David Papineau, *The Metaphysics of Sensory Experience*, Oxford Univeristy Press, 2021, 163 pages, Hardback. ISBN: 978-0-19-886239-0

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In his new book, *The Metaphysics of Sensory Experience*, David Papineau defends a novel theory of the metaphysics of perception called the qualitative view, on which conscious sensory experiences are only extrinsically and contingently representational and are instead constituted by qualitative elements that are fundamentally non-representational. This view, though having noteworthy similarities with both traditional adverbialism and the familiar qualia-theoretic views of Ned Block and Christopher Peacocke, represents a new and important – and unduly neglected – third option besides the much better-known naïve realist and representationalist accounts on which the contemporary debate focuses. Papineau does an admirable job of motivating the position and establishing that it should be taken seriously by those engaged in the current perception debate. The book will repay close reading by all those working on the metaphysics of perception, as well as in related areas, including, for example, the theory of mental content and the epistemology of mind. It is well-written and accessible to those without much background knowledge, and will constitute an essential resource for students and academics alike.

The book is structured into four chapters, following a helpful stage-setting Introduction. Chapter 1 engages briefly with naïve realism and the sense-datum theory, and distinguishes the qualitative view from standard forms of representationalism. Chapter 2 develops an extended critique of representationalism, presenting new and important challenges to underdiscussed aspects of that view. Chapters 3 and 4 develop the qualitative view in much more detail, drawing relevant comparisons with related qualia-theoretic and adverbialist accounts.

Papineau rejects the sense-datum theory for standard reasons, including the well-known concern that there is no place for sense-data in a physicalist ontology (pp. 28-30). Similarly, one main objection to naïve realism is the familiar charge that it implausibly allows for phenomenally indistinguishable experiences to differ in nature (pp. 20-28). However, insofar as Papineau's strategy is to motivate the qualitative view by means of raising problems for competitor accounts, it is worth noting that these objections aren't particularly troublesome. Austere physicalists may have difficulty locating sense-data in the material world. But more liberal theorists, who allow for a wide range of derivative items that are grounded in the fundamental physical, would seem to have less trouble. Likewise, naïve realists are happy to allow that sensory states can differ in nature even when such differences are not introspectable, and this commitment is far from incoherent. Accordingly, more needs to be said if these two views are to be set aside.

Notably, therefore, Papineau also presses a version of the neglected time-lag argument against naïve realists (pp. 18-20). While no less historically important than the more familiar arguments from illusion and hallucination, the time-lag argument is rarely discussed by contemporary philosophers. However, it poses a deep challenge to the naïve realist view. Suppose, for example, you look into the sky and

see a star that died millions of years ago. For naïve realists, your experience contains the perceived star as a constituent. But how can that be, if the experience exists in the present, while the star does not? Naïve realists could perhaps treat the experience as illusory. But that appears to utterly misrepresent the situation.

A more plausible option is to adopt a theory of time (such as eternalism) that makes it possible to claim the star is still a part of reality even having died (cf. Moran, A. 'Naïve Realism, Seeing Stars, and Perceiving the Past', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 100 (1): 202-232, 2019.) On such a view, the star is a real object located in the distant past, and thus seems eligible to partly constitute the experience after all. As Papineau points out, however, this move faces difficulties too. When you see the star, your experience is located in the present. The star, however, is located in the past. So, even given an eternalist ontology, it seems the star cannot be a constituent of the experience. There is, of course, much more to say here. What's clear however, is naïve realists have real work to do if they are to make their theory viable in light of the threat posed by the time-lag argument Papineau discusses.

The book's critique of representationalism is impressively wide-ranging, and includes a helpful critical discussion of the widely cited but inadequately theorised idea that considerations of 'transparency' help motivate representationalism (p. 57ff). Papineau's main objection to representationalism, however, is that it fails to properly respect the manifestly *concrete* nature of sensory episodes. This concern, I think, is an important one, which representationalists must address. However, questions arise about the adequacy of Papineau's way of developing the worry.

Many representationalists maintain that sensory experiences are constituted by mental relations between subjects and uninstantiated properties. As Papineau plausibly notes, however, states constituted by mental relations to uninstantiated properties seem insufficiently concrete to classify as sensory episodes. After all, uninstantiated properties are abstract items. So how could standing in a mental relation to such an item constitute an experience, with its manifestly concrete and qualitative character?

Papineau develops the worry be distinguishing between concrete and abstract facts (pp. 66-67). Concrete facts are instantiations of properties by concrete particulars. Abstract facts are non-concrete. According to Papineau, a mental relation to an uninstantiated property is abstract, not concrete. Yet, sensory experiences are concrete. Therefore, representationalism is false (cf. p. 68).

The trouble, however, is with the second premise. Suppose I stand in mental relation R to *yellowness*. The argument claims this fact is abstract, not concrete. However, my standing in R to *yellowness* can also be represented as the fact that I instantiate the monadic relational property of *bearing R to yellowness*. But then, by definition, this must be reckoned as a concrete fact – it is the instantiation of a monadic property by a concrete particular – and can accordingly be safely identified with a sensory experience after all.

The above remarks notwithstanding, my own view is that Papineau identifies a real problem for standard representationalists here. Compared to naïve realist and sense-datum views, on which experiences consist in awareness relations to particular items that actually instantiate a range of qualitative properties, representationalism seemingly makes our sensory experiences far too abstract. The question that

remains, therefore, is how to turn this intuition into a rigorous objection against the representationalist view.

I want to conclude with a worry about the qualitative view itself. Standard representationalists insist that experiences are constituted by instantiations of representational properties. Qualia-theories diverge in allowing that while experiences are partly constituted by instantiations of representational properties, they are also partly constituted by instantiations of qualitative properties that are non-representational. The qualitative view, however, maintains that experiences are constituted exhaustively by non-representational qualitative properties. Papineau allows that such experiences do have representational features (in the right circumstances), in virtue of their extrinsic connections to the environment. But the idea is that there is nothing *intrinsically* or *essentially* representational about such states.

Recall now one of Papineau's objections to naïve realism, namely, that naïve realists implausibly allow for conscious differences across phenomenally indistinguishable sensory episodes, e.g., when one episode is perceptual and the other is hallucinatory. The objection I want to raise is the parallel one that Papineau's qualitative view seemingly fails to respect certain conscious *similarities* across perception and hallucination; similarities, moreover, that representationalists, sense-datum theorists, and even certain kinds of naïve realist can in principle respect. Suppose you're now veridically perceiving a ripe lemon. Intuitively, your experience puts you in contact with certain worldly properties, such as ovality and yellowness. But now consider your hallucinating twin, a phenomenal duplicate having an hallucinatory experience as of a ripe lemon. It is intuitive to think that your twin's experience also places them into contact with ovality and yellowness. Their experience might even provide them with the novel capacity to think about these properties and know what they are like. Yet, we can stipulate that your twin is hallucinating without being extrinsically connected to the environment in the sort of way that allows for mental representation of the relevant worldly properties. Accordingly, what Papineau must say is that while *you* might be representing ovality and yellowness, *your twin* is not; at best, your twin is aware of with the mental surrogate properties yellowness* and ovality*, conceived as non-representational qualitative features that constitute their experience. The worry, therefore, is that the qualitative view misrepresents the situation for your twin, who is in fact in sensory contact with yellowness and ovality and not merely with their mental qualitative surrogates.

The case reveals a potentially much larger potential problem with the qualitative view. Ultimately, what reflection on the phenomenal character of sensory experience suggests is that experiences acquaint us with worldly properties just in virtue of their intrinsic natures. The qualitative view, however, denies just this, holding instead that sensory experiences only acquaint us with external properties when properly correlated with the environment. While this commitment might not undermine the qualitative view, it is, I think, a cost of Papineau's position, and this should be acknowledged.

The Metaphysics of Sensory Experience is a highly enjoyable and thought-provoking read. It introduces and motivates an important and undeservedly neglected position in the metaphysics of perception debate, and will, I'm sure, prove to be instrumental in shaping and influencing that debate in years to come.