

# Naïve realism without fundamental kinds

*Naïve realism* is a theory of perception with great explanatory ambitions. According to its advocates, the naïve realist theory can explain why genuine perceptions introspectively seem to involve a peculiarly intimate relation to the world<sup>1</sup>; it can also explain why genuine perceptions put us in a position to make singular reference to, and to acquire singular knowledge about, what we perceive.<sup>2</sup> It is primarily on these grounds that so many philosophers have been attracted to naïve realism.

It has been influentially argued that, in order to make good on these explanatory ambitions, the naïve realist should operate with the notion of a *fundamental kind*.<sup>3</sup> I disagree. More modestly, it has been influentially argued that in order to make good on these explanatory ambitions, the naïve realist should operate with a *metaphysically robust* notion of a kind.<sup>4</sup> I agree, but I think that the justification for this claim has not been properly developed. In this paper I air both of these sentiments.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin (2002) offers an especially influential articulation of this idea. Similar ideas appear in Crane (2006); Hellie (2007); Kennedy (2009) and (2013); Nudds (2009); Fish (2009); Brewer (2011, p. 2); Genone (2016, §4.3).

<sup>2</sup> The key work here is Campbell (2002). Similar ideas appear in Fish (2009, pp. 26-8); Brewer (2011, ch. 6); Genone (2016, §4.1).

<sup>3</sup> The fundamental kind theory is due to Michael Martin, and his most fully developed argument for the view can be found in Martin (2006). Martin has inspired many other naïve realists to adopt the fundamental kind theory, or some nearby view about how genuine perceptions are fundamentally: see Soteriou (2005, p. 178); Crane (2006, p. 139); Neta (2008, pp. 311-312); Nudds (2009, p. 337); Brewer (2011, p. 94); Logue (2012a, p. 211), (2012b, p. 174), and (2013, p. 109); French (2013, p. 1735); Genone (2016, p. 7); Gomes (2017, p. 534); Beck (2018, p. 2). Most of these theorists follow Martin closely, but as we shall see, Logue offers an importantly different version of the fundamental kind theory.

<sup>4</sup> As we will see, this is an intermediate conclusion of an argument from Martin (2006).

I will start by describing the naïve realist theory and its explanatory ambitions in more detail (§1). I will then argue that the notion of a fundamental kind – which is standardly elaborated either as the notion of a *maximally specific and essential kind*, or as the notion of a *basic psychological kind* – is far more committal than what the naïve realist needs to realize her explanatory ambitions (§2). I go on to explain why the naïve realist needs a metaphysically robust notion of a kind in the first place, and I propose two minimal conceptions of a kind that would better suit the naïve realist's requirements (§3).

## 1. Naïve realism and its explanatory ambitions

To have a *genuine perception* is to take in the world with your senses, so to speak. Here is a paradigm case: I see a reddish mango, in good lighting and with a normally functioning visual system. More generally, it is clear that total hallucinations are not genuine perceptions, and it is a matter of controversy whether illusions are always, sometimes, or never genuine perceptions.

Genuine perceptions have a number of distinctive features. Here are three:

*1. Apparent intimacy.* Suppose that I genuinely perceive a mango. Later, I form singular beliefs about it; later still, I visually imagine the mango. In all three cases, I am aware of the mango. But, introspectively, it appears that my perceptual awareness of the mango is more *intimate*, in some relevant sense, than my singular belief or my visual imagining.

It is not easy to specify just what the apparent intimacy of genuine perception amounts to. For example, you might be tempted to think that this apparent intimacy just amounts to the fact that my perceptual awareness of the mango introspectively appears to be *immediate* – but that cannot be the whole story. For my singular belief about the mango and my visual imagining of the mango also introspectively appear to be immediate, but at the same time my belief and my

imagining both introspectively appear to lack the peculiar epistemic intimacy that I enjoy when I actually see the mango.<sup>5</sup>

Quite generally, then, genuine perceptions appear to involve a peculiarly intimate form of awareness of mind-independent objects and properties.<sup>6</sup>

2. *Reference-enabling character.* When I genuinely perceive a novel mind-independent object or property – a novel fruit, animal, scent, or texture – I acquire a new ability: I acquire the ability to form singular thoughts about *it*.<sup>7</sup> Similarly –

3. *Knowledge-enabling character.* When I genuinely perceive a novel mind-independent object and its properties, I typically acquire a new ability: absent defeaters, I acquire the ability to gain singular knowledge about *it*.<sup>8</sup>

Now consider:

*Core posit of naïve realism:* Any genuine perception is a relation of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties.<sup>9</sup>

Sometimes the core posit of naïve realism is formulated more narrowly as a claim about the *phenomenal character* of genuine perception. You are welcome to use such a formulation of the posit, and of all of this paper's further claims about naïve realism, if you like.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Millar (2014) brings out these contrasts with great clarity.

<sup>6</sup> For naïve realists interested in explaining this datum, see fn. 1.

<sup>7</sup> For naïve realists interested in explaining this datum, see fn. 2.

<sup>8</sup> For naïve realists interested in explaining this datum, see fn. 2.

<sup>9</sup> For advocates of naïve realism, see fns. 1-3.

<sup>10</sup> I explain why I prefer to avoid this narrower formulation in [Author's Work B], but, again, the issue will not affect the arguments of this paper.

One crucial feature of naïve realism is that it treats genuine perceptions as *relations*. This distinguishes naïve realism at least from pure versions of representationalism, which treat genuine perceptions purely as *representations*. A representation is something that can be correct/accurate or incorrect/inaccurate. Thus, it is possible to represent an object even if that object does not exist, and it is possible to represent an object as having a property even if that object does not have that property. By contrast, a relation is something that cannot go wrong, so to speak: you can stand in a relation to an object only if that object exists, and you can stand in a relation to an object's having a certain property only if the object really has that property.

It is clear enough, at least in outline, how naïve realists can explain the above data about genuine perception. In particular, the naïve realist can say that genuine perceptions are more epistemically intimate than singular thoughts or sensory imaginings because genuine perceptions are *relations* to mind-independent objects and properties, while singular thoughts and visual imaginings are mere *representations* of mind-independent objects and properties. The naïve realist can add that because genuine perception is such an epistemically intimate relation, it can ground our capacities to form singular thoughts about, and to acquire singular knowledge of, the mind-independent objects and properties that we perceive.<sup>11</sup>

There is something noteworthy about the naïve realist account that I have sketched so far: it does not say anything about *fundamental kinds*. It makes claims about relations of immediate awareness, it makes claims about mind-independent objects and properties, and it makes claims about explanation, but the words “fundamental” and “kind” have just not made an appearance.

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<sup>11</sup> Of course, many would argue that naïve realism is not *uniquely* positioned to explain these data – see for example [Author's Work A]; Schellenberg (forthcoming). And a few would argue that naïve realism is not even particularly well-positioned to explain some of these data – see for example Millar (2014). Here I bracket such concerns.

Nevertheless, it has influentially been argued that given her explanatory ambitions, the naïve realist should commit to the following claim:

*Fundamental kind theory:* Every genuine perception belongs to a *fundamental kind* that includes only relations of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties.<sup>12</sup>

Later I will give a detailed explication of the notion of a fundamental kind. For now, though, let me simply register my disagreement. My intention is to argue that the fundamental kind theory is far more committal than what the naïve realist requires in order to realize her explanatory ambitions.

There is, however, an intermediate conclusion of the influential argument that I accept. The intermediate conclusion is that naïve realists should commit to the following claim:

*Minimal naïve realism:* Every genuine perception belongs to a kind that includes only relations of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties.

Although I agree with this claim, I think that the justification for it has not been properly developed. I will attempt to supply the missing justification. I will then articulate two promising notions of a kind – each of which is much less committal than the notion of a fundamental kind – that are well-suited to the naïve realist’s requirements (§3).

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<sup>12</sup> For a dozen naïve realists who endorse something very much like the fundamental kind theory, see fn. 3.

## 2. Why naïve realists do not need the fundamental kind theory

We are considering whether naïve realists should accept:

The *fundamental kind theory*: Every genuine perception belongs to a fundamental kind that includes only relations of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties.<sup>13</sup>

One complication is that many naïve realists who invoke fundamental kinds have said surprisingly little about what a fundamental kind is. The complication is deepened by the fact that naïve realists sometimes seem to be using the term *fundamental kind*, or the term *fundamental*, in subtly different ways.<sup>14</sup> Fortunately, there are two detailed elaborations of fundamental kinds on the market: the first elaboration is to think of fundamental kinds as *essential kinds*, while the second elaboration is to think of fundamental kinds as *basic psychological kinds*. I conjecture that other naïve realists who use the notion of a fundamental kind have in mind more or less one of these two elaborations.

Why think that naïve realists should accept the fundamental kind theory? I have seen only one detailed argument for this claim, but that argument has been extremely influential.<sup>15</sup> In this

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<sup>13</sup> Again, for a dozen naïve realists who endorse something very much like the fundamental kind theory, see fn. 3.

<sup>14</sup> To give some brief examples: Martin thinks of fundamental kinds as maximally specific *and essential* kinds (2006, p. 361); Crane seems to think of fundamental kinds just as maximally specific (but perhaps not essential) kinds (2006, p. 139); likewise for Nudds (2009, p. 337); Soteriou seems to think of fundamental kinds as maximally specific *phenomenal* kinds (2005, p. 178); likewise for Gomes (2017, p. 534); Logue thinks of fundamental kinds as *basic psychological* kinds (e.g., 2013, p. 109); and many naïve realists use terms like “fundamental” with little elaboration (Brewer (2011, p. 94); French (2013, p. 1735); Genone (2016, p. 7); Beck (2018, p. 2)).

<sup>15</sup> The argument in question appears in Martin (2006). I will carefully document Martin’s expression of the argument in later footnotes.

section I will first lay out the argument carefully (§2.1). Then I will show that the argument gives meagre support for its conclusion, regardless of whether we think of fundamental kinds as essential kinds (§2.2) or as basic psychological kinds (§2.3).

## 2.1. The influential argument that naïve realists should accept the fundamental kind theory

There is one argument, and only one argument, that has been particularly influential in convincing naïve realists that they should accept the fundamental kind theory. The core idea of the argument is that naïve realists need the fundamental kind theory in order to ensure that their preferred explanations end up being non-trivial.<sup>16</sup>

In full detail, the argument runs as follows. Start by observing that the naïve realist is trying to explain various facts about genuine perception by giving a non-trivial theory about the metaphysical character of genuine perceptions – by giving a non-trivial theory about what kind of entity a genuine perception is.<sup>17</sup> For example, naïve realism stands in contrast to the *common kind theory*, according to which a genuine perception and a matching hallucination are the same kind of thing.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The line of thought that I am about to describe comes from the following passage in Martin (2006): “[1] Naïve realism can be preserved only at the expense of denying the Common Kind Assumption.... [2] There are ways of construing the Common Kind Assumption on which it comes out as trivially false. [3] If we relax our conception of a kind of event sufficiently then any description of an event mirrors a kind of event.... [4] For the Common Kind Assumption to be a non-trivial falsehood, therefore, we need some conception of the privileged descriptions of experiences. [5] For it to be a substantive matter that perceptions fail to be the same kind of mental episode as illusions or hallucinations, we need some characterisations of events which reflect their nature or what is most fundamentally true of them” (p. 360). Here I have numbered Martin’s claims to make it evident how they correspond to the elements of my interpretation – see the next several footnotes.

<sup>17</sup> For Martin’s implicit endorsement of this claim, see fn. 16, claims [2] and [4].

<sup>18</sup> For Martin’s endorsement of this claim, see fn. 16, claim [1].

Now suppose, for the sake of *reductio*, that there is a kind corresponding to every description, no matter how arbitrary. Then there will be infinitely many arbitrary descriptions, and hence infinitely many kinds, bundling genuine perceptions together with hallucinations. And there will also be infinitely many arbitrary descriptions, and hence infinitely many kinds, splitting genuine perceptions apart from hallucinations. So any theory about what kind of entity a genuine perception is will be trivial.<sup>19</sup>

But this contradicts the premise that naïve realism is a non-trivial theory on precisely this topic, so – according to this influential argument – the naïve realist must jettison her assumption: she must conclude that there are not kinds corresponding to every description<sup>20</sup>; she must conclude that the debate is over fundamental kinds.<sup>21</sup>

When I consider this argument, I notice a superficial problem and a deep problem.

The superficial problem that I notice is this. In order to realize her explanatory ambitions, the naïve realist must talk about relations to mind-independent objects and properties; she must talk about the apparent intimacy, reference-enabling character, and knowledge-enabling character of genuine perceptions; and she must talk about the explanatory link between the former and the latter. But she can talk about all of these topics without ever talking about *kinds*. So it is not yet clear why the naïve realist needs any notion of a kind, let alone a metaphysically robust notion of a kind, in order to realize her explanatory ambitions.

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<sup>19</sup> For Martin's endorsement of this claim, see fn. 16, claim [3].

<sup>20</sup> For Martin's endorsement of this claim, see fn. 16, claim [4].

<sup>21</sup> For Martin's endorsement of this claim, see fn. 16, claim [5]. Note especially that he infers [5] from [4].



In fact, however, I think that there is a good reason – which I will describe later – for why the naïve realist needs a metaphysically robust notion of kinds. Thus, in the interim I propose simply to waive this concern.<sup>22</sup>

But I also notice a deep problem with the argument. The deep problem pertains to the final inference: the inference from the claim that there are *metaphysically robust* kinds to the claim that there are *fundamental* kinds. I submit that this final inference is – overenthusiastic. To appreciate this point, let us examine the two elaborations that naïve realists have given of the notion of a fundamental kind.

## 2.1. First elaboration: Fundamental kinds as essential kinds

The first elaboration is to think of fundamental kinds in terms of *essences*.<sup>23</sup> The idea is that (i) for any entity *E* – at least if *E* is a mental entity – there is a single maximally specific kind *K* to which *E* belongs, and (ii) whatever *K* is, *E*'s belonging to *K* is essential to *E* (though there might be further things that are essential to *E* as well). *K* is then the fundamental kind to which *E* belongs. For convenience, let us speak of fundamental kinds, so elaborated, as *essential kinds*, and let us speak of these theorists as *essential kind theorists*.<sup>24</sup>

Consider, for the sake of illustration, my belief that snow is white. Perhaps the maximally specific kind to which my belief belongs is the kind *belief*, or perhaps it is *knowledgeable belief*,

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<sup>22</sup> Again, for Martin's endorsement of this claim, see fn. 16, claim [4].

<sup>23</sup> See Fine (1994) on the notion of essence.

<sup>24</sup> Here is Martin's seminal expression of the assumption: "... I will assume the following: for all [objects and events] there is a most specific answer to the question, 'What is it?' In relation to the mental, and to perception in particular, I will assume that for mental episodes or states there is a unique answer to this question which gives its most specific kind; it tells us what essentially the event or episode is" (2006, p. 361). For others who follow him in something like this assumption, see fn. 14.

or perhaps it is *knowledgeable belief with the content that snow is white*. The idea is that whatever this maximally specific kind may be, it is essential to my belief that snow is white that it belong to this kind. But other things might also be essential to my belief that snow is white.

Given the presupposition that there are essential kinds, the essential kind theorist goes on to endorse:

The *essential kind theory*: Every genuine perception belongs to an essential kind that includes only relations of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties.

The essential kind theorist has a certain amount of leeway in what she identifies as the essential kinds of different genuine perceptions. It is open to her to say that different genuine perceptions always belong to the same essential kind, namely, the kind that includes all and only relations of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties. But it is also open to her to say that different genuine perceptions often, or even always, belong to different essential kinds. For example, she might say that my genuine perception of a particular reddish mango and my genuine perception of a particular greenish papaya belong to different essential kinds, insofar as these are genuine perceptions of different mind-independent objects and properties.

Now that we understand what the essential kind theory says, let us return to the argument that naïve realists should accept it. I wish to contest the final inference of this argument: the inference from claim that there are metaphysically robust kinds to the conclusion that there are fundamental kinds – i.e., essential kinds. I will suggest that this conclusion is over-committal in at least three important respects.

*First over-commitment.* If there are essential kinds, then every entity belongs to *at least one* maximally specific kind. But you can be committed to metaphysically robust kinds without accepting this commitment. For example, perhaps there is a property of being grue – a property of being either green and first seen before 3000 CE, or blue and first seen after 3000 CE. And perhaps it is *essential* to the property of being grue that it is the property of being either green and first seen before 3000 CE, or blue and first seen after 3000 CE. But perhaps there is not even a single *kind* corresponding to the property of being grue. After all, there is plenty of room for doubt about whether color properties correspond to kinds, and the property of being grue is not even a color property.<sup>25</sup>

In response, the essential kind theorist might be tempted to weaken her initial assumption: she might want to assume only that every *mental* entity belongs to at least one maximally specific kind.<sup>26</sup> But the problem will bloom again if there exist any gruesome mental entities. Of course, the essential kind theorist can further deny that there exist any gruesome mental entities. My point, however, is that the naïve realist does not need this commitment in order to ensure that her explanations do not end up being trivial. All that she needs is a metaphysically robust notion of kinds.

*Second over-commitment.* If there are essential kinds, then every entity belongs to *at most one* maximally specific kind. But you can be committed to metaphysically robust kinds without accepting this additional commitment. For example, you might think that Socrates belongs to the maximally specific kind *man* and also to the maximally specific kind *rational being*. Notice that

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<sup>25</sup> In a similar spirit, Pautz (2007, p. 528) worries that particles of dust do not belong to at least one maximally specific kind.

<sup>26</sup> Martin endorses both the stronger and the weaker version of the principle, as documented in fn. 24.

neither of these kinds is more specific than the other: some men, such as those who are comatose, are not rational beings, and some rational beings, such as women, are not men.

Now, the essential kind theorist might retort that we can perform an easy operation to ensure that every entity belongs to at most one maximally specific kind. Take any case in which something allegedly belongs to multiple maximally specific kinds. Now just conjoin the properties that characterize all of those kinds, and you get a new property that characterizes the *single* maximally specific kind to which the entity really belongs – or so the essential kind theorist might propose.

The problem is that this operation is not guaranteed to succeed in every case. For it might happen that two properties, *F* and *G*, each correspond to a kind, while the conjunctive property *F-and-G* does not correspond to a kind. Indeed, this is a perfectly reasonable thing to say about our original case of Socrates, who is both a rational being and a man. Here you might say that there is important explanatory work to be done by the property of *being a rational being*, and that there is important explanatory work to be done by the property of *being a man*, so that each of these properties corresponds to a kind. And you might concede that there is a *conjunctive property* of being a rational man. But you can also say that there is no important explanatory work for that property to do, so there is no *kind* corresponding to that property.

Or, for an even clearer case, pick the maximally specific mass-related kind property that Socrates possesses. Depending on which mass-related properties correspond to a kind, this might be the determinate property of having a mass of (say) 74 kg, or it might just be the determinable property of having mass. It is clear that, e.g., the conjunctive property of being a rational being with a mass of 74 kg is not a kind property. Thus I suggest that Socrates belongs to at least two maximally specific kinds.

Even if you do not find matters to be so clear here, there is a more modest point that I would make. The more modest point is that the naïve realist does not need to decide the issue to give a metaphysically non-trivial theory of perception; all that she needs is a metaphysically robust notion of a kind.

*Interlude.* In light of my remarks about the first and second over-commitments of the essential kind theory, the essential kind theorist might think to relax the definition of an essential kind: she might say that for *any* maximally specific kind to which an entity belongs, belonging to that kind is essential to it, and this kind therefore deserves the label “essential kind.” And even if my opponent sticks with her original formulation of the essential kind theory, she will still accept this claim. So let us examine this claim: the claim that if there are essential kinds, then for any maximally specific kind to which an entity belongs, belonging to that kind is essential to it. I claim that this constitutes my opponent’s –

*Third over-commitment.* For you can accept that there are kinds, robustly understood, without accepting this claim. Perhaps Hypatia belongs to the kind *woman*, understood as a biological kind corresponding to the property of *being a human female adult*.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps we should regard the property *woman* as corresponding to a kind because there is some important explanatory work done by the entire property of being a human female adult. The important work done by this property might even go beyond the conjunction of the important work done by the properties of being human, being female, and being an adult. (More below on how this might be possible.) And perhaps *woman* is the maximally specific kind to which Hypatia belongs. But belonging to that

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<sup>27</sup> Here the property of being female is to be understood as a sex property, not as a gender property.

kind was still not essential to her: Hypatia was still Hypatia when she was a child and so did not belong to the kind *woman*.

*A general objection.* At this stage, it might occur to my opponent to further weaken her operative notion of a kind. For example, she might fall back on a very weak notion of an essential kind that drops any claims about maximal specificity. Or she might fall back on a very weak notion of a maximally specific kind that drops any claims about essences. In response to such maneuvers, however, I would raise a very general objection: I would suggest that enriching the notion of a metaphysically robust kind, even in these relatively mild ways, just does not give us any obvious explanatory perks. So I wonder why we should bother.

For example, there is a very weak notion of an essential kind that would jettison all of the controversial commitments I have identified thus far. The very weak notion would be that if something belongs to a kind, and if its belonging to that kind is essential to it, then that is one of its essential kinds. This very weak notion allows that something might belong to no essential kinds or to many, and it also allows that the maximally specific kind to which something belongs might not be essential to it.

But I see no advantage for the naïve realist who deploys even this very weak notion of an essential kind. For suppose, as I would prefer to say, that any genuine perception belongs to a metaphysically robust kind that includes only relations of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties. And suppose that it is by appeal to such a relation – and not, for example, by appeal to some property shared by genuine perceptions and total hallucinations – that we explain the relevant facts about genuine perception. Then what further explanatory perks do we earn by invoking *essential kinds*?

Similarly, consider theorists who would be inclined to go in the other direction – to drop all talk of essential kinds and instead talk about a *maximally specific* kind to which genuine perceptions belong. By talking about *a* maximally specific kind rather than *the* maximally specific kind, my opponent now avoids presupposing that there is just one such kind. Still, my objection is the same. Suppose that we explain the relevant facts about genuine perceptions by saying that they are relations of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties. Then what further explanatory perks do we earn by invoking *maximally specific kinds*?

*Summary.* My conclusion is not that there are no essential or maximally specific kinds. My conclusion is not even that the naïve realist theories that appeal to such kinds are false. My conclusion is rather that given the explanatory ambitions of the naïve realist, she has little reason to commit to essential kinds, maximally specific kinds, or anything else in the neighborhood. At most, all that her explanatory ambitions give her strong reason to do is to offer a non-trivial theory of the metaphysical character of genuine perception. And at most, all that she needs to do in order to offer such a theory is to commit to a metaphysically robust notion of a kind. But that is much less than the notion of an essential and/or maximally specific kind.

## 2.2. Second elaboration: Fundamental kinds as basic psychological kinds

But there is a second important way for the fundamental kind theorist to elaborate the notion of a fundamental kind: she can elaborate it as the notion of a *basic psychological kind*. The idea is this. Take any genuine perception *P* and find all of the psychological kinds (as opposed to, say, the neurological or chemical kinds) to which *P* belongs. One of these kinds, *K*, will be such that *P*'s belonging to *K* explains *P*'s belonging to all of these other psychological kinds. *K* will then be the *basic psychological kind* of *P*.

With this elaboration in hand, the naïve realist might now propose that every genuine perception belongs, not to exactly one essential kind, but instead to exactly one basic psychological kind. In particular, she would propose:

The *basic psychological kind theory*: Every genuine perception belongs to a basic psychological kind that includes only relations of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties.<sup>28</sup>

I find the basic psychological kind theory to be both bold and unnecessary.

I find the basic psychological kind theory to be bold. For I find it bold to presuppose – as the view does – that for every genuine perception, we can identify *just one* psychological kind that explains every other psychological kind to which the perception belongs. For any given genuine perception, why must all of the chains of its psychological kinds bottom out in exactly the same anchor – why can't different chains bottom out in different anchors?

Notably, there are some live philosophical theories that would pair well with the idea that different chains can bottom out in different anchors. For example, everyone agrees that some beliefs are not genuine perceptions. And according to one theory, some genuine perceptions are not beliefs, but other genuine perceptions are beliefs. For example, if I mistakenly take myself to be hallucinating, then my genuine perception gets “bracketed” and is not a belief. But if I recognize that I am genuinely perceiving, then my genuine perception is a belief.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Heather Logue develops this idea carefully in several of her papers – see her (2012a, p. 211); (2012b, p. 174); (2013, p. 109). She speaks of psychological *characterizations* instead of speaking of psychological *kinds*, but that difference will not matter for my purposes.

<sup>29</sup> This theory appears in Lyons (2005, pp. 242-243). [Brief identifying remark and reference to Author's Work A removed].



So let us apply this theory to a genuine perception that the subject recognizes as such. Given the theory, we might naturally think that this genuine perception belongs to more than one psychological kind: we might think that it belongs to the psychological kind *belief* and to the psychological kind *genuine perception*. We might further think that each of these psychological kinds is basic: we might think that there is no psychological kind comprising *genuine perceptual belief*,<sup>30</sup> and we might think that there is no other psychological kind that can explain why this mental entity is both a genuine perception and a belief. Then the chains of psychological kinds descending from a single genuine perception would bottom out in at least two different anchors.

So the basic psychological kind theory is bold, insofar as it makes the bold presupposition that every psychological entity belongs to *exactly one* basic psychological kind. But perhaps we could adjust the definition of a basic psychological kind to make the presupposition more modest. According to our original definition, the basic psychological kind of an entity was the psychological kind such that the entity's belonging to that kind explained its belonging to all of its other psychological kinds. But we could instead define the notion of a basic psychological kind like so: for a genuine perception to have *K* as a *basic psychological kind* is for the genuine perception to belong to *K*, and for there to be no other psychological kind *K\** such that the genuine perception's belonging to *K\** metaphysically explains *E*'s belonging to *K*.

With this modified definition in hand, return to:

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<sup>30</sup> We might think this because we think that there is no important explanatory work to be done by the conjunctive property *genuine perceptual belief*. We might think that there is important explanatory work to be done only by the properties of *being a genuine perception* and *being a belief*.

The *basic psychological kind theory*: Every genuine perception belongs to a basic psychological kind that includes only relations of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties.

Now this theory presupposes only that every genuine perception belongs to *at least one* basic psychological kind. That presupposition is very modest: as long as metaphysical explanation is asymmetric in the relevant cases, the presupposition would follow just from the claim – which is widely accepted among theorists of perception – that every genuine perception belongs to at least one psychological kind *simpliciter*.

But now I would return to the general objection that I raised earlier: I would suggest that even this mildly enriched notion of a kind does not give us any obvious explanatory perks. For suppose that we explain the relevant facts about genuine perception by saying that every genuine perception belongs to a psychological kind that includes only relations of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties. How would it improve the quality of the explanation if this psychological kind were *basic*? Or, to put it the other way around, how would it reduce the quality of the explanation if genuine perceptions were to belong to that psychological kind *because* they belonged to some other psychological kind?<sup>31</sup>

*Conclusion.* The fundamental kind theorist thinks that if the naïve realist is to realize her explanatory ambitions, then she should express her theory in terms of kinds, robustly understood.

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<sup>31</sup> Logue (2012a) mentions a further datum for naïve realists to explain. Roughly, the datum is that genuine perceptions put us in a position to know what objects and properties are like *independently of our perceiving them*. She thinks that we can explain this datum *only* if we say that genuine perceptions are relations of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties. Suppose that this is correct. Still, I suggest that it would not reduce the quality of the explanation if we could give some further explanation for why genuine perceptions are relations of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties.

I think that so far this claim is under-supported, but for reasons that I will discuss in the next section, I agree. The fundamental kind theorist then concludes that the naïve realist should express her theory in terms of fundamental kinds. I have argued that this leap is reckless. The leap is reckless regardless of whether fundamental kinds are understood as essential kinds, as maximally specific kinds, or as basic psychological kinds.

### 3. Two alternative notions of a kind

What notion of a kind might the naïve realist offer instead? Let us approach this question softly.

We can start with a prior question: why does the naïve realist need any notion of a kind at all? The answer is not immediately obvious! Return to the naïve realist's central aim, which is to explain certain features of genuine perception: its epistemic intimacy, its reference-enabling character, and its knowledge-enabling character. The naïve realist hopes to explain these features by saying that all genuine perceptions are relations of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties. Now, this theory obviously commits the naïve realist to certain claims about genuine perceptions, relations of immediate awareness, mind-independent objects and properties. This theory also obviously commits the naïve realist to certain claims about explanation. But the theory does not obviously commit the naïve realist even to the claim that kinds *exist*, much less to any claims about what various kinds are like. So what is the link between the explanatory ambitions of the naïve realist and the notion of a kind?

My suggestion is that there is a strong *conceptual* link between the notion of a kind and the notion of an explanation. It is part of the *concept* of a kind that if a property plays a certain explanatory role, then that property characterizes a kind. This suggestion is a rich one. Let us take some time to digest it.

The suggestion is partly about the targets of the naïve realist’s proposed explanations. The naïve realist does not want to be explaining just *any* old properties of genuine perception, however gruesome those properties might be. (Obviously I am using the word “property” liberally, so that it is not oxymoronic for me to speak of gruesome properties.) Pick the most gruesome property *F* that you can think of, just so long as *F* is shared by all genuine perceptions. You will find that a particular genuine perception’s having *F* explains arbitrarily many other properties of that genuine perception. For example, pick any property *G* that the genuine perception does *not* have. Then the genuine perception’s having *F* will explain its having *F* or *G*. There are infinitely many properties that any genuine perception does not have, so *F* can in this way do infinitely much explanatory work.

The naïve realist would not be satisfied if her explanations were like these. She wants to appeal to the property of being relational to explain many of the *metaphysically significant* properties of genuine perception, and she thinks that these metaphysically significant properties include apparent intimacy, reference-enabling character, and knowledge-enabling character.

You might wonder why the naïve realist should not be satisfied if these properties of genuine perception turned out to be metaphysically insignificant ones. My suggestion is that it should just be immediately plausible – to anyone, I hope, and not just to the naïve realist – that the relevant properties are metaphysically significant. Perhaps it will help to contrast the following metaphysically *insignificant* properties that every genuine perception has: (i) the conjunctive property of being apparently intimate and being distinct from the planet Mars, (ii) the disjunctive property of being reference-enabling or being identical to a piranha, and (iii) the trivial property of being such that  $2 + 2 = 4$ . I hope that all theorists of perception will see the difference in metaphysical significance between these gerrymandered properties of genuine perception, on the

one hand, and the properties of genuine perception that the naïve realist wants to explain, on the other hand.

So, if the naïve realist is to fulfill her ambition of explaining many of the metaphysically significant properties of genuine perception, then she is committed to thinking that her central explanatory tool – namely, the relation of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties – does a great deal of explanatory work that is metaphysically significant.

From this point, I suggest that we work backwards: let us construct the concept of a kind that would best suit the naïve realist's needs. I will offer two reasonable hypotheses about what this concept might be without indicating any preference between the two.

One reasonable hypothesis is that the naïve realist should accept that kinds exist, in the sense given by the following partial characterization:

*Significance conception* of kinds: If a property does a lot of explanatory work that is metaphysically significant, then there is a kind that includes all and only the entities with that property.

The naïve realist really does need to accept that there are kinds, *in something like this minimal sense*, if she is to fulfill her explanatory ambitions.

Note that the significance conception provides only a sufficient condition, not a necessary one, for the existence of a kind.<sup>32</sup> Note also that the significance conception probably does not give us a non-circular characterization of kinds, for we probably need to make an implicit appeal to the

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<sup>32</sup> I feel some temptation to change the “if” in the significance conception to “if and only if,” but I am going to resist that urge: making that change would take us beyond the *minimal* notion of a kind that the naïve realist needs.

notion of a kind to say what explanatory work counts as metaphysically significant. And the condition really must include the restriction to significant explanatory work, for reasons that we have already seen: even the most gruesome property can do arbitrarily much explanatory work, and we do not want to say that even the most gruesome property characterizes a kind.

But although the significance conception probably does not give us a non-circular characterization of kinds, I do not see that as a problem. For I take it that we have a good enough intuitive grasp, via likely paradigms and foils, of what metaphysical significance and kindhood each amount to. For example: we know that the property of being grue almost certainly is not metaphysically significant and does not correspond to a kind. We know that the property of being an electron almost certainly is metaphysically significant and does correspond to a kind. And we know that that the property of being a belief, and the property of being a desire, are quite likely each metaphysically significant and quite likely each correspond to a kind. So it does not worry me if the significance conception is circular. I just say that it is reasonable, and that it might well provide the minimal notion of a kind that the naïve realist needs.

That said, you might reasonably think that the naïve realist needs a notion of a kind that is somewhat more restrictive than this. You might think that the naïve realist needs:

The *distinctive significance conception* of kinds: If a property does a lot of explanatory work that is metaphysically significant *and distinctive*, then there is a kind that includes all and only the entities with that property.

What is it for a piece of explanatory work done by a given property to be *distinctive*? The idea is this. Gather up all of the entities that are metaphysically prior to the property in question and

consider what metaphysically significant explanatory work is done by each of them – but ignore any metaphysically *insignificant* explanatory work that they do! Then for any Boolean construction of those entities, you will get a corresponding Boolean construction that amounts to a further explanation. For a piece of explanatory work to be *distinctive* is for it not to be covered by any of those further explanations.

For example, suppose that all of the determinate shades of redness are metaphysically prior to redness itself. And let **W1** be all of the metaphysically significant explanatory done by scarlet, let **W2** be all of the metaphysically significant explanatory done by crimson, and so on for every other determinate shade of redness. Then we are already in a position to explain why something will do either W1 or W2 if that thing is either scarlet or crimson. But W1, W2, ... Wn each include only *metaphysically significant* pieces of explanatory work, so there might still be *distinctive* explanatory work left over for the determinable property of redness to do. This work might moreover be metaphysically significant as a whole, even though it would be a Boolean construction of bits of work that are individually insignificant. According to the distinctive significance conception, if the property of redness does work that is both distinctive and significant in these ways, then there is a kind that includes all and only the red things.<sup>33</sup>

Does the naïve realist need the significance conception or the distinctive significance conception? It depends on whether the metaphysically primitive entities together gobble up all of the explanatory work in the world or leave some explanatory work behind. For, presumably, relations of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties are not themselves

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<sup>33</sup> Here I take inspiration from Yablo (1997), though his view is a bit different.

metaphysically primitive.<sup>34</sup> So if the metaphysically primitive entities together gobble up all of the explanatory work in the world, then there cannot be any distinctive work left behind for that property to do. In that case the naïve realist should stick with the significance conception, which lets a property characterize a kind so long as the property does a lot of *metaphysically significant* work, even if the property does not do any *distinctive* work. You are likely to find this kind of picture attractive if you think that the metaphysically non-primitive entities reduce to, or are even just identical to, the metaphysically primitive entities.<sup>35</sup>

By contrast, suppose that the metaphysically primitive entities do not together gobble up all of the explanatory work in the world; suppose that they leave some explanatory work behind. In this case the naïve realist might opt for the distinctive significance conception of kinds, for she might then reasonably hope that relations of immediate awareness to mind-independent objects and properties do some of the significant work that the metaphysically primitive entities (and all other metaphysically prior entities) leave behind.<sup>36</sup> In other words, she might hope that such relations do some work that is not only significant but also *distinctive*. You are likely to find this kind of picture attractive if you think that some metaphysically non-primitive entities are *non-reductively grounded in* certain metaphysically primitive entities.<sup>37</sup>

I do not know how to settle on a picture of how the metaphysical primitives are related to the metaphysical non-primitives; I must get on with providing a theory of perception while leaving these difficult questions to the metaphysicians. Thus my conclusion is merely that there are good

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<sup>34</sup> Naïve realists often suggest that such relations are *conceptually primitive* and *metaphysically irreducible*, but these are quite different from the suggestion that such relations are *metaphysically primitive*.

<sup>35</sup> For one way of developing a view like this, see Lewis (1994).

<sup>36</sup> But it is still open to her to accept the significance conception.

<sup>37</sup> One natural way of developing this view would be to pair it with the view of Yablo (1997). For a lucid explication of the notion of non-reductive grounding, see deRosset (2013, pp. 5-6).



reasons for the naïve realist to accept *either* the notion of a kind provided by the significance conception *or* the notion of a kind provided by the distinctive significance conception.

Either way, however, the notion of a kind that best supports the naïve realist's explanatory ambitions is much more modest than has usually been appreciated. In particular, it is much more modest than the notion of a fundamental kind, whether that is understood as the notion of an essential kind, a maximally specific kind, or a basic psychological kind.

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