articulation of those judgments and the concepts figuring in them within the subject's background view, Gupta himself might demur. However, on the assumption that no principled objections stand in the way of combining a Gupta-style account of experience with a broadly holistic account of content determination, arguably, on a view that combines these elements, analogous considerations will be possible.

empirical rationality. Accordingly, as we consider candidate cases of receptive knowledge, we must focus on cases in which *S* self-consciously transitions to judgments, etc. that are indeed rational by the lights of her experience and her view.¹⁴

Consider cases, then, in which *S* self-consciously transitions to judgments in such a way that her transition is in accordance with what by the lights of her experience and her view is in fact rational. However, depending on the details of *S*'s background view, it may well be that the judgments that in response to her experience she self-consciously and rationally transitions to are neither true, rational, nor justified. For it could be that her background view is partly false or her outlook partly irrational and that these parts are partly involved in the transition in question. Moreover, it could also be that the phenomenology of her experience, the content of the *seeing as* that via suitable *dispositions of amalgamation* is amalgamated with the specific phenomenal state that she is in as she undergoes her experience, or the *dispositions of amalgamation* themselves are modified by such background conditions. But it could also be that these effects are counteracted by suitable beliefs.

Accordingly, if we think about what suitable candidate cases of receptive knowledge could be, we should also hold that for receptive knowledge to be possible, such effects must either be absent or at the very least counteracted by suitable beliefs.¹⁵

Note that the former option need not be construed as requiring that *S*'s background view be completely free from false or irrational elements. For it may be that in the perceptual context in question, these elements have no effect. Suppose, for example, that everything you believe about the

¹⁴ It could happen that a given subject transitions to a judgment that would indeed be rational for her to transition to, in the context at hand, without its being the case that the transition is brought about in the right kind of way. It could be, for instance, that in a given subject, having an experience triggers her disposition to transition to a judgment which merely happens to be one that it is, in light of her view and her experience, rational to transition to, but that the subject does not transition to it for that reason. To rule out such cases, I included the condition that the subject *self-consciously* transition to the judgments at hand, which I intend to imply that her transitioning to the judgment is a conscious transition to what, in the light of her view, it is rational to transition to, *for the reason* that she acknowledges that her making such a transition is rational in that way.

¹⁵ Whether one accepts the latter will depend on how one answers questions like the following: can a judgment issued on the basis of a hijacked or a illusory experience, where the doxastic background is such that it counteracts the hijacking or the illusion count as a case in which the subject acquires receptive knowledge? Suppose I know that I am in conditions in which red things look green and green things look yellow (say). Can I, by looking at what looks green to me, acquire receptive knowledge that the thing I am looking at is red? If I know that what I am looking at is the Müller-Lyer illusion, can I acquire receptive knowledge about the length of the lines?

sun is correct. Suppose, further, that you hold a false belief about, say, a highly theoretical mathematical conjecture such as e.g. the *Goldbach Conjecture*, or an irrational implicit bias about members of a certain group.¹⁶ Plausibly, these false or irrational elements need not affect the content of your experience or the judgments you rationally transition to in response to it in any significant way.

It must be noted, however, that the question whether the presence of such false or irrational elements has any or no significant effects on the content of perceptual judgments, i.e. where significant effects would be such as to undermine their status as knowledgeable, depends on the details of the broadly holistic account of content determination our Hansonian endorses. For on some such accounts, the individuation of contents will be extremely fine-grained, so that every difference in the background view will entail a difference in the contents contained in any given judgment.¹⁷ On other such accounts, the individuation of content will be less fine-grained. On such accounts, undermining the status of judgments as being knowledgeable may be less easy.

The details of Hanson's own view are unclear. But plainly, for a Hansonian to accept the claim that false and irrational elements may not affect the contents of perceptual judgments in any significant way would be to incur a burden: she would need to provide a holistic account of content determination that yields that result. To reject the claim, however, is to impose very strong constraints indeed on what needs to be the case for receptive knowledge to be possible. For it would then be possible only if the background view satisfies very demanding requirements on the truth, rationality, and justificatory status of its component beliefs. Receptive knowledge, on such a view, would turn out to be akin to a regulative ideal, something to aspire to, but that need not in fact be part of all ordinary epistemic practices of issuing perceptual judgments.

Even on such a view, however, receptive knowledge remains possible, even though it is true that the ideal provided by the conception of an ideal background view that would enable subjects to acquire

¹⁶ According to the Goldbach Conjecture, every even integer greater than two is the sum of two prime numbers.

¹⁷ An argument for such an account may be construed on the basis of pointing out that in any given view, all concepts are such that they are at least implicitly connected via various subjunctive conditionals. See Brandom 2015, chapter 6 for a relevant discussion.

such knowledge may be a distant one.¹⁸ This need not be worrisome if one is also happy to accept that in our ordinary epistemic practices, attributions to the effect that a given judgment is an instance of knowledge are strongly context- and view-dependent.¹⁹

To illustrate, suppose that in our presence, Tycho utters the sentence “This is the sun.” Arguably, in many practical contexts, we could take his utterance as an instance of knowledge. In doing so, we would take his utterance to be such that his word “sun” serves to single out a specific item that we, too, think is currently present in our environment. And in the context at hand, singling out that item may be all that is required. In other contexts, we could well disagree with his utterance, for instance if it is a context in which the sun has been characterized as an object that behaves in ways we think it cannot behave, e.g. as moving around the stationary earth. In such a context, the difference between Tycho’s and our background beliefs would be conversationally salient. Accordingly, we might take his utterance “This is the sun” as an assertion to the effect that the item that he recognizably singles out is a kind of thing that we think it is not. And while in such a context, a fellow Tychonian would still take Tycho’s utterance to be an instance of knowledge, we certainly would not.

Presumably, for McDowell, the idea that the possibility of receptive knowledge is merely that associated with a potentially distant regulative ideal will be unsatisfactory. He might wish to insist that receptive knowledge *must* be involved in any ordinary epistemic practice of judging for it to be an epistemic practice at all.²⁰

¹⁸ To show that on such a view, receptive knowledge is impossible, one would have to show that it is impossible, e.g. through a process of revisions of views, to eventually arrive at a background view that meets these strong constraints.

¹⁹ Recall that in chapter 2, it was suggested that on Hanson’s view, the knowledge a background view must contain to make instances of *seeing as* intelligible was *knowledge as attributed*, e.g. by us. The idea was that we could not make sense of anything as a practice involving *seeing as* unless some of the beliefs that within that practice co-determine the content of the concepts that complement the *seeing as* locution are such that we, too, consider them as knowledgeable.

²⁰ See McDowell 2009a, pp. 468-9: “[W]e *must* find a way to make sense of receptive knowledge, knowledge immediately yielded by experience. Otherwise we make empirical rationality unintelligible. [reference to Rödl 2007, chapter 3]. If that is right, then when he accepts the supposed truism [i.e. that individual experience in and of itself does not allow us to recover how things are in the world] Gupta deprives himself of the very idea of rationality in empirical belief. There is no prospect of reconstructing that idea, in terms of revision sequences or anything else, in a context that includes denying something on which the idea’s viability depends.” In McDowell 2009a, McDowell does not pursue this line of argument further. For present purposes, what matters is that the passage can be read as suggesting that on McDowell’s view, receptive knowledge cannot simply be a regulatory ideal, but must be part of very epistemic practice.

Showing how this is possible, on the view we are considering, would require some heavy lifting and I confess that I am not certain whether it can be done at all. One way of making some progress could be to provide an argument for the suggestion indicated above: that false and irrational elements in one's background view need not always matter for whether the judgments that—upon having a certain experience in the context of a given background view—one rationally transitions to are knowledgeable.²¹ Even if such an argument were provided, however, one would still need to show that anything that could possibly be an epistemic practice presupposes a context in which at least some conceptual capacities of the participating subjects are such as to enable them to acquire receptive knowledge of this kind.

Whether and why there is a pressing need for an argument of the latter kind is an interesting question. Gupta, in his response to McDowell (cf. Gupta 2009) in effect rejects the idea McDowell and Rödl endorse, i.e. that to make sense of empirical rationality, one needs to accommodate the idea that every possible epistemic practice must make sense of receptive knowledge.

Resolving this dispute goes beyond what I can here hope to achieve. Instead, I close by noting the following: presumably, both Gupta and McDowell will grant that for something to be an epistemic practice, the participating agents must enjoy experiences, accept or hold (at least implicitly) a view, and possess various conceptual capacities. Resolving Gupta's and McDowell's dispute, I suggest, thus requires providing, *inter alia*, an account of what is required for someone to hold a view in the first place and an account of how conceptual capacities are to be understood and individuated.

²¹ Doing so could require giving an account of the content of perceptual judgments on which it becomes intelligible that the doxastic context that serves to co-determine such contents can be isolated from certain erroneous beliefs that figure in the subject's background view overall. Alternatively, one could try to specify such contents by drawing on the phenomenological profiles associated with the concepts figuring in the perceptual judgments in question. However, as long as such accounts of content are pending, what the prospects of such strategies are must remain an open question.

In 10.3.2.1, I raised corresponding questions for McDowell. Here, I will add that Gupta does not provide a full account of what constraints must be in place for something to intelligibly count as a view,²² either, nor of how we are to understand conceptual capacities and what individuates them.

We are left, thus, not with a solution, but with a set of further tasks. In the next section, I close by summing up a number of ways in which the current inquiry could be fruitfully continued and by outlining a few areas of philosophical research to which its current results can be fruitfully applied.

10.4 STILL NO END IN SIGHT: OPEN QUESTIONS AND FURTHER AVENUES TO PURSUE

In this chapter, I began by providing a detailed summary of the argumentative trajectory pursued in this book, highlighted what I take to be the main lessons learned, and considered two challenges: the *No Phenomenology* challenge and the *Receptive Knowledge* complaint. The last section brought into view a number of ways in which the project pursued in this book could be developed further. Let us collect them and add some more. For one, and perhaps most pressingly, I suggested, in 10.2, that there is a variety of possible views that can satisfy the two constraints that guided our inquiry. Moreover, throughout, I indicated that various views could be supplemented with parts of other views and in the course of all these suggestions, I never made a full commitment to any of these views in particular. This is studied. For all of the views we considered needed some work, including what I take to be the two most promising ones: the revamped Hansonian Variable Content View, complemented by Gupta's presentationalist account of experience, and Gupta's presentationalism. If I have succeeded, I have shown that there is reason to think that neither of the two dominant kinds of accounts of experience is in principle well-positioned to meet both the constraints that guided our inquiry, that

²² As indicated before (cf. chapter 9, footnote 32), Gupta does provide some constraints, but these flow from the requirements he thinks on the dynamic behavior views must exhibit to be such as to serve the goals of empirical inquiry, not from considerations concerning what must be the case of something for it to intelligibly count as a view.

there are numerous ways in which proponents of the various views we considered could try to improve their views further, and finally, that views that do meet both constraints are possible if both a suitably modified version of Gupta's presentationalist account of appearances and the general conception of experience as making rational transitions to judgments, beliefs, and actions are accepted. This, I take it, is no small feat.

However, if pressed, I will say that personally, I favor a view that combines the strengths of Gupta's conception of the general role of experience and his (slightly modified) presentationalist account of appearance with Hanson's original insights, including his broadly holistic account of conceptual content and his claim that for *seeing as* to be intelligible, the experiencing subject needs to possess some beliefs that we, too, take to be knowledgeable.

With respect to how to fuse what I take to be the best parts of their respective views, and how to develop the resulting view further, here is a list of issues that I think are worth pursuing.

- 1) I side with Gupta in suspecting that the idea that experience has content may be dropped (for a qualification, see point 4) below). That said, I think that the idea that experience involves *seeing as* may not need to be given up.

I already suggested that the notion of *seeing as* may serve an important expressive role. For one, I suggested, in 9.2.3, that it can serve to form view-dependent empirical descriptions of experiences, which can in turn figure as antecedents of (indicative and subjunctive) conditionals that we can use to make explicit, and thus discursively available, our conceptions of the rational linkages that we take our background views to implicitly contain,²³ where on the construal I suggest we endorse, rational linkages are part of the view in that they form an important stratum of the inferential commitments that are implicit in the inferential articulation of those among our concepts that can figure in empirical descriptions.

²³ As I indicated in 9.2, we can distinguish rational from actual linkages, which correspond to what in 8.2 dubbed *dispositions to transition*. These govern how subjects are disposed to respond to their experiences in actual situations. Plainly, the *seeing as* locution can be exploited to make these linkages explicit as well.

By the same token, as indicated in 10.3.1, the *seeing as* locution can serve to make discursively available one's conception of any given concept's phenomenological profile. There may, however, be a further use for *seeing as*, not for the notion, but for the state. That said, as indicated in 9.2.3, I am not certain that we need to think about such states in terms of passively deployed conceptual capacities. Rather, I am inclined to think about states of *seeing as* as dispositional states, in which the experiencing subject is ready to engage in certain view- and context-dependent transition to certain judgments, etc. once suitable further conditions are met.

Characterizing such a state, e.g. a given subject *S*'s specific state of *seeing* something specific *as* red in a given context *fully* may be a potentially gargantuan task. At the very least, it would require making explicit the view-dependent and contextually salient *rational* linkages that serve to inferentially articulate the concept or concepts figuring in the complement of the *seeing as* locution that *S* would deploy to characterize her experience—in this case, the concept 'red.'

But if we are to characterize *S*'s state not just in terms of which transitions to judgments, beliefs, and actions *S*—given her experience and her doxastic context—would be *rational* to make, but also which transitions *S* is *actually* disposed to make, given *all* other contextually salient factors—including e.g. the *S*'s further psychological and cognitive states—the requisite characterization would have to be even more complicated.²⁴

Patently, how the relevant dimensions along which such dispositional states could be characterized is something worth exploring. The point of doing so, presumably, would be in the context of trying to make sense what others are doing, either in terms of what they consider rational or in terms of what other psychological and cognitive factors might be in play as they are ready to respond to their experience.

Relatedly, we may take the dispositions that detract from the subject's ability to respond to her experience in a way that she should, given her view, to limit her ability to see things clearly,

²⁴ Note that, we might, at least in some contexts, exclude the latter kind of specification precisely on the grounds that to the extent that such further factors shape the subject's overall disposition to respond to her experience, these factors detract from her actually and fully *seeing* the object *as* red.

at least relative to her view. If so, specifying such dispositions could be a way of specifying that which needs to be overcome in order to see clearly, which is a project worth pursuing not just in the area of theoretical philosophy, but also in the area of moral perception, as would be the project of specifying the kinds of attitudes and epistemic virtues that would allow one to overcome such dispositions.²⁵

- 2) Hanson's broadly holistic account of content, I think, is quite intriguing. In fact, in interpreting Gupta's rational linkages, as I have done, in terms of inference tickets, as being part of the view in that they form an important stratum of the inferential commitments that are implicit in the inferential articulation of those among our concepts that can figure in empirical descriptions, I have taken a first modest step towards interpreting Gupta's account in the context of an approach on which the meaning of concepts is construed in a broadly holistic fashion.

Yet arguably, Hanson's holistic account is very rough—much more sophisticated accounts of inferentially articulated conceptual systems are available.²⁶ But even with respect to such sophisticated accounts, I think, it is well worth exploring the possibility of combining them with suitable parts of Gupta's account. What I have in mind is not just a construal of rational linkages and, perhaps, states of *seeing as* in the way I have sketched. Rather, I think that Gupta's account affords resources that may serve to enrich broadly holistic accounts of conceptual concepts.

Gupta, as I have noted, does not provide a full account of conceptual content. However, as I noted in 10.3.1, in the context of his discussion of ostensive definitions, Gupta provides an interesting account of how, with the aid of experience, concepts can be introduced and defined. In the process of introducing concepts, such concepts are linked with experiences, in part by way of suitably associating the concepts introduced with the experience had while introducing them, in part by associating them with experiences that are already linked with the

²⁵ As indicated before, I have begun to engage in this kind of project in Rosenhagen ms-a, Rosenhagen ms-b, and, to some extent, in Rosenhagen fthc.

²⁶ See especially Brandom 1994, 2008, and 2015.

concepts that are deployed in providing the ostensive definition. Establishing such definitions in turn generates the relevant concept's *phenomenological profile*. An interesting project, accordingly, would be to fully flesh out a conception of conceptual content that lays alongside the dimension of conceptual content that is constituted by the way the relevant concept is inferentially articulated in the subject's doxastic content *another* dimension of content that can be specified in terms of the relevant concept's view-dependent phenomenological profile. Doing so would be to provide a way of enriching the inferential dimension of conceptual content by a dimension that connects—albeit in view-dependent and thus rationally modifiable ways—the relevant concepts with the subjective dimension that is constituted by the various appearances items manifest in the subject's consciousness and thus, albeit in a doubly mediated way, with the mind-independent items that in most experiences are presented to consciousness.

- 3) Our discussion at the end of 10.3.2.2 brought us face-to-face with the question whether a conception of what can intelligibly count as an epistemic practice must have room for receptive knowledge—not just as an ideal to strive for, but as an actual part of that practice. McDowell, as I interpreted his view, answers this question in the affirmative, Gupta, on the other hand, does not. The interpretation of Hanson's view that I provided in the second chapter hints at a possible third position. According to it, the knowledge that any view against the background of which instances of *seeing as* are intelligible must involve is not receptive knowledge, but knowledge *as attributed* to the seeing subject by others, i.e. knowledge as attributed *by us*.

In the context of the discussion in 10.3.2.2, I suggested that resolving Gupta's and McDowell's (and, as we may now add, Hanson's) dispute may require that we provide, *inter alia*, an account of what is required for someone to hold a view in the first place and an account of how conceptual capacities are to be understood and individuated. This, too, is a way in which our inquiry should be pursued further.

- 4) As indicated earlier, Gupta's account of presentation needs to be sharpened. In 10.2, I claimed that in the context of the debate on how to accommodate doxastic variability, the importance of the long-standing debate between proponents and opponents of the idea that experience has

content is secondary to the question what we should take the general role of experience to be. However, I also indicated (in footnotes 4 and 5) that in the context of a different question, this debate may still be rather important, viz. in the context of the debate what a viable account of presentation requires. Exploring this question further is, thus, another way of pursuing our inquiry further.

Obviously, the issues just raised are complex, the disputes between the disputing parties deep, and the consequences of siding with one side or the other philosophically far-reaching. Accordingly, while I can only hope to eventually make progress with respect to at least some of them, I already count it as a satisfying result that our inquiry has brought them to the fore.

But if we turn our gaze away from these fascinating questions, we can see many ways in which the lessons we have learned can already be applied to various areas of philosophical and non-philosophical research. Let me list just a few.

Patently, the account of experience can be used to make novel contributions in pretty much every area of philosophy in which experience is credited with some important role, e.g. in debates, within *epistemology*, e.g. on

- the structure of epistemic justification,
- epistemic norms and epistemic virtues,
- the new evil demon problem,
- the nature of evidence,

debates within *general philosophy of science*, e.g. on

- the nature and putative problems with the so-called theory-ladenness of scientific observation,
- the nature and preconditions of expert vision,
- the development of scientific concepts and theories,

debates within *aesthetics* and *moral philosophy*, e.g. on

- the role of value-laden experience for moral progress,
- aesthetic perception and expertise,

and, finally, debates within *social*, *feminist*, and *comparative philosophy*, e.g. on

- implicit bias and the claim regularly asserted that *ideology manages experience*,
- feminist stand-point epistemology,
- Buddhist notions of perception (which, like e.g. Iris Murdoch and Simone Weil, highlight the role of attention and compassion for achieving clear vision),
- the Jaina doctrine of *anekāntavāda* (the so-called many-sidedness of reality),

Outside philosophy, too, there are numerous potential applications. Here, I will mention just two. First, consider that within the cognitive (neuro-)sciences, a growing number of researchers endorse *predictive coding* accounts (e.g. Jacob Hohwy, Andy Clark, Karl Friston, Gary Lupyan). According to such conception, roughly, the brain is a hypothesis-testing machine that generates percepts in a way that is highly responsive to top-down effects. It then adjusts its hypotheses about the world in response to the information incompatible with these hypotheses—the so-called *predictive error*—that it actively seeks out in order to test the hypotheses implemented. If we bracket the fact that e.g. agentic talk about the brain is philosophically problematic, clearly, the idea that percepts (whatever they are) may be generated by way of integrating top-down effects, including those exerted by cognitive states such as beliefs, moods, etc., can be easily accommodated on the kind of account that I have been recommending. At the same time, our discussion suggests that proponents of the two dominant accounts of experience will struggle. Accordingly, one can reasonably hope that predictive coding accounts, popular within the cognitive (neuro-)sciences, can be made (more) intelligible by way of interpreting them in terms of the account I have been suggesting we endorse. Second, consider an entirely different area: conflict resolution. It is a distinctive feature of the view that I have been arguing for—more specifically: a distinctive feature of the conception of the role of experience as making rational view-dependent transitions to judgments, beliefs, and actions—that it makes room for the possibility that subjects who inhabit different doxastic contexts may relative to their respective views be rational to respond to similar perceptual situation in wildly different ways. In many contemporary approaches to conflict resolution—e.g. Marshall Rosenberg’s approach to non-violent communication—a lot of emphasis is placed on the idea that to resolve a conflict, conflicting parties

should avoid communicating with one another in a way that involves issuing evaluative characterizations of the actions issued by the opposing party. Instead, participants are to communicate how *they* experienced the situations that gave rise to the conflict and talk primarily about their own reasoning processes and the emotional responses that flew from them.

In the context of the view I have been recommending, the function of such a conversational style is to make available to the opposing party the background view within which one's own responses become intelligible as rational or anyway understandable responses to the situation at hand. This, the idea goes, serves to instill mutual understanding and to establish common ground. For it may well be that given the characterization of the situation and the experiences offered by one of the parties involved, it would, for the respective opposing party, have been rational, too, to respond the way the first party did. Consequently, the view I am suggesting provides a theoretical underpinning for why it is that the conversational style within approaches to conflict resolution makes good sense.

In sum, I propose that the view of experience I am suggesting succeeds where the two dominant kinds of approaches—relationalism and standard representationalism—struggle. Most importantly, it fully meets the two constraints that have been guiding our inquiry throughout, namely to be fully compatible with doxastic effects on experience while at the same time providing a notion of empirical constraint. To make progress in this regard, I have suggested, the question whether experience has or lacks content is secondary; the key move is to reject the restrictive conceptions of the role of experience adopted by relationalists and standard representationalists. At the same time, the conception of the rational role of experience that I adopt from Gupta is general enough to accommodate that experience does, perhaps often, play the role which each of the opposing parties holds dear.²⁷

As I have argued, the resulting conception of experience raises a number of interesting questions, concerning e.g. how to think about concepts in terms of both inferential articulation and—for some

²⁷ This is certainly true for relationalism. It is also true for representationalism if we think of the primary role of experience not in terms of providing knowledge or justification *tout court*, but in terms of conditional justification, i.e. justification relative to a view.

concepts—phenomenological profiles, what preconditions need to be met for something to be a view or for something to be a capacity that affords receptive knowledge, and how to think about perceptual presentation. Moreover, I have hinted at a number of areas within and outside of philosophy in which the account of experience I have been recommending can be fruitfully applied.

In one sense, our inquiry has come to its end. But in another, it has just begun.

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