

4. Perception

In the previous chapter, I laid out the core of the pluralist theory. This theory holds that any perception consists of two very different relations operating in concert. However, my emphasis was on the relation of *deep awareness*, which is intended to explain what is common to all sensory experiences. In this chapter I fill out the pluralist theory of *sensory representation*, the successful variety of which is meant to account for facts that are distinctive to perception.

1. Sensory representations

The pluralist holds that all sensory states – including perceptions, hallucinations, sensory imaginings, and episodic memories – are mental representations of a particular kind. As I will understand things, a (*mental*) *representation* is a mental state or event that is associated with a *content* – a way for things to be. I do not assume that contents must be propositionally structured: perhaps there are non-propositional representations. Nor do I assume that contents must be metaphysically possible: perhaps it is possible to represent square circles.

The pluralist begins by positing a particular form of representation, *sensory representation*, that is found in all sensory states. Sensory representation is a form of *iconic representation*, a kind of representation that is formatted like a picture or map rather than like a sentence. The basic idea is that for an iconic representation, structural relations among its parts represent structural relations among what it represents.¹ In addition, the pluralist says that sensory representations

¹ There is much dispute about precisely how to characterize iconic representations, but a seminal characterization can be found in Fodor (2007, pp. 107-110).

represent how various targets are laid out in space, relative to some part of the subject. In this way sensory representations are less like objective maps and more like perspectival maps.

There are several well-known motivations for these ideas. For one thing, there is an obvious feature that unites all sensory states and distinguishes them from abstract thoughts, intentions, and desires. This evidently has something to do with spatial character, and in particular perspectival character. (You might wonder whether the obvious feature is phenomenal consciousness. It is not: there are phenomenally unconscious perceptions, sensory imaginings, and so on.) To boot, the idea that sensory states involve iconic, perspectival representations fits well with cognitive science.²

Next, consider the distinction between singular and existential contents. For the content of a representation to be *singular* is for the representation to be putatively directed at a particular, such as an object, property-instance, or event. *Successful* singular contents actually include particulars – e.g., the content <Socrates is a philosopher>, which includes Socrates himself.³ A representation that is directed at a particular without actually latching onto one has a *failed* singular content – e.g., the content of a failed demonstrative term. For a content to be *existential* is for it not even to be directed at a particular. Representations can be singular or existential in a secondary sense, in virtue of having singular or existential contents.

The pluralist's next claim is that sensory representations are sometimes existential and sometimes singular. If I imagine an armchair, then I am deploying a merely existential representation; my sensory imagining is not even directed at a particular. If I have a mundane perception of a tomato, I am deploying a sensory representation with a successful singular

² See xxx.

³ I will use angle brackets to denote contents.

content, a content that includes that very tomato and its instances of red* and round*. If I hallucinate a tomato, I am deploying a sensory representation with a failed singular content.

It is natural for the representationalist to say that all sensory imaginings have existential content and that all perceptual experiences have singular content. The pluralist does *not* say this. She thinks that many sensory imaginings have singular content, and that some unusual perceptual experiences have existential content. Her reasons will emerge in due course.

The pluralist accepts singular content for typical perceptual experiences for the usual reasons. Imagine that I see a blue ball on my left. The ball is illuminated with trick lighting, so I take it to be yellow. I see it through a slanted mirror, so I take it to be directly in front of me. And the mirror is a carnival mirror, so I take the ball to be a cube. In short, on the basis of my perception, I take there to be a yellow cube directly in front of me. In fact, there *is* a yellow cube in front of me, hidden behind the mirror! Despite this, I am having an illusion, not a veridical perception. A simple explanation for this is that my perception has singular content: it represents *the blue ball on my left* as a yellow cube straight ahead.⁴

Such arguments do not apply to sensory imaginings. To be sure, sensory imaginings *sometimes* have singular contents: I might sensorily imagine my mother. But the pluralist's idea is that when I sensorily imagine an elephant, but no elephant in particular, the content of my experience is merely existential. You might wonder whether there are other arguments for the claim that all sensory imaginings have singular content. I examine the issue in Appendix 3A.

In sum, the pluralist says that all sensory states or events – perceptions, hallucinations, sensations, episodic memories, and sensory imaginings – involve sensory representation. This is a form of representation that is perspectival and iconic. Sensory representations can be singular

⁴ Cases of this sort trace to Grice (1961).

or existential, but this distinction does not map neatly onto the distinction between perceptual and non-perceptual experiences.

2. Perception

Turn now to what distinguishes perception, *whether it is conscious or not*, from other sensory representations. The pluralist says that perception is not just representational, but also relational.

In particular:

To be a *perception* is to be a sensory representation that represents by standing in a perceptual relation to certain targets.⁵

A *perceptual relation* is a relation between a subject's perceptual systems and the target(s) that has three features: the relation (i) is direct, (ii) updates in real time, and (iii) varies with the target's spatial position relative to (some part of)⁶ the subject.

What is the significance of *these* three features in particular? It is that when they are taken together, they have a special kind of explanatory value. To appreciate this, suppose that I see a falling leaf. Now imagine a mental event that is as similar to this as possible, except that one of the defining characteristics of the perceptual relation is missing. Perhaps the mental event does not involve *direct* awareness of its target: perhaps I am seeing the shadow of the leaf against the tree, without seeing the leaf itself. Or perhaps the event does not update in real-time: it is more

⁵ Episodic memories (understood factively) may also be relational, but the relation in question is not the *perceptual* relation.

⁶ Imagine a scattered subject. Perhaps her eyes are on Venus but have a quantum link to her body on Earth. The parenthetical qualification handles such complications.

like a frozen image of a leaf mid-fall. In both cases, I submit that it is obvious why it is worth distinguishing these mental events from my perception of the falling leaf.

Or imagine an alien being who has some kind of direct awareness of the leaf “from nowhere”: the alien is sensorily aware of the spatial layout of the leaf, but lacks any sense of where the leaf is relative to itself.⁷ This event is much like my perception of the leaf, except that it does not directly convey information about the target’s spatial position relative to some part of the subject.

This event arguably belongs to a joint-carving kind in its own right. But it is plausible that there is also a joint-carving kind that includes perceptions while excluding alien experiences such as this. Perception has a distinctively *perspectival* character: it reveals, or purports to reveal, the location of its targets in egocentric space. These targets might be ordinary objects: when I see a black Labrador Retriever, my visual perception reveals where it is *relative to me*. Or the targets might be something else. When I breathe in the scent from a bottle of vanilla, it is not the bottle itself but the *scent* that evidently fills my nose; when I hear a cup smash against the floor, it is the *sound* that is evidently coming from my left. It is because of this perspectival character that perception literally provides a *point of view* on its targets. The alien experience does not do that. The difference is surely worth marking.

We can bring the point into relief by seeing that all three of the distinctive features of the perceptual relation have a special connection to *action*. If I am not directly aware of the leaf, or if

⁷ You might think of this as a variation on the two-gods case described by Lewis (1979, pp. 520-521): “They inhabit a certain possible world, and they know exactly which world it is. Therefore they know every proposition that is true at their world. Insofar as knowledge is a propositional attitude, they are omniscient. Still I can imagine them to suffer ignorance: neither one knows which of the two he is. They are not exactly alike. One lives on top of the tallest mountain and throws down manna; the other lives on top of the coldest mountain and throws down thunderbolts. Neither one knows whether he lives on the tallest mountain or on the coldest mountain; nor whether he throws manna or thunderbolts.”

I am not aware of it in real time, or if I am not aware of its position relative to me, then I cannot act on the leaf – trying to catch it, say – *in the fluid and direct way made possible by my perception*. This is not what *makes* perception joint-carving: even for a subject who cannot act, perhaps because she is paralyzed, it would be worth marking the difference between perception and various nearby mental states or events. But the link to action is a *mark* of the significance of perception.

I make one last remark for those who differ with me on the details. I have identified three features that characterize the perceptual relation, but I see room for reasonable disagreement about whether these are precisely the right features. Perhaps you have slightly different features in mind.⁸ Then I ask you to consider whether your preferred features could be substituted into the pluralist account instead.

In any case, the present account of perception has another pair of important virtues that relates to the well-known distinction between access consciousness and phenomenal consciousness.⁹ For a mental state or event to be *access conscious* is for it to be directly available to the subject – for example, for verbal report and action. For a mental state or event to be *phenomenally conscious* is for it to have the kind of consciousness distinctively associated with the hard problems of consciousness described in ch. 2.

It is clear that perceptions can be access-unconscious. This is true of certain perceptions in the dorsal stream that directly guide action without being accessible to the subject.¹⁰ It is also clear that perceptions can be phenomenally unconscious. The perceptions of very simple creatures are like this, as are the perceptions of blindsighted subjects. The present account has the virtues of explaining both possibilities. Suppose that there is a sensory representation that

⁸ See Burge (xxx) and xxx.

⁹ The distinction was first drawn in Block (1995).

¹⁰ See Milner and Goodale (xxx).

represents by standing in a perceptual relation to certain targets. This representation need not be available to the subject; it might be available only to certain subpersonal systems, such as her motor-control systems. Then the subject would have an access-unconscious perception, as in dorsal-stream perceptions. Or suppose that there is such a sensory representation that does not involve any deep awareness, as in simple or blindsighted creatures. Then there would be a phenomenally unconscious (though perhaps access-conscious) perception.¹¹

Many further advantages of this account of perception will emerge throughout the rest of this chapter.

3. Real and apparent presentational character introduced

Consider these phenomenological descriptions:

It is a natural, if paradoxical, way of speaking to say that seeing seems to ‘bring one into direct *contact* with *remote* objects’ and to reveal their shapes and colours.... (Broad 1952, p. 6)

I look out my study window and observe a variegated scene. There are maple, birch, and spruce trees in my front yard. Squirrels scurry across the lawn and up and down the trees.... The most intuitively attractive way of characterizing my state of consciousness as I observe all this is to say that it consists of the *presentation* of physical objects to consciousness.... It seems for all the world as if I enjoy *direct, unmediated* awareness of those objects. There is, apparently, nothing at all ‘between’ my mind and the objects I am perceiving. They are simply *displayed* to my awareness. (Alston 1999, p. 182, emphasis his)

¹¹ It is usually thought that phenomenal consciousness requires access consciousness, but not vice-versa. That is why I do not mention the possibility of phenomenally conscious but access-unconscious perceptions.

... your visual experience will place a moving rock before the mind in a uniquely vivid way....
Visual phenomenology makes it for a subject as if a scene is simply presented. Veridical perception,
illusion and hallucination seem to place objects and their features directly before the mind.
(Sturgeon 2000, p. 9)

The ripe tomato seems immediately present to me in experience. I am not in any way aware of any
cognitive distance between me and the scene in front of me.... The world is just there. (Levine
2006, p. 179)

Something else that we take for granted is that physical objects are the very things that are
presented to us in perception. It is extremely difficult to make this very natural idea precise. (Brewer
2011, p. 2, emphasis his)

These quotations are circling a common phenomenological point, which I will express as
perspicuously as I can.

Suppose that I see a tree. Later, I close my eyes and vividly sensorily remember that I
saw that tree, and on that basis I judge that I saw that tree. All of these three mental states or
events – the perception, the episodic memory, and the judgment – are in some sense committal
about the existence (current or past) of a tree. But there is still something distinctive about my
seeing the tree: it seems to involve a form of awareness that is *peculiarly direct* in a way that my
episodic memory and my judgment are not. Let us have a label for the relation that we first-
personally seem to find here:

Presentation is a relation of awareness that first-personally seems to occur in any typical
perception. It is more direct, in a hard-to-articulate way, than the relations of awareness
implicated in thought, sensory imagination, or sensory memory.

The phenomenological point is that perceptual experiences, including both perceptions and hallucinations, have what I will call *apparent presentational character*: they first-personally seem to present one or more targets. These targets typically include ordinary objects, such as trees and tomatoes; ordinary events, such as the event of a jogger running past; and ordinary property-instances, such as instances of brownness or roundness. (Note that property-instances are particulars – they are spatiotemporally located, and they can be qualitatively identical but numerically distinct. Property-instances should be sharply contrasted with *properties*, such as redness and roundness, which are not particulars.) Perceptual experiences do not usually first-personally seem to present extraordinary particulars such as sense-data or neurons, but if they did, they would still count as having apparent presentational character. In short, the idea is this:

Apparent Symmetry: Any typical perceptual experience has *apparent presentational character* – that is, it first-personally seems to present one or more targets. Typically, these targets seem to be ordinary, mind-independent objects or events, along with their property-instances.

We can add that for an experience to have *real presentational character* is for it to *really* present one or more targets – whether or not it first-personally seems to do so. Now, given Apparent Symmetry, should we accept that every typical perceptual experience really presents its targets? Of course not! If I hallucinate a scarlet plate, then there will be no mind-independent plate or instances of scarlet for me to be presented with. More generally, in cases of hallucination there is strong pressure to accept that our experiences are not as they seem. Still, it remains

possible, and indeed very attractive, to hold that *perceptions* really present their targets. Putting these ideas together, we get:

Real Asymmetry: Any perception has *real presentational character* – that is, it really presents one or more targets. Typically, these targets include ordinary, mind-independent objects or events, along with their property-instances. By contrast, no hallucination really presents any ordinary entities at all.

I turn now to the pluralist account of real presentational character. I will return to the matter of apparent presentational character in the next chapter. Some readers may wonder how presentation is related to direct awareness, how Apparent Symmetry is related to the transparency thesis, and how presentation is related to deep awareness. I clarify these matters in Appendix 3B.

4. An account of real presentational character

Not every perception has real presentational character. After all, there are access-unconscious perceptions, such as a perception that is accessible only for purposes of action without being available to the subject. There are also access-conscious but phenomenally unconscious perceptions, such as the perceptions of blindsighted subjects. What is real presentational character, then?

The pluralist's answer is this:

The *illumination account (part 1)*: For a mental state or event to have *real presentational character* with respect to a target is for it to be a perception of that target, where the perception includes deep awareness of how the target is.

Her idea is that perception by itself is no more presentational than thought. Real presentational character comes about only when perception is *lit up* or *illuminated* by deep awareness.

The basic motivation for this portion of the illumination account is that real presentational character divides into two factors. First, the target must be *present* for the subject – that is, the subject must perceive the target. This in turn requires the existence of a perceptual relation, a relation that is direct, that updates in real time, and that directly conveys information about the target’s spatial position relative to some part of the subject. Without a direct relation to a target, *that target* would not be present for the subject; at best some other target would be. Without a relation that updated in real time, the subject would not have a link to the actual target as it is now. And without a relation that directly conveyed information about the target’s spatial position relative to some part of the subject, the subject would not have any sense of how she was related to the target. Again, imagine having a perception-like awareness of a leaf that does not place the leaf relative to any part of your body. Such an event would give you a sense of the spatial contours of the leaf *from nowhere* and would thus not have real presentational character in the fullest sense of that term.¹²

But, the illumination account continues, perception by itself is not enough for real presentational character. Real presentational character also requires the subject to be positioned

¹² Some will say that this last condition is not necessary for real presentational character. I answer that the dispute is merely terminological. There is one joint-carving category of mental events that need not satisfy the last condition and another that must. Nothing in our introductory remarks about “real presentational character” settles which of these categories we are talking about. I have chosen to talk about the second category.

to understand *how the target is*, in a certain deep sense. This is why the perception must be lit up by deep awareness. If the target is an ordinary object – a cup, a tree – then the function of deep awareness is to make the subject aware of some of its properties in a way that reveals part of the very essence of those properties. By extension the subject then has a deep appreciation of how the object currently is. Or suppose that the target is a property-instance – an instance of red*, say. Then deep awareness will reveal part of what is essential to red*, and much of this will also be essential to the instance of red*. In this case, the subject’s appreciation of how the target is runs even deeper.

The illumination account thus predicts that a mental state or event might fail to have real presentational character in two importantly different ways. First, the target might fail to be present to the subject, even if she is aware of how the target is. Suppose for example that I see a tree, close my eyes, and vividly remember my experience. I am aware of how the tree is, but it is not *present* to me. What is missing here is the perceptual link to the tree.

Alternatively, a mental state or event might fail to have real presentational character because the subject, even if she is presented with the target, is not aware of *how the target is* in the relevant sense. The point can be illustrated by considering a philosophical *zombie* – a creature that is physically identical to an ordinary person, but that has no phenomenal consciousness. The zombie sees a falling leaf; so do I. These perceptions might dispose us to take many of the same actions, with the same fluidity, and to form many of the same beliefs. Still, there is an important kind of knowledge that only I can have: only I can know *how the falling leaf is*. That is, I can know *which* properties the leaf has – I can appreciate part of the essences of those properties. The zombie cannot do this.¹³ The distinction is surely worth marking.

¹³ The zombie might be able to acquire knowledge-*that* about the essences of these properties, but it is not propositional knowledge that is at issue here.

Some will worry that zombies are not metaphysically possible. Fine! Then we can focus on other cases of access-conscious but phenomenally unconscious perceptions. For example, there are the perceptions of simple creatures (honeybees?). There are also the perceptions of individuals with super-blindsight. The illumination account explains why there is no real presentational character when a honeybee or a super-blindsighted individual perceives a chair: what is missing is deep awareness, which reveals how the perceived target is in an especially deep way.

We can find further confirmation for the illumination account. Take any of these creatures – the zombie, the honeybee, or super-blindsighted Sue. The account predicts that if their perceptions were to be lit up with deep awareness, then those perceptions *would* have real presentational character. This seems exactly right. Imagine that Sue, who once suffered from super-blindsight, suddenly begins to enjoy deep awareness when she has visual perceptions: when she looks at a chair, she experiences the colors, shapes, and textures that the chair actually has. Imagine also that she takes these to be the colors, shapes, and textures *of the chair* – not through some voluntary act of imagination, but in a spontaneous and immediate way. Then, I submit, Sue *is* enjoying a visual experience with real presentational character. Likewise for the zombie or the honeybee.

I conclude that the illumination account provides a satisfying account of real presentational character. The account correctly classifies a broad range of cases. Better still, it makes it clear what is special about real presentational character – it makes it clear why this is a joint-carving kind. Incidentally, the illumination account raises some interesting issues regarding total illusions, which I discuss these in Appendix 3C.

I turn now to a related phenomenon.

5. An account of strong singular character

In ch. 1 we considered the example of a man who hears various sounds coming from the neighboring house. On that basis he posits the existence of various objects that are likely in the house – say, a coffee table, a refrigerator, and so on. His experiences have *weak singular character* with respect to these targets: they position him to make singular reference to these objects. But finally the man enters the house and *sees* the coffee table, the refrigerator, and so on. These perceptions have *strong singular character* with respect to these objects: not only do the experiences (i) position our subject to make singular reference to that target, they also (ii) position him to know, in a certain special way, what he is referring to.

Weak singular character is cheap. The ability to make singular reference can be granted by the perceptual relation, even in cases of blindsight: a subject can make singular reference to a chair that she blindly sees. A subject can even make singular reference to an entity just on the basis of knowing what functional roles the entity performs: a detective might refer to *that criminal* – the person, identity unknown, who left this footprint, who shattered that window, who knocked over the lamp, and so on. What is precious, and much harder to account for, is strong singular character.

The pluralist’s account of this phenomenon is closely related to her account of real presentational character. It is this:

The *illumination account (part 2)*: For a mental state or event to have *strong singular character* with respect to a target is for it to have weak singular character with respect to that target and to involve either (i) deep awareness of the target or (ii) deep awareness of the target’s properties *as* properties of the target.

The central motivation for the account is that once a subject can make singular reference to something, it is deep awareness that positions her to know, in the relevant sense, *what* she is referring to. Deep awareness “lights up” the referent for her. If the referent simply is a property of which the subject is sensorily aware, then the subject will just directly be positioned to know part of the essence of the referent itself. Alternatively, if the referent has the properties of which the subject is sensorily aware, then the subject has a special way of appreciating what those properties are, and by extension what the referent is. Either way, the illumination account identifies the precise sense in which the subject knows what she is referring to.¹⁴

Note that this special kind of knowledge involved here is not fundamentally propositional. It is not fundamentally knowledge *that* certain truths about essences obtain. It is fundamentally knowledge-*of*. This non-propositional knowledge is what positions the subject, secondarily, to acquire propositional knowledge concerning truths about essences.

Let us begin to test the illumination account. It says that strong singular character is generated by deep awareness of a target or its properties. This normally occurs in perceptions, but it also occurs in other mental states or events. Thus the illumination account predicts that these other mental states or events should also position the subject to make singular reference while knowing what she is referring to.

¹⁴ This is also my account of a phenomenon described by Heather Logue: “suppose that you had a choice between having veridical experiences of your environment, and having a trustworthy, omniscient creature tell you about what’s going on in it. I, for one, would prefer to have the veridical experiences. That’s not because veridical experiences are the only route to knowledge about my environment – on the face of it, trustworthy and reliable testimony could do just as well. And arguably, the preference isn’t just due to the fact that testimony happens to be a slower means of conveying information than veridical experience is – we could revise the case by making the omniscient creature talk really fast and idealizing the subject so that she could understand. I would still prefer to have the veridical experience” (2012, p. 227). I say that what is missing in mere testimony is the kind of knowledge that I have described.

This prediction is easily confirmed. Consider an episodic memory of a tree: this mental event positions the subject to refer to the tree, and it also involves deep awareness of the tree's properties *as* properties of the tree. Thus the illumination account predicts that an episodic memory of a tree should position the subject to know *what she is referring to* when she thinks about that tree. This is obviously correct – even if the subject did not notice the tree when she originally saw it. (Perhaps she was running past and only later, in a jolt of memory, realizes what she saw.)

Some will be unimpressed by this prediction. After all, for a subject to episodically remember a tree, she must have seen the tree before, but we already know that perception has strong singular character. So perhaps it is unsurprising that episodic memory has strong singular character, too – by extension, as it were. It would be more impressive if the illumination account could identify mental states or events with strong singular character that did *not* require the subject to have a current or previous perception of the target.

It can. I have never met Barack Obama, but I have seen him in photographs and video clips. We can all agree that this positions me to make singular reference to him. The illumination account delivers the further prediction that this positions me to know who I am thereby referring to, in the special sense under discussion. After all, as long as the photo of Obama is taken in good light, seeing it will reveal to me certain sensory qualities that I know to be shared by Obama himself. The point also extends to types: I have never seen a live zebra, but I have seen paintings and photographs of them. According to the illumination account, this will permit me to refer to the type *zebra* and to know what I am thereby referring to. These predictions strike me as exactly right, and they are cases in which I know what I am referring to despite having seen only *depictions* of the target rather than the target itself.

It is easy to miss the point, since there are many different senses in which you might “know what you are referring to.” But once we focus on the sense under discussion, the point

comes into sharp focus. If I merely refer to Obama by his functional roles, e.g., as the 44th president of the United States, then I am like the man who makes singular reference to the coffee table and refrigerator in his neighbor's home that he has never seen. Once I see a photo of Obama, I am like the man after he *sees* those objects: it is simply revealed to me how the referent is.

Now turn to the case of hallucination: consider a subject who hallucinates a perfect circle. Such a subject cannot make genuine singular reference, much less know what she is referring to, when she speaks of *that object*, the non-existent circle. Likewise for the non-existent property-instance of perfect circularity. But she *can* make knowledgeable singular reference to *that shape*, perfect circularity*.

The pluralist can explain exactly what is happening here. The subject is deploying *failed* singular representations of an object and a property-instance. That is why she cannot actually refer to anything – her experience does not even have weak singular character with respect to an object or property-instance. At the same time, however, the subject is sensorily aware of perfect circularity*, which allows her not only to refer to it, but also to know what she is referring to. Thus her experience has strong singular character with respect to this property.

En passant, we can see a weakness of standard naïve realist theories. Such theories can easily explain why hallucinations do not have even weak singular character with respect to particulars: the subject does not stand in the perceptual relation to any such particulars, they will say. But these theories have trouble explaining why hallucinations have strong singular character with respect to sensory qualities such as perfect circularity*. The standard naïve realist might simply deny that hallucinations do have strong singular character with respect to sensory qualities,¹⁵ but then she is giving up a very attractive claim.¹⁶

¹⁵ See for example Brewer (2011, p. 113).

¹⁶ There are non-standard versions of naïve realism that say that perception involves awareness of universals as well as particulars – see for instance Johnston (2004); Conduct (2012). These

Summary. The illumination account identifies, in a precise and satisfying way, what this special kind of knowledge of reference amounts to. It correctly predicts that paradigmatic episodic memories and perceptions of photographs will have strong singular character with respect to particulars and properties. And it correctly predicts that paradigmatic sensory imaginings and hallucinations will have strong singular character with respect to properties but not particulars. That makes it a very attractive account.

Other matters. Consider the observation that clouds, tables, and airplanes are categorical, intrinsic, and mind-independent objects. Some naïve realists have thought that perceptions, and only perceptions, position us to grasp the categoricity, intrinsicity, and mind-independence of these objects in a special way. They have argued that this can be explained only if we say that perception is relational.¹⁷ Thus you might expect me to argue that the illumination account can explain these data.

This expectation will be disappointed. For I think that the data have been misdescribed: *all* perceptual experiences, including hallucinations, put us in the relevant epistemic position. Once this is appreciated, it becomes natural for the pluralist to explain these data by appealing, not to the perceptual relation, but to the relation of deep awareness. I develop these ideas in chapter 6.

I leave some other discussions to the appendices. In Appendix 3D (not yet written), I reveal further weaknesses in the standard naïve realist account of strong singular character. In Appendix 3E, I argue that standard singular representationalism can account for weak singular character but not strong singular character. In Appendix 3F (not yet written), I mention an

theories may be able to avoid the problem. Elsewhere in this book I raise other problems for such theories, but let credit be given where it is due.

¹⁷ See Campbell (2002, especially chs. 6-7).

additional line of support for the illumination account, which turns on the fact that perceptions position us to *understand* (not just *know*) what we are referring to.

We have now digested the pluralist theory of hard character, real presentational character, and strong singular character. Pulling all of this together lets us dissolve an especially deep problem about phenomenal character.

6. A deep problem about phenomenal character

Here are two deeply attractive ideas. The first is the idea that any perception and matching hallucination have precisely the same phenomenal character. You will get the appeal easily enough. Just consider any perception – a perception of a scarlet plate, say – and a matching hallucination. It seems perfectly obvious that what it is like to have these two experiences is precisely the same. But then there is a second attractive idea: the idea that the phenomenal character of any perception includes the particulars that are perceived. For instance, when I see a scarlet plate, what my experience is like has to do with *that very plate* and *its particular instances of scarlet** and *roundness**. The trouble is that it is very hard to honor both ideas at the same time: in a matching hallucination, there are no particulars to be perceived, so – apparently – the phenomenal character of the hallucination cannot be the same as the phenomenal character of the perception that it matches.¹⁸

The standard representationalist view is that the phenomenal character of an experience is identical to the property of being a perceptual representation with a certain content (or portion of that content).¹⁹ Given this assumption, the problem can usefully be posed as a dilemma about

¹⁸ Here I refine my presentation of the problem in my (2014, pp. 311-312). There I did not think of the second idea as an idea about the *phenomenal character* of perception. Now I do.

¹⁹ I include the parenthetical qualification to cover the view of, e.g., Tye (2009). Tye thinks that the content of perception concerns particulars and qualities, but he adds that only the qualities, not the particulars, figure in phenomenal character (p. 119).

experiential content. What generates the dilemma is this question: is the phenomenal character of perception a matter of its singular content or its non-singular content (or is it a matter of a *part* of the content that is singular or non-singular)?

On the first horn, the representationalist answers that phenomenal character is a matter of non-singular content. Then she can honor the claim that a perception and a matching hallucination will have the same phenomenal character: she can say that both experiences have exactly the same non-singular content. But she loses her grip on the idea that particular objects and property-instances figure in the phenomenal character of perception. This claim is, I repeat, very plausible! It is very plausible that seeing a scarlet plate puts me in touch with that very plate and its particular instances of scarlet*.

On the second horn, the representationalist instead answers that phenomenal character is a matter of singular content. This lets her honor the idea that my perception of a scarlet plate puts me in touch with that very plate and its instances of scarlet*, since she can say that these particulars figure in the content of my perception. However, on this view no such particulars figure in the content of a matching hallucination; such an experience will have only a failed singular content. As a consequence, the representationalist is now forced to sacrifice the claim that a perception and a matching hallucination will have the same phenomenal character.²⁰

This is one of the deepest problems for any theory of perception. I say that the pluralist has a powerful response to it.

²⁰ Fish outlines this dilemma by considering a case in which Michael Tye sees the blueness of the Pacific Ocean: “a representationalist might claim that veridical experiences possess a further content that is singular. While such a position would be possible, and may indeed allow for the claim that the very blueness of the ocean is *seen* by Tye (where seeing is a matter of veridical representation), as long as it is an abstract or general content that is identified with/determines phenomenal and hence presentational character, then the representationalist will be unable to hold that it is the very blueness of the ocean that Tye is *presented with*. And if a representationalist were to hold that this singular content determined phenomenal/presentational character, then such a phenomenal character would be unavailable in the nonveridical cases” (2009, p. 23, fn. 27).

The pluralist's key move is to disambiguate the term *phenomenal character*. Does this refer to real presentational character, to strong singular character, or to hard character?²¹ Suppose first that the opponent is focusing on either *real presentational character* or *strong singular character*. Then the crucial claims are these:

1. Any perception and matching hallucination will have exactly the same real presentational character.
2. Any perception and matching hallucination will have exactly the same strong singular character.

As I have already argued, these claims are not even *prima facie* plausible. There is no pre-theoretic reason to think that a hallucination of a cup really presents the subject with a cup, nor that it positions the subject to refer to "the" cup while knowing what she is referring to. There is no cup there, so how could the subject be presented with it? How could she refer to it (much less know what she is referring to)? Thus it is unproblematic that the pluralist does not accommodate sameness of phenomenal character in these senses.²²

Alternatively, perhaps my opponent means to focus on hard character. Then the crucial claim is this:

3. Any perception and matching hallucination will have exactly the same hard character.

²¹ Or perhaps it refers to apparent presentational character. I offer an account of this phenomenon in the next chapter.

²² The pluralist does say that the subject's hallucination will have strong singular character *with respect to certain sensory qualities*. But this is very initially plausible, and it is compatible with the existence of a difference in *overall* strong singular character between a perception and a matching hallucination.

This claim is indeed among the motivations for pluralism. The pluralist honors this claim by explaining hard character in terms of deep awareness: a perception and a matching hallucination involve deep awareness of precisely the same sensory qualities and thus have precisely the same hard character. None of this conflicts in any way with the claim that these experiences will differ in real presentational character and singular character. Again the concern simply vanishes.

To my mind, it is a great advantage of pluralism that it can dissolve this deep problem.²³

There are many further objections to a representationalist account of perception. For instance, it has been said that the representationalist cannot accommodate the truths that only the perceiver is actually aware of a plate or its property-instances; that only the perception has real presentational character; that the perceived targets are constituents of the perception, but not of the hallucination; and that there is an intrinsic difference between a perception and a matching hallucination. I address these objections in Appendix 3G.

7. Conclusion

There are many sophisticated arguments for preferring naïve realism to representationalism. But my sense is that these are not what really drive most naïve realists: were the arguments revealed to be unsound, naïve realists would simply develop new ones. I think that most naïve realists are motivated by the thought that only naïve realism can fully honor the real presentational character

²³ I will mention *en passant* that this approach is available to any singular representationalist. The singular representationalist can explain real presentational character and strong singular character (with respect to particulars) in terms of successful singular content, which is found only in perception. At the same time, she can explain hard character in terms of something that is shared across perceptions and hallucinations – perhaps represented sensory qualities (see Tye (2009, p. 119)), content-types, or representational capacities exercised (see Schellenberg (2018, p. 88)). Elsewhere in this book, I argue that standard forms of singular representationalism are inadequate for other reasons. But it is worth acknowledging this strength of the view.

and strong singular character of perception. I conjecture that if most naïve realists were truly convinced that neither of these motivations supported their theory, then they would no longer accept it in their heart of hearts.

I say that pluralism does even better than standard naïve realism on both fronts. The standard naïve realist honors the fact that perception has real presentational character, but only by taking this as primitive. That explanatory tactic, while possible, should be a last resort. The pluralist, by contrast, offers an informative explanation of what real presentational character is. Better still, there are strong independent reasons to accept the central posit of this explanation – that deep awareness reveals part of the essence of the sensory qualities. In particular, as I argued in chapter 3, this posit is first-personally plausible, and it shoulders many explanatory burdens.

As for the other front, the pluralist can fully honor, and indeed informatively explain, the fact that perception has strong singular character. In this respect pluralism is like standard naïve realism. In addition, the pluralist can explain why other mental events, such as episodic memories, have strong singular character. She can also explain why even hallucinations have strong singular character with respect to sensory qualities. It is unclear how standard naïve realist theories can explain these facts.

For these reasons, I believe that pluralism is the true beneficiary of the deepest motivations for standard naïve realism.

Appendix 4A. Do sensory imaginings have singular content?

Someone might think that all sensory imaginings have singular content on the grounds that they involve representations of particulars. For example, when you imagine an elephant, you are imagining an object – *the elephant*. This argument is not compelling, since there can be merely

existential representations of objects: you can represent the mere *existence* of an elephant, without representing the existence of any *particular* elephant.

Still, you can sensorily imagine an elephant and then imagine further things about *it*: that *it* will shortly take a mud bath, say. Does this require your sensory imagining to have singular content?

It does not. Consider a thought that is clearly existential: the thought that there exists someone wearing a fedora. You can then have further thoughts about *that person*: that *she* is a gumshoe, say. Thus, being in a mental state with an existential content can position you to have thoughts that *superficially appear* to be singular.

For these reasons, I continue to think that not all sensory imaginings have singular content. But I repeat that some sensory imaginings *do* have (failed) singular content. One example is a sensory imagining of your mother. More exotic examples are given in §x.

Appendix 4B. Some clarifications

Here I clarify some crucial notions and theses.

Presentation vs. direct awareness. There are many ways of understanding what *direct awareness* is, but many authors use this term in such a way that an episodic memory or a singular thought about an object might involve direct awareness of that object. I will follow that usage. Accordingly, I can say that direct awareness is a weaker relation than presentation. For, as we have already seen, episodic memories and singular thoughts do not present their objects.²⁴

²⁴ But note that some theorists – including some of those quoted above – use the expression *direct awareness* to refer to presentation. I do not know of any way to avoid confusion here besides being clear about how I am using these terms myself. In any case, the distinction that I am making is widely accepted: see Broad (1952, pp. 32-3); Alston (1999, p. 182); Sturgeon (2000, p. 9); Millar (2014, p. 240).

Apparent Symmetry vs. the transparency claim. There are many claims about “transparency” that theorists of perception like to make, but here is a representative one:

The *transparency claim*: Take any typical visual experience and consider the properties of which the subject is directly aware. All of these properties are experienced as properties of ordinary particulars; none of them are experienced as properties of the experience itself.²⁵

This should be sharply contrasted with:

Apparent Symmetry: Any typical perceptual experience has *apparent presentational character* – that is, it first-personally seems to present one or more targets. Typically, these targets seem to be ordinary, mind-independent objects or events, along with their property-instances.²⁶

The transparency claim and Apparent Symmetry are logically independent. On the one hand, the transparency claim is merely a claim about direct awareness, so it does not entail Apparent Symmetry, which is a claim about the stronger relation of *presentation*.²⁷ On the other hand, Apparent Symmetry does not entail the transparency claim – this, despite the fact that

²⁵ For some seminal discussions of transparency, see Harman (1990) and Tye (2002). The transparency thesis that I have stated appears in Tye (2002, pp. 137-8). I will discuss the transparency claim in more detail in chapter x.

²⁶ As Millar points out (2014, pp. 241-2).

²⁷ On this point I disagree with Kennedy (2009). Kennedy is clearly discussing apparent presentational character (which he calls “manifest presence”), for on pp. 578-579 he approvingly cites Alston’s description of that phenomenon. But Kennedy holds that transparency entails apparent presentational character (pp. 576-577, 579).

presentation entails direct awareness. For the transparency claim entails that certain properties are the *only* properties that we are directly aware of in any typical perceptual experience, while Apparent Symmetry does not entail any such restriction.

Presentation vs. deep awareness. Deep awareness is found when a subject sees red, episodically remembers red, or pictures the color red, but it is not found when a subject merely thinks abstractly about the color red. Deep awareness is obviously distinct from both presentation and first-personal appearances of presentation: sensory imaginings and episodic memories paradigmatically involve deep awareness, but they neither present nor seem to present anything. Still, it is plausible that presentation *entails* deep awareness. This will turn out to be a consequence of the pluralist account.

Appendix 4C. Total illusions

It is natural to think that a mental state or event has real presentational character just in case it is a phenomenally conscious perception. However, the illumination account entails that this is not quite right. For the illumination account says that real presentational character requires deep awareness *of how the target (actually) is*. This is missing in some unusual cases of perception – in particular, in cases of *total illusion*, where the subject misperceives *every* property of a target.

Recall the case in which I see a blue ball to my left, but take it to be a yellow cube straight ahead. Here I misperceive the color, shape, and location of the object. Still, this is not yet a case of total illusion: I correctly perceive the ball as a *single* object. So let us modify the case. Suppose it is not a single ball that I see, but an art installation: to my left, a dozen small blue balls are floating in the air in a haphazard formation. (The balls are metal and are kept suspended with magnets.) Again, due to trick lighting and a slanted carnival mirror, these balls look to me like a

single yellow cube straight ahead. Now the illusion is total.²⁸ Are the blue balls really present to me? My own sense is that they are not, given that I have no appreciation of how they really are.

This is just what the pluralist predicts. She says that I am sensorily aware of yellowness, cubicity, and so on; I am positioned to know part of the very essences of these properties. I then take the properties to be instantiated by the floating blue balls – but this is not the case! If a mental state or event to have real presentational character, it must make me aware of *some* property that the referent actually has, the pluralist continues, and in this case I lack such knowledge. (Still, if you disagree, the illumination account can be modified to accommodate your thinking. It should merely speak of *apparent* rather than *actual* deep awareness.)

Some will say that all visual perceptions are partial illusions, because colors* are never instantiated in physical objects. Even so, typical visual perceptions can have real presentational character as long as they are not total illusions. Plausibly, they are not. When I see my desk, I am plausibly sensorily aware of its shape*, orientation*, texture*, and so on.

Some will still worry that we suffer from at least small illusions even with respect to these sensory qualities. But if the illusions are small, then we will still have genuine deep awareness of less determinate sensory qualities, and our perceptions will still have real presentational character.

Appendix 4D. The standard naïve realist account of strong singular character

[To be written.]

²⁸ You might object that I am at least aware that the target is not moving. But the case can be modified to avoid the objection: perhaps the balls are slowly drifting, while the surface of the carnival mirror is simultaneously changing in a way that cancels out any appearance of motion.

Appendix 4E. Standard singular representationalism and strong singular character

The standard singular representationalist acknowledges an important difference between perceptions and matching hallucinations. Perceptions have successful singular contents: the content of a perception of a scarlet plate will actually include the particular plate and the particular instances of scarlet* that are perceived. A matching hallucination will have only a failed singular content.

I contend that, by itself, standard singular representationalism does not explain the strong singular character of perception. She can make a good start. She can say that only a content that involves particulars can position you to make singular reference to them – but this occurs only in perception. However, that is only an explanation of *weak* singular character, the ability to make singular reference to particulars. I repeat that this is cheap! You can be in such a position just on the basis of testimony or knowledge of functional roles. What the standard singular representationalist has not yet explained is why perceptions position us to *know*, in a special way, *what we are referring to*.²⁹

I urge the standard singular representationalist to complete the explanation by accepting Partial Revelation.

²⁹ I take this objection to cut against the views of Schellenberg (2018, esp. pp. 126-128) and Tye (2009, esp. ch. 4). Schellenberg takes pains to explain how perception positions the subjects to *refer* to particulars, but she does not explain the special kind of *knowledge* of reference that perception provides. Tye does not explicitly consider the question at all.

Appendix 4F. Understanding reference: another line of support for the illumination account

[To be written. The basic idea is that understanding comes in degrees: you can have a better or worse understanding of what you are referring to. How well you understand is a function, though probably not a simple one, of how many properties of the target you have deep awareness of.]

Appendix 4G. Some additional naïve realist objections to representationalism

Here I address a number of naïve realist objections to representationalism. I argue that these make no trouble for the pluralist.

One worry begins with the observation that there is an important asymmetry between perception and hallucination: only in the case of perception is the subject perceptually aware of any plate or any property-instances thereof. Naïve realism correctly allows for this. But, the objection goes, representationalist accounts fail to accommodate the asymmetry: they require the content of a perception to be the same as the content of a matching hallucination.³⁰

This objection does not even make contact with the pluralist account. This account explicitly states that the content of a subject's perception of (for example) a scarlet plate is something like <there is, in front of me, that particular plate, with those particular property-instances>. A matching hallucination will not have this content.

³⁰ As Campbell puts it, "On the Representational View, the representational content of your experience may be exactly the same in both cases On the Relational View, in contrast, there is nothing intrinsic in common between the cases in which there is a dagger to which you are consciously attending, and the case in which you are just having a hallucination. In the case in which there is a dagger, the object itself is a constituent of your experience. The experience is quite different in the case of the hallucination, since there is no object to be a constituent of your experience" (2002, p. 117).

A further argument is that a representationalist cannot say this; she is committed to the view that a perception and a matching hallucination will have precisely the same real presentational character. For the subject could perceptually represent a dagger and its properties whether or not she is confronted with a dagger.³¹

The premise of this argument does not support its conclusion. According to the present representationalist account, an experience's real presentational character (if it has one) consists partly in the actual, particular objects and property-instances that are represented. In the hallucinatory case, there simply are no such objects and property-instances. Thus, the present account says that perceptions have real presentational character and hallucinations do not. But this account allows that a subject could perceptually represent *a* dagger (but no dagger in particular) and its properties whether or not she is actually confronted with a dagger.

Another concern is that the representationalist acknowledges only a *causal* difference between a perception and a matching hallucination. The idea is that for the representationalist, the perception and the hallucination are intrinsically identical mental events that merely have different causes. What is needed, however, is a difference between the two that is *constitutive*.³²

This concern also misfires against the account under consideration. Yes, the pluralist holds that the perception and the hallucination are intrinsically identical mental events that have

³¹ As Campbell puts it, "On the Representational View, ... given a single background environment, you could have representational contents relating to daggers and their characteristics whether or not there actually was a dagger in front of you. So the phenomenal character of your experience could be exactly the same in both cases" (ibid). As I argued in chapter 1, Campbell uses the term *phenomenal character* to refer to real presentational character.

³² As Campbell puts it: "On the Representational View, ... [a]ll that is different between the two cases [of perception and hallucination] is the way in which the representational contents are caused on these occasions. In the veridical case, the representations are caused by a dagger. In the hallucinatory case, the representational contents are but creatures of the heat-oppressed brain.

On the Relational View, in contrast, ... [in] the case in which there is a dagger, the object itself is a constituent of your experience. The experience is quite different in the case of the hallucination, since there is no object to be a constituent of your experience" (2002, p. 117).

different causes. In particular, in a perception of a scarlet plate, the sensory representation stands in a perceptual relation – which is a type of causal relation – to an actual plate. In a matching hallucination, there is an intrinsically identical sensory representation, but the perceptual relation is missing. However, the pluralist says that this causal difference grounds a constitutive difference, namely, that a perception of a scarlet plate is a relation to the particular plate and its particular instances of scarlet. This is why the perception positions its subject to make singular reference to those particulars.³³

It is independently plausible that causal differences can ground constitutive differences. Compare a successful singular thought about a particular elephant and a similar but failed singular thought. These thoughts might be intrinsically identical, but the successful singular thought has a content that is constituted by the individual elephant. The failed singular thought does not have a content of this sort.

A final worry is that there is not just a constitutive difference between a perception and a matching hallucination. There is an *intrinsic* difference between them, which the pluralist does not acknowledge.³⁴

It is true that the pluralist does not acknowledge an intrinsic difference here. So what? The standard reason for positing such a difference is to account for the real presentational

³³ The broad possibility of such a view has been anticipated by Harold Langsam. Langsam is a naïve realist, but he concedes that “[i]f there is a kind of representation that is a genuine relation, then for all that has been said, the relation that is of concern to the naïve realist can be a kind of representation” (2017, p. 111).

³⁴ Campbell observes, “On the Relational View, in contrast [to the Representational View], there is nothing intrinsic in common between the cases in which there is a dagger to which you are consciously attending, and the case in which you are just having a hallucination” (ibid, p. 117). Similarly, Fish says, “the hillsides shape the contours of the landscape by actually *being* the contours of the landscape. This, I suggest, is how we should understand the naïve realist's claim that external objects and their properties shape the contours of the subject's conscious experience: they shape the contours of the subject's conscious experience by actually *being* the contours of the subject's conscious experience.”

character or the strong singular character of perception. The pluralist has an account of both phenomena that does not make any reference to intrinsic differences between perceptions and hallucinations. If there is some inadequacy in this account, I would like to know precisely what it is.

Or perhaps my opponent will say that it just first-personally seems that when she perceives a scarlet plate, the plate is intrinsic to her perception. I respond that it does not first-personally seem this way to me. It first-personally seems to me that I stand in a genuine *relation* to the plate, and that the plate is *present* to me in a special sense – the sense involved in the claim that my perception has real presentational character. It is perfectly reasonable to *theorize* that these facts are explained by what is intrinsic to perception, but that is a theoretical rather than an intuitive step. The step can be resisted if there is some other theory that is fully satisfactory. That is what the pluralist aims to provide.