Implications of Intensional Perceptual Ascriptions for Relationalism, Disjunctivism, and Representationalism About Perceptual Experience*†

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According to some authors, perceptual ascriptions such as "Jones sees an F" are sometimes intensional, in that they can be true without there being an F.[1] The claim that there are intensional perceptual ascriptions (or IPAs) is not without opponents, but the critics' arguments are addressed in a recent article in this journal (Bourget 2017a). In this paper, I take it as read

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[1]Authors who hold this view include Moore (1905), Ayer (1940), Smythies (1956), Anscombe (1965), Hintikka (1969), Coburn (1977), Harman (1990), Chomsky (1995, p. 52), Moltmann (2008), Brogaard (2012, 2015), and myself (2017a).

that there are IPAs. I am interested in the implications that the existence of IPAs has for current philosophical theories of perceptual experience.[2] I first defend three theses regarding IPAs: I) IPAs ascribe phenomenal properties; II) perceptual verbs are not ambiguous between intensional and extensional readings; III) IPAs have a relational form. I then argue that theses I-III support and reconcile versions of relationalism, disjunctivism, and representationalism. While supportive of the main theories of perceptual experience, theses I-III do not directly support particularism, the view that we experience external objects. I conclude with a brief discussion of the status of this claim in the context of theses I-III.

1 Intensional perceptual ascriptions

This section mostly summarizes relevant material from an article recently published in this journal (Bourget 2017a). Readers interested in more details or arguments should find this article helpful.

A *perceptual ascription* is a token statement of the form "α ϕ-s S," where α is the subject, ϕ is a perceptual verb ("see," "hear," "smell," "taste," "feel," or "perceive"), and S is the direct object of the verb. For example, "I see a flower" is a perceptual ascription. An *intensional* perceptual ascription (IPA) is a perceptual ascription token that states a proposition that is existence-neutral

[2]IPAs were once thought to support sense-datum theories of perception, but this misconception was corrected by Harman (1990). I don't talk about sense-datum theories in this paper because hardly anyone holds such views today (see Bourget & Chalmers 2014).

with respect to the names and existential quantifiers occurring within S, in that these names and quantifiers do not have their normal existential import.[3] *Extensional* perceptual ascriptions (EPAs) are perceptual ascription tokens that are not intensional.

IPAs are ascriptions that *state* existence-neutral propositions, not merely ascriptions that convey or communicate such propositions. There is considerable disagreement on how to best account for the difference between stating and conveying. Nonetheless, we seem to have a fairly good intuitive grip on the distinction. In conversational implicatures, for example, it is clear that what is stated is distinct from what is conveyed.

Many authors have offered examples of alleged IPAs.[4] Statements (1)-(5) are examples from the scientific literature on perceptual anomalies, which should be untainted by philosophical views.

(1) "[...] patients have hallucinatory perceptions ranging from **seeing** shapes and colors to vivid scenes that involve people and animals." (Prerost et al., 2014)

(2) "Auditory hallucinations typically involve **hearing** voices [...]" (First et al., 1997)

(3) "Also known as phantosmia, olfactory hallucinations involve **smelling**

[3]In addition to existence neutrality, two other "marks of intensionality" are often recognized: referential opacity and non-specificity. However, the three "marks of intensionality" come apart in many ways (Coburn 1977; Forbes, 2006, 2008, 2002), so it is best to choose one mark as definitional. I choose existence-neutrality because it is most relevant to my arguments.

[4]See footnote 1.

odors that are not derived from any physical stimulus." (Ali et al., 2011)

(4) "In my mouth I could **taste** something like phenic acid." (Blanke and Landis, 2003)

(5) "They **feel** insects on the hands and arms." (Brown et al., 1916)

In these utterances, the speakers seem to be stating that certain things are perceived without implying that these things exist. These utterances seem to be IPAs.

While the preceding utterances are most naturally read as IPAs, perceptual ascriptions can also be given extensional readings. Indeed, most perceptual ascriptions are naturally given extensional readings. In what follows, I will use an "i" or "e" subscript on the perceptual verb to indicate that an intensional or extensional reading is intended.

Austin (1962, p. 91), Dretske (1969, pp. 44-49), Grice (1989, p. 44), and Soames (2003, p. 184) question the existence of IPAs. All four argue that apparent IPAs can be explained away as instances of *conveying* an existence-neutral proposition by *stating* a non-existence-neutral proposition, which is all that a perceptual ascription ever states. The best worked out version of this view, suggested by Dretske, Grice, and Soames, is that every apparent IPAs is a case in which one conveys that *it seems* or *appears* to a subject that the subject is perceiving$_{\text{e}}$ something by *stating* that the subject is perceiving$_{\text{e}}$ something. The speaker is taken to want to convey the qual-

ified claim in virtue of features of the context. The qualification accounts for the intensionality of the ascription: from the fact that it seems to you that you see_{e} an elephant, it does not follow that there is an elephant. I will refer to this as the *unstated qualification view* of IPAs. The key difference between this view and the one that I (and other proponents of IPAs) defend is that, on this view, the existence-neutral proposition is merely conveyed, not stated.

One important consideration against the unstated qualification view is that IPAs have substantive implications regarding the phenomenal character of the subject's experience, whereas EPAs do not. For example, suppose that one utters (6) in the context of talking about the effects of a drug.

(6) I see a pink elephant.

In this case, one clearly conveys (and states) something substantive about the phenomenal character of one's experience (that it is in some way pinkish and elephantine). Clearly, the reason for uttering (6) is to convey something about one's phenomenology.

Compare this with a case in which the extensional reading of (6) is intended. Suppose, for example, that you are searching for pink-painted elephants that have escaped from the circus. Suppose that you are looking for the elephants at night using infrared goggles, which make everything look green. If you were to spot one of the elephants, you could correctly utter (6) meaning that you see_{e} a pink elephant. In this case, you do not convey nor

state that you are having a pinkish-elephantine experience. This is problematic for the unstated qualification view because, on this view, an alleged IPA of the form of (6) is supposed to convey what a claim such as (7) states.

(7) It seems to me that I see_{e} a pink elephant.

Since the extensional ascription embedded in (7) does not state that one has a pinkish or elephantine experience, the whole statement does not state anything regarding pinkish or elephantine experiences (though it states something regarding pink elephants). So the unstated qualification view cannot account for what alleged IPAs convey about phenomenology.

The unstated qualification view has a problem in the other direction as well: it predicts that IPAs state more than they in fact state. The problem is that (7) states a certain epistemic fact that is not stated (and not always conveyed) by (6) on its intensional reading, namely, that one has a certain kind of evidence for the presence of a pink elephant. It is not hard to imagine one making a claim such as (6) without thinking that one has any evidence whatsoever for the presence of a pink elephant. For example, one might have full confidence that experiences of pink elephants are *always* hallucinatory. Similar issues arise for other ways of qualifying extensional perceptual ascriptions.

The preceding are but two of the multiple objections to the unstated qualification view raised by Bourget 2017a. Since I am taking it as read that there are genuine IPAs for the purposes of this paper, I won't discuss other

objections here.

Some of the critics of IPAs assume that if perceptual ascriptions can state either existence-neutral propositions or non-existence-neutral propositions, perceptual verbs must be lexically ambiguous (c.f. Dretske 1969, pp. 44-9; Austin 1962, p. 91). But a little reflection shows that it is not obvious that the existence of IPAs implies a lexical ambiguity. There is at least one plausible alternative on which the difference between intensional and extensional readings of perceptual ascriptions is at the level of proposition structure or logical form rather than word meaning. Specifically, EPAs have the overall form of (8) at some level of abstraction, whereas IPAs have the form of (9), where q is a quantifier of some sort.

(8) $qx(\phi(\alpha,\_\_x\_\_))$

(9) $\phi(\alpha,\_\_qx\_\_)$

We can distinguish two forms of perceptual ascriptions allowing intensional readings: *clausal ascriptions,* in which the object of the verb is a clause (e.g. a bare infinitive clause (10) or a participial clause (11)), and *NP ascriptions*, in which the object of the verb is a noun phrase (12, 13).

(10) I see [a triangle turn].

(11) I see [a triangle turning].

(12) I see [a triangle].

(13) I see [triangles].

I have suggested that clausal ascriptions that allow intensional readings plausibly express relationships to propositions. A clausal ascription is ambiguous between an intensional and an extensional reading when it contains a quantified noun phrase that can be read as introducing a variable either inside (intensional) or outside (extensional) the propositional argument of the verb.[5] In the case of NP ascriptions, two main views are available: propositionalism, which takes them to also express relations to propositions, and Montagovian views of NP complements, which take them to express relations to intensions for generalized quantifiers (or similar entities). On the propositionalist view, the scope distinction for NP ascriptions works the same way as for clausal ascriptions. The Montagovian view introduces several technicalities that complicate things, but the principle is the same: expressions such as (12) are structurally ambiguous in that, as far as surface syntax is concerned, the quantifier introduced by the quantified NP can take either wide or narrow scope. The main motivations for the foregoing account are that 1) it is a simple application of received views of other intensional constructions and 2) it can explain all the most striking differences that we find between intensional and extensional readings, including differences in existence-neutrality, opacity, and specificity (see Bourget 2017a for details). More evidence for this scopal account of the intensional/extensional distinction will be introduced

[5]In Bourget 2017a, I suggest that names only give rise to IPAs when they are QNPs in disguise. I touch on this issue below.

below.

2 IPAs and phenomenal consciousness

In the preceding section, we noted in passing that a subject's seeing an F, on the intensional reading, seems to entail that the subject is having a phenomenal experience with a phenomenology that has something to do with F-ness. For example, if one is seeing$_{\text{i}}$ a pink elephant, there is something pinkish and elephantine about the phenomenal character of one's experience. This points to a connection between IPAs and phenomenal consciousness. This section aims to shed more light on this connection. I begin by clarifying the language that I use to talk about phenomenal consciousness.

Intuitively, phenomenal consciousness is the "what it's like" aspect of mental states. Examples of mental states that exhibit phenomenal consciousness include perceptual episodes, bodily sensations, emotional feelings, and (arguably) occurrent thoughts. A *phenomenal property* is a property that captures a certain "what it's like." On this understanding of phenomenal properties, they are individuated by what it's like to have them: two phenomenal properties are the same just in case what it's like to have them is the same. Phenomenal properties are also sometimes called "phenomenal states."

Philosophers normally use the noun "experience" to mean something along the lines of *an instantiation of a phenomenal property*. It is important to be

aware that this use of "experience," while perfectly clear and intelligible to the initiated, is not in line with the ordinary meaning of the term. In ordinary English, an experience is *an encounter or event,* or something that happens to oneself.[6] On this understanding of "experience," experiences have little to do with phenomenal consciousness. For example, an experience of poverty or an experience of a red ball need not be a phenomenal event. Even *phenomenally* experiencing a red ball, in this sense of "experience," is not the same as what philosophers mean by "experiencing a red ball": the former is merely a matter of encountering a red ball in consciousness, which is consistent with the ball looking blue or square (or both), whereas experiencing a red ball in philosophers' sense is simply a matter of instantiating a certain reddish phenomenal property.

My aim for the rest of this section is to make a case for the thesis that IPAs ascribe phenomenal properties. We can put this thesis a little more precisely as follows:

Thesis I: IPAs are pure phenomenal ascriptions.

A *pure phenomenal ascription* is an utterance that states a proposition that simply ascribes a phenomenal property to an individual. In other words, the utterance states a proposition that can be stated by a statement of the form "x has a visual/auditory/etc. experience of y" as normally understood by

[6]The preceding is a close paraphrase of the entry for the noun "experience" in *Oxford Dictionary of English* (revised edition), ed. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson (Oxford University Press, 2005).

philosophers.[7] Thesis I is considerably stronger than the observation with which I started this section: not only is phenomenal consciousness involved in intensional seeing, but intensional seeing is nothing but a matter of phenomenal consciousness.

From this point on, it becomes important to bear in mind a potential variation in the meanings of perceptual verbs distinct from any potential intensional/extensional ambiguity. Most perceptual verbs have uses that seem to have little to do with perception, experience, or the senses. For example, when one says that Bob sees threats everywhere, that one has heard the news, or that something doesn't feel right, it seems that one is not talking about episodes of perception, phenomenal consciousness, or any kind of sensory activity: Bob need not have any relevant sensory activity, the news might have been read in a newspaper (so not literally heard), and things not feeling right seems to have more to do with intuition than the senses. Such *non-perceptual uses* of perceptual verbs are outside the scope of Thesis I. My claim is only that perceptual uses that are also intensional are pure phenomenal ascriptions.[8] For ease of exposition, I stipulate that non-perceptual uses of perceptual verbs do not count as perceptual ascriptions (intensional or extensional).

The easiest way to see that IPAs are pure phenomenal ascriptions is to

[7]"Experiencing" ascriptions can be read intensionally or extensionally just like perceptual ascriptions, but I take it that they are normally given intensional readings, and I will assume such readings unless otherwise noted.

[8]Brogaard (2012) draws a similar distinction, but she distinguishes a third sense of "see."

consider them in context. For example, imagine that you have just undergone surgery to receive a cerebral implant that is supposed to augment your visualization abilities. Your neurologist will now perform some tests on you to verify that the implant functions properly. She begins by putting a device on your head. After returning to her console, she says, "now tell me whether *you see a blue grid about one meter in front of you*." It is natural to take the neurologist to be asking whether you are *experiencing* a blue grid (as a philosopher would put it), perhaps among other properties. The context forces an intensional reading of the verb "to see," and this seems to result in an understanding of the IPA in italics as ascribing a phenomenal property.

If the neurologist's IPA ascribes a phenomenal property, there are two possibilities: either it ascribes a phenomenal property and nothing else (it is a pure phenomenal ascription), or it ascribes a complex state that involves a phenomenal property among other properties. What could the other properties be in the second case? Clearly, the neurologist did not want to know whether you thought (or believed or judged) that there really was a blue grid in front of you (she knew that you would not believe this whether or not you saw$_{\text{i}}$ a blue grid). She did not want to know about the external cause or normal cause of the state you were in either. She knew about its external cause already, and insisting that the state you were in is normally caused by blue grids would not satisfy her. She might well say, "For all I know you are one of those inverts—I want to know how it was like subjectively for you." She was also not asking about your physiological condition. Indirectly,

perhaps, she was (if physicalism is true), but her meaning was not "Are you in such and such brain state?" because she knew that you could not answer such a question. So seeing a blue grid in the neurologist's sense does not a priori entail that some condition pertaining to judgments, the causes of the experience, or one's physiology obtains. It also does not seem to be a matter of having an experience of a certain kind while a disjunction or other logical combination of these conditions obtains. In other words, there seems to be nothing else for the neurologist to be asking about but phenomenology. Consequently, it seems that by "see a blue grid," your neurologist meant exactly what philosophers mean by "visually experience a blue grid."

These remarks apply *mutatis mutandis* to anything that one can be said to see (in the perceptual sense). The neurologist could have asked about a triangle, a pink elephant, or anything else that you might be able to experience visually. In every case, it would be natural to understand her as making an intensional perceptual ascription because of the context. It would also be natural to understand her as asking about a (pure) phenomenal property, because there is nothing else for her to be asking about.

Parallel observations apply to other modalities. Suppose for example that you are hearing a ringing in your left ear. Typically, part of what you mean when you say that you are hearing a ringing is that you are having an experience of a certain kind, namely, an auditory experience of a ringing. What else might you intend to say? Normally, to say that you are hearing a ringing is not to say anything about your beliefs, your environment, your

physical state, or the current or normal circumstances of your state, because you could conceivably hear a ringing whatever your beliefs or the state of your body or environment. As in the case of seeing blue grids, there seems to be nothing for the expression "hearing a ringing" to pick out but a phenomenal property. Similarly, if I say that I am feeling pain in my phantom arm, all I am talking about is a phenomenal property.

That IPAs are pure phenomenal ascriptions can also be brought out by reflecting on the grounds of certain ascriptions. Suppose that you get up too quickly and "see stars" as a result. You say, "I'm seeing stars." That you are seeing stars is something that you would normally realize spontaneously. So it is plausible that you would normally come to notice that you are seeing stars either perceptually or introspectively, not through some kind of explicit reasoning (which is not to say that you are not reasoning at some subconscious level). But you do not normally make any relevant perceptual judgments when you find yourself seeing stars: as a general rule, you know full well that there are no specks of light in front of you. So it seems that the basis of your assertion, in the normal case at least, must be an introspective judgment. It is plausible that there are only three kinds of mental states we can introspect: propositional attitudes, occurrent thoughts (judgments), and, least controversially, experiences. Since seeing$_{\text{i}}$ stars does not seem to involve having a propositional attitude or making a judgment about stars, it must be experiences that you introspect. So it seems that seeing stars consists in nothing more than a phenomenal property. The same line

of argument straightforwardly applies to other IPAs.

In addition to illustrating the fact that IPAs are pure phenomenal ascriptions, the preceding example illustrates another important observation about IPAs: we often use natural or artificial kind terms as part of IPAs without meaning to refer to the kinds normally designated by these terms. It is clear that when one says that one sees_{i} stars, one does not mean that one is seeing_{i} celestial bodies. The word "stars" here stands for things that are superficially like stars, not for celestial bodies. Such *superficial uses* of kind terms are common as part of IPAs. This can obscure the fact that IPAs ascribe phenomenal properties. For example, if I say that I saw a car, an elephant, or an alien while hallucinating, it might seem natural to take me to be self-ascribing something else than a phenomenal property, because I arguably cannot phenomenally experience a car, an elephant, or an alien.[9] This inference should be rejected, because someone who claims to have seen a car, an elephant, or an alien in a hallucinatory context normally intends the relevant kind term to be understood superficially, not literally.

3 Are perceptual verbs ambiguous?

Assuming a view of propositions as compositionally formed structures of properties, relations, quantifiers, individuals, or intensions for such entities, we can talk about the contribution that a perceptual verb makes to a propo-

[9]But see Siegel (2010 and 2006) and Brogaard (2013) for discussion.

sition stated in a context. We would expect such a contribution to be either a property, a relation, or an intension for a property or relation. My claim in this section is that the contribution of a perceptual verb is the same between the intensional and extensional readings of a perceptual ascription.

Thesis II: Perceptual verbs make the same contributions to intensional and extensional readings.

One observation that supports thesis II is that the key differences between intensional and extensional readings can be explained in terms of quantifier scope. Intuitively, the extensional reading of (6) can be paraphrased as (14), in which the quantifier explicitly takes wide scope over the verb.

(14) There is a pink elephant that I see.

This is not the case with intensional readings. As a result, it seems that quantifiers take wide scope over the verb on extensional readings but not on intensional readings. In Bourget 2017a, I argue that this quantifier scope difference can explain all the key differences between intensional and extensional readings. If this is right, it seems plausible that the difference between these readings lies exclusively at the level of quantifier scope, and so that perceptual verbs make the same contributions to intensional and extensional readings.

Well-known ambiguity tests provide more evidence for thesis II. Consider the conjunction reduction test (Chomsky 1957, p. 358; Zwicky and Sadock 1975, p. 18). Suppose that you are experimenting with a drug that has the

effect of making you see colorful animals without otherwise altering your perception of your environment. You could describe a particular experience using (15 a). So long as we don't take this use of "and" to imply a temporal ordering, it seems that we can reduce the two clauses of (15 a) to just one (15 b).

(15) (a) I saw the bed and I saw a pink elephant.

(b) I saw the bed and a pink elephant.

The first clause of (15 a) is most naturally read extensionally, whereas its second clause is most naturally read intensionally. There is a natural reading of (15 b) on which it seems equivalent to the most natural (mixed) reading of (15 a). This would not be possible if "saw" didn't make the same contribution to intensional and extensional readings.

Ascriptions involving other perceptual verbs than "see" also pass the conjunction reduction test. For example, someone who has a tendency to hear voices but is not otherwise subject to hallucinations might describe their situation using either (16 a) or (16 b).

(16) (a) I hear cars outside, and I hear voices.

(b) I hear cars outside, and voices.

The same goes with "feel":

(17) (a) I feel my (phantom) leg and I feel the seat.

(b) I feel my (phantom) leg and the seat.

One can also make statements that combine intensional and extensional readings without being equivalent to conjunctions of IPAs and purely extensional ascriptions:

(18) I saw a small pink elephant dancing on the table.

(18) is naturally taken to state that there is a unique salient table which is such that I experienced a small pink elephant dancing on it. This reading is intensional with respect one quantifier ("a small pink elephant") but not the other ("the table"). This reading would be unavailable if the verb "to see" contributed different properties or relations on intensional and extensional readings.

Reflection on the truth conditions of certain EPAs provides more evidence for thesis II. Consider (19) as a statement about a hallucination:

(19) I see the color you like.

On its most natural understanding, (19) is extensional because it entails that there is a color that you like. At the same time, however, its truth seems to require that a true statement satisfies schema (20), which involves an IPA.

(20) C is the color you like, and I see_{i} something C.

If we can specify the truth conditions of (19) in this way, "see" must make the same contribution to intensional and extensional readings. Parallel remarks apply to (21) and (22).

(21) I heard the same thing as you (but we were both hallucinating).

(22) I feel what you feel (but the feeling is hallucinatory).

On the most natural readings of (21) and (22), the truth of these statements requires that the definite descriptions occurring in them denote. So, these statements are extensional. Since both statements, like (19), seem to state propositions that are made true by facts stated by intensional perceptual ascriptions, it seems that "hear" and "feel" must make the same contributions to intensional and extensional readings.

Relatedly, IPAs and EPAs can be combined in formally valid inferences. Imagine that the following claims are comments about what is going on as we are both hallucinating:

(23) You see a light flashing. [intensional]

I see everything you see. [extensional]

Therefore, I see a light flashing. [intensional]

(24) You see a rabbit. [intensional]

I don't see anything you see. [extensional]

Therefore, I don't see a rabbit. [intensional]

(25) I heard the same thing as you. [extensional]

You heard noise coming from the left. [intensional]

Therefore, I heard noise coming from the left. [intensional]

These inferences seem to be formally valid in the following sense: one can see that they are valid without having much of a grasp of what the statements that compose them state, so long as one has an understanding of the structures of the propositions stated. For example, one need not be able to articulate anything at all about what is involved in seeing or hearing something, or to know what a noise, flashing light, or rabbit is. If these inferences are formally valid in this sense, perceptual verbs must make the same contributions to intensional and extensional readings.

Another observation that supports thesis II is that perceptual ascriptions that are devoid of scope ambiguity or a possible ambiguity in the meaning of the object of the verb are not subject to multiple readings. For example, (26) has no coherent reading.

(26) # This, I see but I don't see.

If "see" could be taken to contribute different relations or properties, we would expect (26) to be coherent on some reading.

Together, the preceding considerations amount to a fairly good case for thesis II. They also lend support back to the scopal account of the intensional/extensional distinction discussed in section 1: if perceptual verbs make the same contributions to intensional and extensional readings, something else has to vary between these readings. Clearly, it is not the meaning of words such as "pink" and "flash," so it seems that it has to be the logical form of the statements.[10]

[10]Above I noted that the interpretation of kind words sometimes varies between IPAs

4 The relational structure of IPAs

My last thesis regarding IPAs is that they have a relational form. More specifically:

Thesis III: For every perceptual verb ϕ, there is a relation R such that every proposition stated by an IPA of the form "α ϕ-s S" has, at some level of abstraction, the form $R(\alpha,\_\_)$.[11]

One argument for thesis III is that it is an immediate consequence of the scopal account of the intensional/extensional distinction given in section 1, which, as I just noted, is further supported by thesis II. But other arguments can be made independently of the scopal account.

Note first that the claim that *extensional* perceptual ascriptions have a relational structure hardly needs defending. It is part of the definition of extensional ascriptions that they entail existential claims about the object of the verb: if one sees_e an F, it follows by the definition of extensional readings that there is an F. Since entailing existential claims about an apparent argument is a strong indicator that there really is an argument, it seems highly probable that extensional ascriptions have a relational structure. Relatedly, perceptual verbs must contribute relations to EPAs in order to accommodate the fact that existential quantifiers take wide scope over perceptual verbs on such readings.

and EPAs, but it does not always vary.

[11] This thesis could also be stated in a way that allows that perceptual verbs contribute intensions rather than relations, but I assume a broadly Russellian view of propositions for simplicity.

Given that EPAs are relational, thesis II enables a straightforward argument for thesis III: if perceptual verbs contribute certain relations to extensional readings and perceptual verbs make the same contributions to intensional and extensional readings (thesis II), it follows that perceptual verbs contribute these same relations to intensional readings. Unlike the first argument I mentioned above, this one does not rely on the scopal account of the intensional/extensional distinction.

Another consideration in favor of thesis III is that IPAs pass a general test indicating that the verb contributes a dyadic property: they can participate in formally valid inferences that would not be formally valid were the property expressed monadic.[12] Consider arguments (23)-(25) in the preceding section. Explaining the formal validity of these arguments seems to require that we analyze the premises and conclusions relationally. For example, argument (23) becomes (27), where the variable ε ranges over individuals, properties, higher-order properties, and all other potentially relevant entities.

(27) $See(You, ALightFlashing)$

$\forall\epsilon(See(You, \epsilon) \rightarrow See(I, \epsilon))$

$\therefore See(I, ALightFlashing)$

Whatever *ALightFlashing* is, it must be one of the things that ϵ ranges over, and "You see_i a light flashing" has to be analyzed as ascribing a relation to this thing even though it is intensional. Otherwise it is not possible to

[12] c.f. Davidson 1967, Schiffer 1990, Pietroski 2009, and Grzankowski 2016.

explain the formal validity of the inference.

We can also argue directly that IPAs support existential claims. For example, if I am perceiving$_{\text{i}}$ a large object, *there is* something that I am perceiving: it would not be accurate to say that I am not perceiving anything at all. What I am perceiving might not be a large object or any kind of object, but it is *something,* in the broadest possible sense of "something." This argument is reminiscent of arguments for sense-data, but the objects of intensional ascriptions need not be mental particulars, as we will see below. On the contrary, we will see that the theses defended so far support the main views that are opposed to sense-data.

5 Relationalism

We have seen that I) IPAs are pure phenomenal ascriptions, II) perceptual verbs make the same contributions to IPAs and EPAs, and III) IPAs have a relational form. In this and the remaining sections, I explore the implications of these theses for views of perception and perceptual experience, starting with the implications of I-III for relationalism.

According to *relationalism* (also known as *naïve realism*), veridical perceptual experiences relate us to the concrete objects we perceive: for one to see, hear, smell, or otherwise perceive a concrete object x is for one to undergo a perceptual experience that is a relationship to x (perhaps among

other things).[13,14]

Relationalism is supported by theses I-III as follows. Thesis I tells us that a statement of the form "I see *S*," on its intensional reading, states the same proposition that is expressed by a statement of the form "I visually experience *S*" as typically used by philosophers. Assuming that identical propositions have identical parts arranged in the same way, this implies that "see" in IPAs contributes the same property or relation as "visually experience" on philosophers' reading. That is, seeing_i is visually experiencing.

P1 seeing_i = visually experiencing

According to thesis II, "see" makes the same contribution to intensional and extensional readings.

P2 $\text{seeing}_\text{e} = \text{seeing}_\text{i}$

According to thesis III, "see" contributes a relation to IPAs.

P3 seeing_i is a relation

From P1-P3, we can conclude that seeing_e a concrete object x is a matter of visually experiencing x, where visually experiencing is a relation. This is

[13]Proponents of this view include Snowdon (1980), Child (1992), Langsam (1997), Campbell (2002), Martin (2004, 2006), Hellie (2007, 2010), Sturgeon (2008), Fish (2009), Brewer (2007), Schellenberg (2010, 2011, 2014, 2016), Logue (2011, 2012), and Genone (2014, forthcoming). The disjunctivism of Hinton (1967) is an important precursor.

[14]Another claim that is sometimes labeled "naïve realism" is that we *directly* perceive external objects. What is meant by "directly" is in need of spelling out. I take it that the preferred spelling out yields an understanding of naïve realism that is equivalent to the above view: in veridical perception at least, we directly perceive external objects in that our experiences are relationships to them.

just relationalism for visual perception. Since this reasoning applies *mutatis mutandis* to other modalities, theses I-III seem to establish relationalism generally.

A claim that has often been made in support of relationalism is that it captures our naïve, pre-theoretic conception of perceptual experience. Our findings vindicate this claim: not only is relationalism the naïve view, but it is analytic, true in virtue of the very meanings of the relevant terms.

While I hold that relationalism is true (and analytic), I want to stress that nothing I said so far supports certain additional claims that are often associated with relationalism. One closely associated view is *particularism*, the view that we experience external objects. To be more precise, I understand particularism to be the claim that certain possible statements of the form "α experiences β" are true, where the verb "to experience" is given its usual technical meaning and β is a name. If relationalism is true, perceiving an object is a matter of experiencing it. So relationalism implies particularism on the assumption that we perceive external objects. However, relationalism does not entail particularism on its own because it does not entail that we perceive external objects. Theses I-III also do not entail that we perceive external objects. We arrived at theses I-III by reflecting on the ordinary uses of perceptual ascriptions. No amount of reflection on linguistic usage is going to show that there are objects out there that we experience. Put differently, theses I-III shed light on what everyday perceptual statements *mean*, but they do not to tell us whether such statements are ever *true*. I briefly discuss

the second question in section 8, but it falls outside the scope of my core project in this paper.

Relationalism is also closely associated with the denial of the causal theory of perception. Here we need to bear in mind that there are two importantly different versions of this theory. One view, which I am going to refer to as *CTP*, states that in every case in which one perceives an external object *x,* one does so at least in part in virtue of being in an internal state that bears a broadly causal relation to *x.* As stated, this is a universally quantified thesis about instances of perception in the actual world, and it may or may not be a priori true. A stronger view, *ACTP*, claims that CTP is *a priori* or *conceptually necessary.*

ACTP clearly bears a logical connection to relationalism. This connection is made by Snowdon (1980) as part of his attack on ACTP.[15] Simplifying considerably, Snowdon's main argument against ACTP is that relationalism is conceivable, and experiencing an object x does not a priori entail standing in a causal relation to *x,* so it is not a priori or conceptually necessary that perceiving involves a causal relation (ACTP is false). Our case for relationalism lends additional support to Snowdon's argument by showing that relationalism is not only conceivable but analytic. However, our case for relationalism leaves CTP untouched. Even if perception is a matter of experience and it is conceivable that experience does not require causation, it is also con-

[15] ACTP is the view defended by Strawson (1974) and Grice (1989).

ceivable that causation plays a role in constituting experience.[16] In fact, it seems that we normally assume that causation plays a role in constituting perceptual experience. When, in one scenario made famous by Grice (1961) and P. F. Strawson (1974), we judge that the object seen (i.e. experienced) is the one whose image is reflected in the mirror, and not the identical object located where the perceived object appears to be, we do so on the basis of the assumption that a causal link is (at least in practice) necessary for perception. This is a very natural assumption. For what else could link us up to objects? It would be pure magic if we managed to latch on external objects without any causal connection. So there is an intuitive case for CTP as an *a posteriori* thesis even if ACTP is false. This is just to say that theses I-III are compatible with causalist intuitions about perception, not that such intuitions are correct.

6 Disjunctivism

One view associated with relationalism that is supported by our findings is *disjunctivism*. This view comes in several forms. As I understand it, the general idea is that hallucinatory and non-hallucinatory experiences differ in

[16]There is an old debate between Alex Rosenberg (1989) and Mohan Matthen (1989) regarding the consistency of a causal theory of perception and the intensionality of perception (though neither recognizes as much intensionality as I do, because neither recognizes IPAs). I don't see why an *a posteriori* causal account of perceptual relations would be inconsistent with the intensionality of perceptual ascriptions as explicated here (and in Bourget ibid.), which is a purely logical feature, so I agree with Matthen. The congeniality of theses I-III to a reductive theory of perception such as Matthen's will become clearer in sections 7 and 8.

some important, fundamental way, such that non-hallucinatory perception cannot be seen as the sum of a) the same kind of experiential element that is found in hallucinatory experiences and b) an additional condition that differentiates a hallucination from a non-hallucination.[17] Non-hallucinatory perception is just extensional perception: it is perceiving$_{\text{e}}$ something. Since the sorts of experiences present in hallucinations are the sorts of experiences characterized by IPAs, we can reformulate disjunctivism as the claim that EPAs cannot be reduced to or analyzed as IPAs plus some additional conditions. To be more precise, I take the core disjunctivist view to be that no EPA S_e is such that there is some IPA S_i and an additional success condition C such that S_e can be analyzed as (is analytically equivalent to) $S_i \wedge C$.[18]

To assess this claim, we must consider EPAs with two different forms: *quantified EPAs*, in which some NPs within the object of the verb are quantified noun phrases (QNPs; 28, 29), and *singular EPAs*, in which all NPs within the object of the verb are names (30, 31).

(28) I see$_{\text{e}}$ a toddler walking.

(29) I see$_{\text{e}}$ a toddler.

(30) I see$_{\text{e}}$ Fred.

[17] This characterization of disjunctivism puts illusion on the same side as veridical perception, which is an issue on which theorists differ (see Byrne & Logue 2008 for discussion).

[18] This understanding of the disjunctivist thesis is close to Martin's: "we should not think that perceptual experience is to be analyzed as a common factor of perception and either illusion or hallucination." (2004) It also seems to be a core implication of Hinton's (1967) and Snowdon's (1980 and 1990) disjunctivist views.

(31) I see$_{\mathrm{e}}$ Fred walking.

The scopal account of the intensional/extensional distinction sketched in section 1 and further justified by thesis II makes transparent the correctness of the disjunctivist thesis as far as quantified EPAs are concerned. These EPAs quantify into the object of the verb, while IPAs do not. Unless C itself is a variant on S_e, conjoining it to a statement S_i that does not quantify-in cannot result in a statement that is equivalent to S_e, which quantifies-in. It is not possible to go from $P(\alpha, [\_\_])$ to $\exists x P(\alpha,[\_\_x\_\_])$ by conjoining a statement of the first form to some other statement that does not itself contain a statement of the second form.

The case of singular EPAs is a littler trickier, but it can be considerably simplified if we assume that names contribute individuals to singular EPAs. For example, the structure of (30) might be represented as (32).

(32) $See(I, Fred)$

Given this Millian view of names, singular perceptual ascriptions do not have intensional readings. If "Fred" fails to refer, (30) does not express a complete proposition. To make sense of an ascription such as (30) in absence of Fred, we would have to take it to relate the subject to some kind of Fred-surrogate, but there is no reasonable candidate to play the role of surrogate. For this reason, there are no singular intensional ascriptions. Given that there are no singular intensional ascriptions, an analysis of an extensional ascription such as (30) in terms of an intensional ascription plus additional conditions would

have to start with a qualitative intensional ascription of the form "I see an F" or "I see the F," to which some claim to the effect that Fred is the one F would be conjoined.

This attempt to analyze singular terms away does not work. The fundamental problem is that the meaning of (32) does not single out any particular set of properties that one must experience in order to see Fred. Statement (32) obviously does not entail that one experiences the essence of Fred. Even more obviously, it does not entail that one experiences any particular set of the superficial features of Fred. Since perception is experience (by theses I-II), it follows that any choice of F would result in a purported analysans that says more than the analysandum. It is unclear what are the truth conditions of (32), but we need not go deeper into this topic for now (I briefly return to it in section 8). Whatever the truth conditions of (32) might be, they cannot be analyzed as conjunctions of intensional perceivings of certain properties together with additional claims attributing the properties to individuals. Disjunctivists' intuitions about the irreducibility of "good cases" have their source in the very semantics of perceptual ascriptions.

The preceding argument for disjunctivism regarding singular EPAs takes its starting point from Millianism about names, but there is reason to think that other views lead to the same conclusion. A variant on the Millian view common among semanticists is that names contribute generalized quantifiers involving individuals, or intensions for such quantifiers (see Montague 1973, Barwise and Cooper 1981, and Westerståhl 2011). Since these quantifiers are

not definable when the name does not refer, this view has the same consequences as the Millian view. Another possible view (not very popular today, but plausibly applicable to certain special cases at least) is that names are definite descriptions in disguise. On this view, names should be subject to the same scope ambiguity as overt QNPs, so the above account should apply. If names contribute Fregean senses, it is a bit less clear how the discussion should be adapted. It depends on what sort of logical roles these senses can play. But if they work like quantifiers, which standard semantic considerations suggest (ibid.), then our considerations regarding QNPs should extend to names. Overall, the case of names is tricky because names are tricky, but we can see how disjunctivism might turn out to be made true by the semantics of EPAs and IPAs, depending on how questions about names are resolved. In any case, disjunctivism is at least clearly analytic with respect to quantified ascriptions, which is an interesting finding.

While the preceding considerations support a kind of disjunctivism, the view of perceptual ascriptions developed here contradicts other views that go by this name. In particular, the above account contradicts the view that there is "no common factor" between veridical perceptual experiences and hallucinations, because it entails that the same perceptual relation is involved in veridical and hallucinatory cases. This brings out a distinction between *disjunctivism about the objects of perception* and *disjunctivism about perception.* The first view is that hallucinatory and non-hallucinatory perceptual episodes do not have the same objects (relata). This view is supported by the

above account. The second view is that hallucinatory and non-hallucinatory perceptual episodes have nothing in common, or nothing non-trivial or interesting in common. This view is refuted by I-III.[19]

7 Representationalism

Perhaps surprisingly, theses I-III support representationalism in addition to relationalism and disjunctivism.

Representationalists claim that phenomenal consciousness is a kind of representation or intentionality.[20] Before we can assess this claim, we need to be clear on what representation or intentionality is supposed to be. It is not enough to say that intentionality is "aboutness" or "directedness." These metaphors simply do not give us enough purchase on the notion for us to be able to tell for sure whether this or that case is one of intentionality (many things have directedness, not all have intentionality, and it is unclear how to draw the line). For present purposes, I understand representationalists' claim as being that phenomenal properties are similar in nature to propositional attitudes, and I assume that the important feature of propositional attitudes is

[19]Strictly speaking, any two things always have something in common. This is why qualifications such as "non-trivial" or "interesting" are necessary. But these qualifications are quite vague, making it hard to see what the substance of the thesis might be. The above precisification of disjunctivism in terms of analyzability seems to me to capture core intuitions with satisfying clarity.

[20]Note that this is not the sort of "representationalism" associated with David Marr and the sense-datum theory of perception: the view is not that perception is mediated by internal representations. On the contrary, my kind of representationalism is motivated in good part by a desire to account for the direct nature of perception. See Harman 1990 and Seager and Bourget 2007.

that they are nonfactive relations to propositions, on some broad understanding of "propositions" that includes a range of things (sets of possible worlds, structured propositions, ways the world can be, functions from worlds to truth values, etc.).[21] Given these assumptions, it is natural to precisify the central representationalist tenet with respect to perceptual experience as follows: for every sensory modality m, there is some nonfactive relation R such that, for every basic phenomenal property p in m there is some proposition P such that p = standing in R to P, on some broad understanding of "proposition."[22] Put loosely, experiences are nonfactive relationships to propositions. Here I am going to focus on representationalism about perceptual experience, the claim that every basic *perceptual* phenomenal property is a nonfactive relationship to a proposition.

By *basic phenomenal property,* I mean a phenomenal property that does not consist merely in having some properties among a set of distinct phenomenal properties. For example, *experiencing red or experiencing blue* is not a basic phenomenal property because it consists merely in having one of the properties in this set: {*experiencing red, experiencing blue*}. Since they

[21] To a first approximation, a nonfactive relation is a propositional relation that is insensitive to the truth of propositions. For example, the belief relation is nonfactive, whereas the knowledge relation is factive.

[22] This type of representationalism (modulo the limitation to basic phenomenal properties) is endorsed by Pautz (2009, 2010b and 2010a), Speaks (2009, 2010, 2015b,a), and Sosa (2010). Other proponents of representationalism include: Byrne (2001), Byrne and Tye (2006), Chalmers (2004, 2006), Crane (2003), Dretske (1995), Harman (1990), Hill (2009), Jackson (2004), Lycan (1987, 1996, 2001), Mendelovici (2013, 2014), Nanay (2012), Schellenberg (2010, 2011, 2014), Tye (1995a,b, 2000, 2002, 2003a,b, 2007, 2008, 2015), and myself (2010, 2015, 2017c and 2017b; Bourget and Mendelovici 2014).

are straightforwardly explained by basic phenomenal properties, non-basic phenomenal properties need not be part of a theory such as representationalism. Whether or not representationalism as I define it truly deserves the name of "representationalism," establishing that this view is correct would be a big step toward representationalism.

In order to establish representationalism about perceptual experience as I understand it, we need to show i) that the basic perceptual phenomenal properties consist in standing in relations to propositions and ii) that the relevant relations are nonfactive. As we have seen already, theses I-III imply that the perceptual relations (seeing, etc.) are experiential relations (visually experiencing, etc.). Conversely, visually experiencing is seeing, aurally experiencing is hearing, and so on. Assuming that every perceptual phenomenal property is a kind of perceptual experiencing, we know that every basic perceptual phenomenal property consists in standing in a certain experiential relation to something. In order to establish (i), we only need to show that the relevant relata are propositions.

Given the identity of perception and perceptual experience, we can establish this by showing that every perceptual ascription that ascribes a basic phenomenal property ascribes a relation to a proposition.[23] As a first step

[23]One might ask why I don't consider the semantics of "experiencing" directly. The reason for this is that my use of "experiencing" is a technical one, and one might doubt that a semantic analysis of a technical notion can tell us much about the pre-theoretic concept of experience. Also, I have become convinced that a significant number of philosophers writing on perception consistently use the term "experiencing" with its ordinary meaning, not its technical meaning.

toward this conclusion, notice that perceptual ascriptions with NP objects do not seem to ascribe basic phenomenal properties. Phenomenologically, it seems that one cannot merely see_i a triangle: one has to see the triangle doing something or other (if only *being* a triangle). This also seems true of extensional ascriptions: one does not merely see_e a triangle. We don't merely see properties or objects that happen to bear properties, we see *instantiations* of properties. Generalizing from these cases, it seems that "I see NP" means something along the line of *there is a possible state of affairs involving [NP] that I see*, where the NP, if it is a quantified NP, can be given either wide scope or narrow scope over the description of the state of affairs. For example, seeing_i a triangle seems to be a matter of there being a proposition or possible state of affairs that I see and that involves the quantifier denoted by "a triangle," or some such entity. Seeing_e a triangle seems to be a matter of there being a proposition or possible state of affairs that I see and that involves an object that is a triangle (whether or not its being triangular is part of what I see). Parallel remarks apply to singular NP ascriptions such (30). One cannot merely perceive an individual: one has to perceive the individual *being* some way or other. So it seems that NP ascriptions in general are not ascriptions of basic phenomenal properties.

If NP ascriptions are not ascriptions of basic phenomenal properties, only perceptual ascriptions complemented by clauses might be ascriptions of basic phenomenal properties. Clausal perceptual ascriptions can have one of five kinds of clauses as complement: bare infinitive clauses (10), particip-

ial (-ing) clauses (11), nominal relative clauses (33), "wh"-clauses (which are superficially similar to nominal relative clauses; 34), and "that"-clauses (35).

(33) (a) I see what you described.

(b) I see what you feel.

(34) (a) I see where it is.

(b) I see why you did this.

(35) (a) I see that he has arrived.

(b) I hear that it is over.

(c) I feel that this is wrong.

Nominal relative clauses compress descriptions involving a noun and a relative clause that qualities the noun. For example, (33 a) can be spelled out as "I see the things that you described." They are effectively noun phrases in disguise, so, like NP ascriptions, they do not ascribe basic phenomenal properties.

"That"-clause complemented perceptual statements seem to fall in the category of non-perceptual uses of perceptual verbs. More specifically, they seem to be metaphorical uses of perceptual verbs. This is suggested by the heterogeneity of these ascriptions. Consider first that "that"-clause complemented "seeing," "hearing," and "feeling" ascriptions make sense, as illustrated above, but "I smell that ___" and "I taste that ___" don't seem to make

sense. Also, "seeing that" is factive, whereas "hearing that" and "feeling that" are not. "Seeing that" seems to be a metaphor used to convey that one is, cognitively, directly accessing certain facts in a manner similar to how one sees a fact. "Hearing that" is a metaphor used to convey the receipt of certain information through some kind of communication. This does not necessarily involve any auditory perception: one can hear that something is the case by reading it on Facebook. "Feeling that" conveys that one has a cognitive or emotional attitude towards something and one's having this attitude involves a certain felt quality. Here the choice of the verb "to feel" is meant to indicate that there is some phenomenology involved, but it is not used in the same way as when one says that one feels a texture with one's hand. None of these metaphorical or otherwise anomalous uses ascribes a basic phenomenal property, so they are not relevant to (i).

Grammar textbooks tell us that "wh"-clauses, unlike the superficially similar nominal relative clauses, always relate to stated or tacit questions. For example, (34 a) claims that I in some sense have the answer to the question "where is it?" If we were to further spell out what is reported, we would say that I see that where it is is L, where L is some explicit description of the location in question. In general, it seems that a "wh"-clause perceptual ascription is a partial statement of a more complex "that"-clause perceptual ascription that states that one is aware of a certain fact. Since only "seeing that" ascriptions state such facts, this would explain why it is hard to come up with "wh"-clause perceptual ascriptions involving other perceptual verbs

than "to see." This means also that "wh"-clause perceptual ascriptions are not perceptual.

This leaves us with only two kinds of clausally complemented perceptual ascriptions to consider in assessing (i): bare infinitive and participial ascriptions. To simplify the exposition, I am going to refer to ascriptions of either kind as *genuine clausal ascriptions.* If what we said so far is correct, all basic perceptual phenomenal properties can be ascribed using genuine clausal ascriptions.

At this stage we have to consider that genuine clausal ascriptions have both intensional and extensional readings. On its extensional reading, the truth conditions of a statement such as (28) can be thought of as given by an enormous disjunction along the following lines, where there is a disjunct for each possible toddler that one might see walking:

(36) $Toddler(\alpha) \wedge See(I, [Walking(\alpha)])$ OR

$Toddler(\beta) \wedge See(I, [Walking(\beta)])$ ...

In other words, the truth of (28) requires that one of a certain set of distinct phenomenal properties obtains, and also that this phenomenal property meets the further condition that the individual who is part of the content experienced be a toddler. This means that the states ascribed by extensional readings of quantified clausal ascriptions are not basic phenomenal properties. The properties that might be basic are those found in the disjuncts of (36), which can be ascribed using singular, genuine clausal ascriptions such

as "I see Fred walking," and the properties ascribed on intensional readings of other genuine clausal ascriptions. In other words, only genuine clausal ascriptions that involve no quantifying-in might ascribe basic phenomenal properties.

Now, it is quite plausible that genuine clausal ascriptions involving no quantifying-in have the form $R(\alpha, P)$, where R is a perceptual/experiencing relation and P is a proposition. We know that such statements have a relational form, so the question is only whether the second relatum, which is clearly what is denoted by the complement of the verb, is a proposition or an entity of some other kind. Candidate types of entities include individuals, properties of individuals, intensions picking out individuals or properties of individuals, facts, and various proposition-like entities (all of which I count as propositions). One relevant consideration is that the complement of the verb in a statement such as (28) seems to predicate a property of something. This suggests that the complement is a fact or proposition. This is part of why every semantic theory ascribes facts or propositions (broadly construed) as semantic values of such complements. Relatedly, the other options are phenomenologically inaccurate. As noted earlier, in basic phenomenal states we see things being certain ways, not just individuals or ways for individuals to be (properties of individuals). So, the relata of basic phenomenal properties are plausibly either facts or propositions.

We know that statements such as (28) can be true despite the property apparently ascribed to something not being had by anything (for ex-

ample, without anyone being a toddler). This is true of intensional and singular perceptual ascriptions in every modality. This at once establishes that perceptual ascriptions that are genuine clausal ascriptions and that do not quantify-in ascribe relations to propositions as opposed to facts, and that these relations are nonfactive, which completes the argument for representationalism via (i) and (ii).

The representationalist view that the preceding discussion motivates faces a large number of well-known objections. Among other objections, it might seem phenomenologically inaccurate, it might seem to commit us to an implausible ontology of abstracta, and it might seem to face numerous counterexamples involving blur, perspective, pain, etc. There is a large literature raising and addressing objections to representationalism. There is no space here to contribute significantly to this literature, but I will say something brief about the first objection, the objection that it is introspectively manifest that we experience concrete objects rather than abstracta.[24] I focus on this objection because it has not been addressed as far as I know, it seems particularly relevant given the phenomenological points I make as part of my defense of representationalism, and some of the points I make above help address it.

As noted above, an expression of the form "α ϕ-s NP," where ϕ is a perceptual verb, or the verb "to experience," does not mean that one stands in the relation expressed by the verb to whatever the NP denotes: rather, it

[24]Kriegel (2007) and Crane (2009) make something like this objection.

means that one stands in a relation (perhaps not that expressed by the verb, but a closely associated relation) to a proposition involving whatever the NP denotes. So, to say that one experiences a proposition is to say that one stands in an experiencing relation to a proposition involving a proposition. Clearly, this is not normally the case when one has a perceptual experience. This is arguably almost never the case. So, the objection under consideration is correct as far as this goes: we do not experience propositions. However, the objection is by the same token off target, because representationalism does not say that basic experiences involve standing in experiencing relations to propositions involving propositions. Representationalism merely says that basic experiences involve standing in relations to propositions; it is consistent with representationalism that these propositions are never propositions about propositions.

Not only can the representationalist agree that we don't experience propositions, but she can agree that we experience concrete objects. On our analysis of NP ascriptions, experiencing concrete objects is a matter of standing in an experiencing relation to a proposition involving concrete objects. This is clearly allowed by representationalism: the propositions that are the objects of our experiences can be concrete ways the world can be, which involve concrete, spatiotemporal objects. If this is the case, we experience concrete objects. Note that representationalism is consistent with this on two different senses of "concrete objects." In one sense, a concrete object is an actual object. Representationalism allows that the objects of our experiences are

singular propositions involving actual objects. In another sense, a concrete object is a spatiotemporal object (the kind of thing one can bump against). In this sense, representing that there is something having such and such spatiotemporal properties should be sufficient for representing a concrete object, even if one is not representing an actual object. Clearly, representationalism allows that we represent spatiotemporal entities in this way as well.

While the preceding addresses the objection as stated, there is another objection in the neighborhood that one can make and that is not fully addressed yet: one might claim that it is introspectively obvious that experience is not a matter of being related to abstract entities such as propositions. This, contrary to the claim that we don't experience propositions but concrete objects, is a point about the nature of experience and its objects, not about the nature of the items that figure *within* the objects of experiences.

A preliminary question to ask is what, exactly, is supposed to be said or denied by introspection on this view. I take it that the typical objector here does not think that introspection presents experience as non-relational. She takes introspection to present experiences as relationships, but not as relationships to propositions. Presumably, introspection says something about the relata. It seems that it must say that they are of one of the following kinds: individuals, properties, propositions, or facts. The first two options do not seem to be phenomenologically accurate for reasons that we have discussed already. This leaves us with two possible views regarding the deliverances of introspections: either it tells us that experiences are relationships

to facts, or it tells us that experiences are relationships to propositions.

At this point, the short answer to this objection is that it seems irrelevant to representationalism whether introspection tends to present our experiences as relationships to facts or propositions. If, as seems plausible, facts are simply true propositions, the question boils down to whether introspection, in addition to presenting our experiences as relationships to propositions, tells us that these propositions are true.[25] Either way, what introspection says would be consistent with the representationalist picture of the nature of experience. The only introspective pronouncements in this neighborhood that would be in tension with representationalism would be pronouncements to the effect that certain phenomenal states are *essentially* relationships to true propositions. But if this were the case, the way things seem introspectively would be inconsistent with things not being as presented in experience: it would, barring any failure of rationality, be inconceivable that *this,* what I introspect as the object of my experience, is not how the world really is while I am experiencing it. It seems to me that such possibilities are always readily conceivable, and so that what introspection tells us does not include any pronouncements regarding the infallibility of experience.

[25]My assumption that facts are true propositions might seem controversial, but it should not be given that I take a broad view of propositions. For example, possible states of affairs are propositions.

8 The bottom line

The main upshot of our discussion of the semantics of perceptual ascriptions is that perception and perceptual experience are one and the same thing. This conclusion follows from theses I and II. If we combine this conclusion with a relational view of perception/experience (thesis III), we obtain relationalism. If we combine a broadly relational view of perception/experience with a plausible account of the structure of certain perceptual ascriptions, and other plausible claims regarding the relationship between perceptual ascriptions and phenomenal properties, we get representationalism. Disjunctivism can similarity be defended on the basis of theses I-III and plausible auxiliary assumptions.

My conclusion that relationalism, disjunctivism, and representationalism are all true might seems suspicious, because the latter view is commonly thought to be opposed to the former views.[26] One might think that either I am not talking about the real relationalist, disjunctivist, and representationalist views, or my overall position is inconsistent. Relatedly, one might ask what is the true picture of the metaphysics of experience if what I say above is correct: since relationalism (together with disjunctivism) and representationalism are generally taken to offer incompatible pictures of the metaphysics of experience, what should we make of the above conclusions?

[26] A notable exception is Schellenberg (2014), who argues that the representational and relational views can be reconciled by adopting a gappy content view of hallucinatory experience. This is an alternative approach to reconciling the two views.

I readily admit that my uses of the terms "relationalism," "disjunctivism," and "representationalism" might differ from those of many authors. This is true simply in virtue of the fact that there are multiple views lumped under each of these labels. What we have are families of views, and the views I defend are somewhat regimented, streamlined theses in the ballpark of each family of views. I do think, though, that they capture the spirit of each family.

This can be made clearer by considering the role of an assumption shared by nearly everyone in this debate. Virtually everyone assumes that mundane extensional perceptual ascriptions such as "I see a table" are sometimes true. As I noted earlier, this assumption goes beyond anything I have argued for here. Together with relationalism, this assumption commits us to particularism, the view that we sometimes experience external particulars. We can call this *the argument from perception for particularism*. The typical relationalist embraces the conclusion of this argument, but the typical representationalist does not. Typical representationalists, impressed by the observation that qualitatively indistinguishable objects do not seem to make distinct contributions to the phenomenal character of experience, deny particularism. Because they think that we perceive external objects (EPAs are sometimes true), they are committed to denying relationalism. This is not because relationalism is inconsistent with representationalism; rather, this is because the widespread assumption that EPAs are sometimes true and the denial of particularism are both part of the broader representationalist

view. The real disagreement between the relationalist and the representationalist is at the level of particularism. This is why I can defend and endorse relationalism and representationalism together.

For those interested in the deep nature of experience, the status of particularism is key. More precisely, the question whether it is *possible* for singular (and extensional) perceptual ascriptions to be true is key. Suppose first that this is possible. Then, arguably, the relationalist's picture of the mind expanding to encompass concrete reality is the correct metaphysical picture, and the disjunctivist's intuition that there are two fundamentally different kinds of experience, the object-involving ones and the non-object-involving ones, is correct. However, suppose that particularism is necessarily false. Then all extensional perceptual ascriptions, whether singular or quantified, are necessarily false. Relationalism and disjunctivism tell us certain facts about what it would take for such ascriptions to be true, and they are correct as far as this goes. However, if these ascriptions are necessarily false, they have more or less the status of confused statements: they ascribe to the subject a relation to a particular (either a specific particular or one characterized in generic terms) when the nature of the relation is such that it is impossible to stand in it to a particular. On this view of things, EPAs are analogous to a statement such as "I stepped on a musical note." Musical notes are just not the kinds of things that we can step on. For such a claim to be true, we would have to be able to literally leap into the realm of forms, where musical notes live. It is not part of our metaphysical picture of athletic

capacities that they enable such jumps into the realm of forms because we know that such claims are necessarily false (when taken literally). Similarly, if particularism is necessarily false, the implications of EPAs are irrelevant to the nature of experience. Only IPAs can be true, and the nature of the states of affairs described by IPAs is the nature of experience. That is, experience is fundamentally a matter of standing in certain nonfactive relations to propositions.

The broader relationalist and representationalist positions seem to me to be both less than fully satisfactory. The broader representationalist position is highly unsatisfactory because it involves the denial of an analytic truth, relationalism. The broader relationalist position is unsatisfactory because particularism is, it seems to me at least, implausible on its face. The problem, in a nutshell, is that I cannot introspectively identify a phenomenal way things are that could make it true that I am experiencing, say, object 828, and not merely *something being such and such.* I cannot introspectively find the haeccities of external objects, and I don't know what else could make it true that I experience external objects, as opposed to merely experiencing propositions such as *there are such and such objects.* I find this idea so obscure that I am inclined to think it is not even possible to experience external objects. Some people have told me that it is introspectively manifest to them that they experience external objects, but no one has been able to help me find them in my own experience. There is a sense in which I introspect a relationship to particular external objects, but this is fully accounted

for by the view that the contents of experience are existentially quantified: the variables that I experience stand for particular external objects, and I experience them as such.

Since the broader relationalist and representationalist positions are both less than fully satisfactory, it might be worth exploring the possibility of rejecting the common assumption that forces us to endorse one of these two positions. Nearly everyone assumes that we perceive external objects, but it is not clear what evidence we really have for this claim. The fact that we commonly utter EPAs seems to be weak evidence: this might merely be a convenient fiction that is encouraged by the grammar of perceptual verbs. Even if we did not literally perceive (i.e. experience) external objects, we would still be doing something quite similar to this that can explain everything else that the perception of external objects is supposed to account for. Arguably, everything that the perception of external objects is supposed to explain can be explained simply by the fact that we gather information about the external world through reliably caused experiences that have largely true existentially quantified propositions as objects. Clearly, knowing that there are such and such objects around me (fill in with a complex qualitative description) is sufficient to account for how I navigate my surroundings. Some philosophers claim that particularism is required to account for singular reference, but this remains a minority view within a much broader debate on reference sporting many competing views.[27] It seems to me that there is

[27]See for example Snowdon 1980, Campbell 2002, and Schellenberg 2016.

not, on reflection, a very strong case to maintain that we perceive external objects. The case is at the very least more theoretical and debatable than the direct phenomenological evidence against particularism. As a result, I find myself inclined to endorse the neglected combination of views that accepts both relationalism and representationalism while denying particularism and the perception of external objects. On this overall view, relationalism, disjunctivism, and representationalism are all true and supported by the semantics of perceptual ascriptions, but representationalism is the only view that bears on the nature of experience.

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