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The Way Things Look: a Defence of Content

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Abstract How does perceptual experience disclose the world to our view? In the first introductory section, I set up a contrast between the *representational* and the *purely relational* conception of perceptual experience. In the second section, I discuss an argument given by Charles Travis (*Mind* 113: 57–94, 2004) against perceptual content. The third section is devoted to the phenomenon of perceptual constancy: in 3.1 I describe the phenomenon. In 3.2 I argue that the description given suggests a phenomenological distinction that can be deployed for a defence of content. In 3.3 I compare and contrast my view of perceptual content with that of Susanna Schellenberg (The *Journal of Philosophy* 105(02): 55–84, 2008). Finally (3.4), I support my conception of content by means of an argument that links content to the way in which the mind-independent nature of material objects is manifest in perceptual experience.

1 Introduction

One of the liveliest current debates in the philosophy of mind concerns the nature of perceptual experience and the way in which it is directed toward the world. According to a well-established view, perceptual experience is representational, that is, it represents the world as being a certain way. Let us call this view *representationalism*, or *intentionalism*, or also the *content view*[1] (Burge 2010; Byrne 2001; Crane 2006;

[1]These terms are often used as differing from one another in meaning: representationalism is often associated with the project of reducing phenomenal character to the supposedly more tractable notion of representation (Dretske 1995); intentionalism is associated with the thesis that intentionality is the mark of the mental (Crane 2009); the content view is often spelled out as the thesis that the very structure of perceptual consciousness entails perceptual content (Byrne 2001; Siegel 2010; Siewert 1998). The approach that comes closest to my view is that exemplified by the content view, but for present purposes I ignore these otherwise important differences and treat the terms in question as synonyms. The justification for this approach is that the representationalist, the intentionalist and the content view theorist all claim that perception has representational content – this minimal claim is the one that interests me; thus, whenever I speak of the representationalist conception of perceptual experience, I simply refer to the idea that perceptual experience has content.

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Dretske 1995; Searle 1983; Siegel 2010; Siewert 1998). Mike Martin offers a canonical characterization of the view:

> On such a view, perceptual states represent to the subject how her environment and body are. The content of perceptual experiences is how the world is represented to be. Perceptual experiences are then counted as illusory or veridical depending on whether the content is correct and the world is as represented (Martin 1994: 464).

The idea that perception is representational has enjoyed a large consensus at least since the eighties, but it has recently been challenged by some philosophers. Perceptual experience, these philosophers say, is, at least when veridical, relational *instead* of being representational: it is fundamentally a question of a subject being perceptually related to mind-independent objects. Let us call this view *pure relationalism* (Brewer 2006, 2008, 2011; Campbell 2002; Fish 2009; Travis 2004, 2013). Thus, Brewer says:

> Perceiving is not a matter of being saddled with representational content. … It is rather a matter of the conscious presentation of actual constituents of physical reality themselves, particular such things, just as they are, which is what makes all contentful representation of that reality in thought even so much as possible (Brewer 2006: 172).

And thus, Schellenberg (2011) characterises the view (without endorsing it) explicitly in terms of relations:

> Perceptual experience is not representational, but rather fundamentally a matter of a subject being perceptually related to mind-independent objects, properties, events, or the event in which such relations obtain (Schellenberg 2011: 714–715).

I call this view pure relationalism in order to distinguish it from a view on which perceptual experience is fundamentally relational *and* contentful (Logue 2014; McDowell 2013; Schellenberg 2011).

There are different ways to motivate pure relationalism. Some emphasise epistemological aspects: Campbell (2002) argues that only if perception is more basic than representation, can we formulate knowledgeable demonstrative judgements on the basis of perception. According to Logue (2014), another source of resistance to the notion of representational content is rooted in an argument of Martin's (2004) regarding a distinct but related issue, namely what someone who thinks that perception is fundamentally relational should say about hallucination.[2] In this paper, I'm concerned with a rather different source of hostility toward representational views, which stems from a specific way of conceiving of the relationship between perception, looks and content: the relevant version of pure relationalism has been championed by Brewer

[2] As per Logue's careful formulation, the resistance is *rooted* in Martin's argument concerning hallucination, but Martin has not presented his own argument as an argument against content; in fact, Martin is strictly neutral concerning the issue of whether perception has content – this is why Martin doesn't count as a pure relationalist according to my definition.

(2011) and Travis (2004), and is based on the thought that perception simply confronts us with what is in our environment, by affording us sensory awareness of it; whatever representational content follows from that awareness is the result of the way we represent things to ourselves on the basis of that sensory awareness. Representational content essentially involves an element of categorization, and this, according to pure relationalists such as Brewer and Travis, is incompatible with perception being the most basic access that we have to empirical reality – with perception being, as it is often said, *openness to the world*.

In this paper, I consider in detail Travis's argument against content, and I approach the whole issue via a phenomenological route. However, I also aim to show that phenomenological questions concerning looks have a bearing on epistemological matters (see especially 3.3). On the other hand, a discussion of hallucination falls beyond the scope of my paper.

In the second section, I discuss the highly influential argument that Travis (2004) offers against content. In the third section, I show how Travis's argument can be resisted by drawing on a phenomenological analysis of perceptual constancy, and that it must be resisted on pain of not being able to make sense of how the mind-independent nature of material objects is revealed to us in perceptual experience.

2 The Silence of the Senses

Travis thinks that the senses are *silent*, because while they make it so that the world is made manifest to us, they do not tell us that it is articulated so and so – that further step is up to us, and it depends of what me make of the sensory awareness of our environment that the senses afford us. Travis's argument depends on several assumptions concerning what perceptual representation would have to be like and the role that looks would have to play within a representationalist account. To simplify the exposition, we can say that the argument depends on two core assumptions:

1. The representing is something that the experience does, not the subject. To elaborate: it should not be the case that we represent things to ourselves on the basis of perceptual awareness, as when we take the footprints that we see on the threshold to represent or indicate that someone has walked in. It rather has to be the experience itself that takes a stance, as it were, on how things are – perceptual representation would have to be a case of *allo*representation, not *auto*representation (Travis 2004: 60–61).
2. The content of the experience must be accessible to the experiencing subject: there must be some feature of experience in virtue of which we are "able to appreciate what it is that is thus so according to it" (62). Roughly, if you ask me whether it is a brown table or a green chair that my experience represents to me, or whether it is a straight stick or a bent stick, I should be able to give you a definite answer. The feature of experience that enables me to do that might be, Travis conjectures, the way things look in having a particular experience: "the idea is that one could tell the representational content of an experience by the way, in it, things looked" (63); content is "*looks-indexed*" (63). Let us call the *accessibility-requirement* the idea that perceptual content would have to be accessible in this way. We should also make sure we understand the claim that content is looks-indexed correctly: the idea

> is not that perception represents things as looking some way; perception represents things as being some way – just which way things are represented as being is accessed on the basis of how they look.

It is not just obvious, contrary to what Travis says, that the accessibility-requirement is "non-controversially part of [a representationalist conception]" (58), although he offers some considerations for thinking that it is. The *rationale* behind the accessibility-requirement is that the notion of perceptual content would be explanatorily idle if content was not accessible by the perceiving subject:

> …that we are represented to in experience is meant to be a familiar phenomenon; something we can tell is happening. It is not just events occurring in visual processing mechanisms of which we are all ignorant. It should not come as a complete surprise someday, to be sprung on us by future neurophysiologists, that we are thus represented to (uselessly, of course, since we were all ignorant of it) (2004: 86).

There certainly are things that someone who was not sympathetic to the accessibility-requirement could say to respond to this, but here I adopt a pragmatic dialectical approach: I concede to Travis that the conditions identified above are constitutive of a representationalist conception, and if I am still able to show that the notion of content is viable, and indeed necessary, that will make my argument stronger. Let us then see Travis's argument.

If a representationalist conception of perceptual experience is true, the way things look in having an experience makes recognizable for the perceiving subject the content of that experience. There are two notions of looks that Travis discusses, neither of which he considers fit to index content. For present purposes, it will suffice to discuss the first.[3] On the relevant notion of looks, there is some object or feature of an object which bears resemblances to other objects or features of objects. Thus, Fido might look like a dog, i.e., he might look like dogs look; Fido shares a *demonstrable look*, in Travis's terminology, with other dogs. Likewise, a shirt might look blue, i.e., the shirt might look like blue things look; objects exhibit demonstrable, comparative public looks:

> …something looks thus-and-so, or like such-and-such, where it looks the way such-and-such, or things which are (were) thus and so, does (would, might) look. On this notion, Pia may look (rather, very much, exactly) like (the spitting image of) her sister…The shirt looks blue (in this light) – as a blue shirt (so viewed) does, or might. The sun, at sunset, may look red. A van Meegren may look (uncannily) like a Vermeer (Travis 2004: 70).

[3] The second is an epistemic notion, on which things looking some way is "very much a matter of what can be gathered from, or what is suggested by, facts at hand, or those visibly (audibly, etc.) on hand" Travis (2004: 76). Thus, if your neighbours' curtains are drawn and there is no sign of their car, it might look to you as though they have left. Crucially though, *that they have left* is not the kind of thing that your perceptual experience represents to you – it is rather something that you represent to yourself on the basis of what perception affords you; in Travis's terms, it is autorepresentation, not allorepresentation.

In clarifying the argument, I follow Travis in assuming that, if perception was representational, it would represent high-level properties like *being a lemon*, although many think it can only represent low-level properties like *colour*, *shape* and *size*.[4] Travis's argument is supposed to work on either construal of perceptual content, but in the third section of this paper I articulate my response by focussing on low-level properties to which perceptual constancy applies, and I consider my argument complete if I can show that perceptual experience of those properties ought to be characterised in terms of content.[5]

Suppose there is something in front of you which demonstrably looks like a yellow lemon. By representationalist lights, that *lemony* look should be what determines content: your experience has the representational content that there's a lemon because what you see looks like a lemon. However, there are many other things that the object in question looks like: a tennis ball seen from a certain distance, a yellow piece of soap, an orange seen under certain light conditions, and so on. In looking like a yellow lemon, it also looks like all these other things and many others. We are thus faced with a problem: why say that the experience represents a lemon, rather than an orange, or any other relevantly similar object? The point generalises:

> …in looking like *Y*, *X* also shares a look with many things…If Pia looks like her sister, she also, on some understanding, looks the way she herself does, so might, or would, look. On some understanding or other, she looks (just) like any of indefinitely many different things. There is thus a substantial problem. Which facts as to Pia's looking (like) thus and so matter, and how, to how things should be to be the way they look *simpliciter*? Which looks, if any, matter to what is thus represented as so? And how? And why? (Travis 2004: 71–72).

Any one given object will have visual similarities to (will look like) a number of different things. To determine how the object is represented as being, a criterion will be needed to determine which similarities (which facts as to how the object looks) matter and which don't.

The challenge the representationalist faces could be construed as a dilemma. On the first horn, one might say that all of the demonstrable looks of the object contribute to the determination of content. If one takes this route, then an object is represented as being each and every one of the things it looks like. Upon seeing an object *o* that is in fact a yellow lemon, the content of your experience might be as follows: [(o is a lemon), (o is a tennis ball), (o is an orange), …]. The obvious problem is that on this construal our experiences would be totally incoherent. For in being one of the things it looks like, the object cannot be any of the others. But since the truth of the content above would require of the object that it be a lemon, and a tennis ball, and an orange, it follows that the experience cannot possibly be veridical.

[4] For more on the topic of the admissible contents of experience, see Hawley and Macpherson (2011).

[5] This raises the question of how one gets from representation of certain colours and shapes to, say, perceptual knowledge that there is a cardinal in front of one. McDowell (2009) has sketched a promising account based on recognitional capacities, on which perceiving, say, a cardinal, puts one "in a position to know non-inferentially that [the perceived object] is a cardinal" (258).

On the second horn, one might say that in perception a specific look, among those that the object has, is selected as the one which indexes content (a lemony look rather than an orangy look, say). However, it's not clear how that could come about, given that both are looks that the object has and are, as it were, on a par. What is the experiential criterion on the basis of which one could say that the experience represents the object as a lemon, not as an orange, given that the object in question looks like both? According to Travis, it is "no part of what perception is — of how it opens our surroundings to our view — that in perceiving one is to appreciate one set of facts as to what things look like, and ignore others (2004: 73)", and for Brewer selecting a look over another would be to trade "direct openness to the elements of physical reality themselves, for some intellectual act of classification or categorization (2006: 174)", for registering certain set of similarities rather than others is, on this view, part of our conceptual classificatory engagement with the world, rather than part of a genuine perceptual presentation of reality.

From a purely relationalist perspective, there is no principled answer to the question raised by Travis: "Which looks, if any, matter to what is thus represented as so? And how? And why?" (71–72). Thus, the second horn of the dilemma leads to an arbitrary decision: the content of your experience is that there's a lemon just because you say so *ex post*, that is, after you have gone on to believe that there is a lemon, or have selected a particular look. The outcome of Travis's argument is that the content of experience cannot be "read off of the way, in it, things looked" (69). On the assumption that perceptual content is determined by the way things look (on the present notion of looks), it follows that perceptual content should just be abandoned.

In the next section I offer a way out to representationalists, but, before that, there is something I need to set aside: there has been, over the last few years, a revival of the debate concerning the semantics and pragmatics of look-statements that was initiated by Chisholm (1957) and Jackson (1977). More precisely, Byrne (2009) seems to argue that there has to be a non-comparative sense of looks on pain of an explanatory regress, and Siegel (2010) argues that if any notion of looking is going to constrain the contents of experience, it must be *looking some way to a perceiver*, which picks out a notion of looks distinct from Travis's comparative looks. As I argue in Giananti, A. How not to argue for perceptual content, (unpublished manuscript *a*), I don't think those attempts are fruitful, and I think that the notion of perceptual content can be more effectively defended on the basis of a phenomenological analysis, rather than logico-linguistic considerations concerning look-statements.

In the next section, I propose a novel account of perceptual constancy and argue that it provides a response to Travis. In particular, I argue that a correct description of constancy requires making a phenomenological distinction between two different ways in which different facts as to how an object looks can contribute to determining content.

3 The Way Things Look

3.1 Perceptual Content and Perceptual Constancy

Perceptual constancies are those phenomena in virtue of which we are able to see the intrinsic perceptible properties of objects despite variations in light conditions,

distance and orientation relative to us. It is said, for example, that we can perceive "the uniform colour of a yellow wall although parts of it are illuminated more brightly than others" (Schellenberg 2008: 55). Importantly, it is generally agreed that there is a distinct phenomenological dimension to the phenomenon, in the sense that the perceptible properties of objects *look to remain constant* as the conditions of perception and the retinal images change. Thus, Kelly remarks that "walking toward a friend, it doesn't look as though *she* is getting bigger; she *looks to remain constant in size*. And this is true despite its being the case that the size of the image that her body casts onto my retina does, of course, grow as I get closer to her" (Kelly 2010: 146, second emphasis mine). Likewise for shape: "a penny *looks* round both when viewed head on and when viewed from an acute angle, even though the area projected by the penny onto our retinae under these two conditions is very different" (Cohen 2014: 621, emphasis mine).

Despite the intuitive, prima facie plausibility of these characterizations, it is notoriously difficult to give a phenomenologically accurate description of constancy. In particular, it is not obvious how to square two seemingly conflicting data:

(1) We see objects as unchanging despite variations in viewing conditions;
(2) Objects appear differently as the viewing conditions change.

In this subsection I take as paradigmatic the case of shape and use it to explicate in more detail the apparent conflict between the two data, briefly explaining how my analysis equally applies to colour and size. In the next subsection I draw a phenomenological distinction that helps to dissolve the impression of a conflict between (1) and (2), and also suggests a principled criterion for the determination of an accessible perceptual content.

One temptation that we should resist is that of saying that at the level of experience we only find a representation of an unchanging object, whereas the variations in light conditions, distance and orientation are taken care of by the visual system by means of unconscious computational processes. What is wrong about the temptation is not the idea that there are unconscious computational processes, rather that the relevant variations in perceptual conditions do not have a *phenomenological* significance. In other words, any satisfactory account of constancy should respect the fact that both (1) and (2) are phenomenological aspects of perceptual experience.

Let us consider an experience of a glass with a circular rim seen at an oblique angle. How should we describe the experience so as to make sense both of the fact that the rim looks circular and of the fact that, when seen at an angle, it looks differently than it does when seen from above?

One option would be to say that the rim appears differently when seen at an angle, but the rim's *shape* looks the same as when it is seen from above, that is, circular. The change in the phenomenology could then be construed in terms of the awareness that the rim seen at an angle covers a different portion of one's visual field than the rim seen from above, or, analogously, that the glass is seen as having a different orientation relative to oneself than it has when seen from above. Thus, one could say that the rim looks *circular from here*, and that that is how a veridical perceptual experience represents it. A potential problem with this option is that it demands too much of the perceiver: while we certainly *can* register our own position relative to a perceived

object, it should not be a condition on the obtaining of perceptual constancy that we do so. Schellenberg (2008) has remarked this problem:

> The specific angle at which one perceives the table or the specific brightness of the light are features that are arguably not perceptually available, at least not to most human perceivers (Schellenberg 2008: 67–68).

What other options are there?[6] A second possibility is to say that the difference in appearance has to be captured by saying that the rim seen at angle looks elliptical, not circular. On at least some purely relationalist accounts, this is a natural result: Brewer (2011), who arguably has offered the most developed and sophisticated account of looks from a purely relationalist perspective, argues that an object *o* looking F is a question of *o* having "visually relevant similarities with paradigm exemplars of F" (118), where visually relevant similarities are "similarities of the various kinds to which the physical processes enabling visual perception respond similarly" (118) and can thus be characterized as "identities in such things as the way in which light is reflected and transmitted from the object[s] in question, and the way in which stimuli are handled by the visual system, given its evolutionary history and our shared training during development" (103), while paradigm exemplars are, roughly, exemplars that are suitable for acquiring the notion of what it is to be an F. As Brewer acknowledges, his account implies that a circular glass seen at an angle looks elliptical, since the image that the glass projects on the retina from there is more similar to that of a paradigmatic elliptical thing, not a circular one; indeed, according to Brewer, one can make sense of the fact that a coin looks elliptical to John "because it is circular and he is viewing it from an angle" (163).

There is a glaring problem with this option, though: it does not account for perceptual constancy; it makes sense of (2), but not of (1).

What else is there? We might acknowledge that it is true to say, of a circular rim seen at an angle, both that it looks circular and that it looks elliptical. This might seem puzzling, but in fact is the natural reflection of the complexity inherent to the phenomenon of constancy, namely that both the constant aspect of constancy, as it were, and the variation aspect of constancy are *phenomenological* in nature. More than thirty years ago, Irvin Rock correctly emphasised this:

> Many students in introductory classes in psychology are likely to shake their heads when the instructor points out that the circle looks circular and not elliptical. They often say 'it looks elliptical but I know it is circular'…In this I believe they are mistaken. We do perceive the circle at a slant as circular, but we also are aware that its projected extensity relations are 'elliptical'. The point is

[6] There is an additional reason why I'm not persuaded that the problem can be solved simply by incorporating a reference to angles and distance in perceptual content: even if the glass seen at an angle looks *circular from here*, in looking that way, it also looks *elliptical from here*; if someone said "Look, seen from here the glass appears elliptical", I don't think that we should respond that that is flatly wrong. Thus, we still have two looks, and as long as it is not clear if and why they have a different role to play, I don't think that the representationalist is off the hook (arguing that the looks have indeed a different role will be the whole point of subsections 3.2 and 3.4).

> that we would be seriously distorting the phenomenal facts if we chose to speak only of the constancy aspects of perception. In this respect the students have been right and we have been wrong (Rock 1983: 263).

One doesn't necessarily have to agree with the particular way in which Rock describes the duality in question (awareness of "elliptical extensity relations") to appreciate the insight that we would be "distorting the phenomenal facts if we chose to speak only of the constancy aspects of perception". Although I'm focussing on shape here, I take it that the phenomenological facts that I have mentioned also apply to other basic perceptual properties such as colour and size. In the case of colour this seems all obvious: due to constancy, the shaded parts of a table look the same colour as the unshaded parts. However, if the shaded parts actually were painted darker, they would look exactly as they do, so it cannot be wrong to say that they do look darker. The relevant considerations also seem to apply to size: if someone said, after walking some distance away from an object, that now it looks smaller, it would be very odd to classify their assertion as straightforwardly incorrect; we can imagine Rock's students saying "the shaded parts of the table look darker, although we know that they are the same colour as the others", and "the table looks smaller from here, although we know it's the same size as before", and then Rock pointing out that there is *some* respect in which they are right, in that there are phenomenological colour and size-related aspects of their experiences which correspond to their descriptions.

Where do we go from here? One might think that what I've said so far speaks in favour of the thesis of the silence of the senses: both the circular and the elliptical look are facts as to how the glass looks, and are as such on a par. Thus the representationalist would seem to face again the same dilemma discussed above: either say that the experience represents the rim at the same time as circular and as elliptical, or make a totally arbitrary decision as to which look is to determine content.[7]

In the next subsection I argue that that is not so and that there is a principled way to determine a coherent, unique, reflectively accessible content.

3.2 Perceptual Content, Adverbial Modifications and Dynamic Perception

In this subsection and in 3.4, I offer two closely related arguments. The first is an argument for the claim that different facts as to how any one object looks can contribute in different ways to the constitution of a coherent, unique and reflectively accessible perceptual content. The second is an argument for the claim that the notion of content helps us better to see how the mind-independent nature of the objects of perception is made manifest in experience. In developing the first argument, I also discuss (in 3.3) an important alternative view of perceptual content offered by Schellenberg (2008), which might appear to be well equipped to answer Travis's objection, but in fact is problematic.

[7] Restricting the range of represented properties to *shape*, *size* and *colour* reduces, of course, the magnitude of the problem, for one doesn't have to explain why the thing is represented as a glass rather than, say, an unusual cover for an *abat-jour*. Since my reply to Travis is based on constancy, I focus on basic properties to which constancy applies.

The result of the analysis that I have conducted in the previous subsection is that, when a circular glass is seen at an angle, the statements "the glass looks circular" and "the glass looks elliptical" are both true. From a purely relationalist standpoint, this would be a good reason to think that the experience does not have a determinate perceptual content. However, I think there is an important phenomenological distinction that Travis overlooks.

The distinction I have in mind can be expressed in several ways. The most general formulation is this: there is a layer to perceptual experience that has *direct objective purport*, that is, it tells its subject how things are. There is a second layer that has no direct objective purport, insofar as it doesn't take a stance as to how things are; however, the presence of the latter makes it possible for the former to have direct objective purport, so we might say that the second layer has an indirect objective purport.

The phenomenological character of the distinction can be brought into relief by relating the two layers to facts about looks. Among the looks that an object has, there can be one that relates to the layer with direct objective purport, and another that relates to the other layer. The look relating to the layer with direct objective purport determines what shape, colour, or size the perceived object is represented as having; in phenomenological terms, the look related to the layer with direct objective purport makes it so that the perceived object *looks to have* a certain shape, size, or colour. The other look also contributes to content, but *not* by determining the shape, colour or size that the object looks *to have*. In what follows, I explain more fully the relation between the two layers.

Capturing complex experiences in linguistic terms is always difficult, but I tentatively propose the following: let us call the look that determines what property the object is represented as having (that is, the property that the object looks to have) the *ground look*, and let us say that the other look contributes to the experience in the way of *adverbially modifying* the experience – when a subject sees a circular glass at an angle and all goes well (that is, when the perception is veridical), the glass *looks to be circular* to the subject, although the subject is also *appeared-to elliptically*. The distinction between ground look and adverbially modifying look requires two main elucidations, which I provide below.

First of all, it is important to distinguish metaphysical from psychological questions. The question of what is a look is a metaphysical question. I do not aim to provide a precise answer to this question here, but I accept things that, if true, would place constraints on what a correct answer would look like.

One of the assumptions that I accept is that, for any object *o* and any set of circumstances C, there are several truths of the form *o* looks F. I use "F" as a variable that ranges over (perceptible) properties, and I take it that *o* may look F even if it is not F. Furthermore, I take it that for any *true* sentence of the form *o* looks F, there is a property, *looking F*, that *o* has; thus, if it is true that our glass looks circular, the glass has the property of looking circular; if it is also true that it looks elliptical, it also has the property of looking elliptical. Finally, I take it that the metaphysical nature (whatever that is) of the looks of an object does not depend on whether *o* actually is F.[8] So, in my view, there is no difference at a metaphysical level between the looks of an object.

[8] If hard-pressed to say what is a look, I would say that looks are objective, relational properties of objects. Take an object *o*: *o*'s looking F is a function that takes as arguments an appropriate subset of *o*'s properties, a spatiotemporal point of view, certain circumstances such as light conditions, and returns the value *looking F*.

This brings me to the second elucidation. The difference between a ground look and an adverbially modifying look is purely psychological. More precisely, it is a question of the role that a certain look plays within the context of an experience, for a given look might be a ground look on one occasion and an adverbially modifying look on another. For example, suppose that a circular glass has an elliptical look (call it EL): if everything goes well, EL will adverbially modify the experience and the glass will look to be circular. However, if for whatever empirical reasons the subject undergoes an illusion, EL might play the role of the ground look, so the glass will look to be elliptical (in such a case its circular look may either adverbially modify the experience or play no role at all, depending on the specific angle of view and perhaps other factors).[9]

My proposal achieves two important things. First, it does justice to both (1) and (2), for it accounts both for the fact that we keep on seeing the glass as being circular, and for the fact that the appearance of the glass (and of its rim's shape) varies in a way which is such as to be aptly described by mentioning ellipticality. Second, and by the same means, it provides an answer to Travis's challenge, for it allows the representationalist to avoid the first horn of the dilemma: there being several facts as to how an object looks does not imply that the content of experience is bound to be incoherent, for different looks can play different roles in the determination of content (to repeat: one look determines the property that an object is represented (looks) *to have*; another look contributes to content by adverbially modifying the experience.

More needs to be said in order to make my view of content maximally clear, and I intend to do this by considering further challenges. First, I consider the objection that my account falls foul of the second horn of the dilemma, and I respond by articulating the concept of dynamic experience. Second, I explain how my account satisfies Travis's requirement that content be recognizable to the experiencing subject on the basis of the experience (the accessibility-requirement). Third, in 3.3, I compare and contrast my account with the representationalist strategy developed by Schellenberg (2008). Fourth, in 3.4 I give further support to my conception of content by means of an argument that involves the mind-independent nature of the objects of perception and the way in which that is made manifest to us when we look at objects from different perspectives. Finally, I come back to the first horn of the dilemma.

One may object that my proposal falls foul of the second horn of the dilemma, for if the looks are on a par, there can be no principled criterion to decide which look indexes the property that an object is represented to have (ground look), and which look adverbially modifies the experience; talking of a role that a particular look has implies that there is something which selects the look in question as having that role. However, the objection might go, this was exactly the pitfall of the second horn.

I think that this challenge can be met. Perceptual content is determined and accessed in the context of a *dynamic experience*, where by "dynamic experience" I mean an experience which comprises different views on the object. Suppose one veridically sees a glass with a circular rim. As the experience unfolds over time and from different perspectives, the glass will look *to be* circular, although the subject will also be

[9] Generally speaking, if a perception is veridical, the ground look corresponds to the actual shape, size or colour of the object. More precisely: if the experience is veridical and an *F-look* is the ground look, then the object is F (the glass looks to be circular and *is* circular). Of course, things can go wrong in perception, and if that happens the ground look will not correspond to the relevant shape-property of the object (the glass looks to be elliptical but is not elliptical).

appeared-to elliptically from most points of view, and appeared-to circularly only from a very limited number of vantage points (i.e., from above). The experience of the circular glass, therefore, will be phenomenologically characterized by a specific dialectic between the shape that the glass looks to have on the one hand, and the adverbial modifications on the other. If one were to veridically perceive an elliptical glass instead, there would be a *different* dialectic, because the manifestation of the ellipticality of an object does not involve being appeared to-circularly, at least not when one sees an elliptical thing from above (although when it is titled in certain ways, the experience might involve being appeared-to circularly).

Reflecting on the dialectic between the ground look and the adverbial modifications allows us to appreciate why the adverbially modifying look (the layer without direct objective purport) contributes to content. Generally speaking, not any adverbial modification is compatible with a given content. Suppose that as I walk around the glass, I'm suddenly appeared-to squarely; presumably, at that point the glass no longer looks to be circular, because while it is plausible that a circular glass could look *to be* circular and also look elliptical in the adverbially modifying sense, it is not plausible that a circular glass could look to be circular and also look square. Therefore, there being certain adverbial modifications instead of others makes it possible for the experience to represent the glass as being circular – it is in this sense that the layer relating to adverbial modifications has an indirect objective purport.

Furthermore, the dialectic between the ground look and the adverbially modifying look helps us see why the present view of content is compatible with the accessibility-requirement: the circular look being the ground look *explains* the successive adverbial modifications that we are presented with. If instead the elliptical look was the ground look, this would not explain the fact that the subject is appeared-to circularly when she sees the object from above. The prioritization of one look as the ground look is not arbitrary, it is the correct explanation of appearances. So the second horn is avoided.

The sense of "explanation" that I have in mind is directly relevant to the satisfaction of the accessibility-requirement on content. Perceptual experience can be construed as the joint upshot of two elements: (i) mind-independent objects, persisting relatively unchanged in time, and (ii) our spatiotemporal routes through the world that are such as to afford us encounters with the objects in question. If I walk around the glass, there is both a sense in which its appearance remains the same and one in which it changes, which correspond to its circular and elliptical look respectively. In order for me to see the glass as circular, it must be part of my stream of consciousness that the experience include certain adverbial modifications and not others (that when I get to see the object from above, for example, there be circular modifications). A determinate interplay between the ground look and the adverbial modifications of the experience, together with the persistence of objects as unchanging, play a fundamental role in helping us to make sense in the first person, *as perceiving subjects*, of the way our dynamic experiences of mind-independent objects unfold over time; indeed, we are often in a position to explicitly register this explanatory role when giving explanations concerning the way things appear, of the form "*o* appears *thus* because I see it *from this angle*" (*under this light*, *from this distance*).

How generally applicable is this view? Applying it to colour does not seem to present serious challenges. Let us consider, as suggested by Schellenberg, the case of a uniformly yellow wall with some parts more brightly illuminated than others. If the

analysis I offered in 3.1 is correct, it is true that the brightly illuminated parts look brighter than the others, but it is also true that they look to be the same colour as the others. As with the case of shape, the key to making sense of the puzzle is to appreciate that the two different looks contribute differently to content: the illuminated parts of the wall look *to be* the same yellow as the other parts, although more *brightly* so. The brightly illuminated parts are such that they are correctly described as looking *to be* the same colour as the other parts. At the same time, it would be preposterous to deny that there is some colour-related aspect that distinguishes those parts from the others. But this does not imply that the illuminated parts are represented as being both of the same colour and of a different colour than the other parts; their brighter look, that is, can contribute to the experience by adverbially modifying it, without generating any incoherence. Further, as in the case of shape, which look determines the colour that the wall is represented to have, and which other look contributes to the experience in the way of adverbially modifying it, is something that is phenomenologically determined over the course of a dynamic experience, not arbitrarily decided.

Concerning size: if I am right, it is true that a tower seen at a distance looks smaller than it does when one sees it close by, but it is also true that it looks the same size. Why is it, then, that an experience typically does not represent the tower as being of two different sizes? Again, it is crucial to realize that different looks can play different roles. The tower can look to be *that big* both when seen close by and when seen at a distance, although in the latter case it also appears in a more small*ish* way, so to speak. Size-experience exhibits the same phenomenological structure as colour-experience and shape-experience: a given fact as to how an object looks determines that the object looks to be *that big*, and other facts as to how it looks determine how one's experience of the object is modified as one moves closer or farther.[10,11]

To appreciate further the virtues of my account, in particular with respect to the accessibility-requirement, it might be useful to compare it to, and distinguish it from, an important account offered by Schellenberg (2008).

[10] What should we say about the content of static experiences? There are at least two options that are compatible with my account: one is to say that static content is in effect underdetermined – for example, that neither the circular nor the elliptical look have the "right" to be the ground look.

Another option, which I favour, is that static content is partly determined by the fact that the subject implicitly anticipates how the object would look and her experience would change if she were to see it from different angles; further, these anticipations are grounded in dynamic perception (I develop more fully this point in Giananti, A. What philosophers of perception can learn from Husserl, (unpublished manuscript *b*); see also Hopp (2011: 76–80; 146–148) for a discussion of the role of anticipations in Husserl's theory of perception).

[11] The are some similarities that the present view has to that developed in Noë (2004, 2012), insofar as both Noë and I attribute a pivotal role to constancy and duality in perception. I can't discuss in detail here the relationship between my view and Noë's, but it is perhaps worth pointing out three differences: first, there is a significant difference between our respective ways of setting up the puzzle of constancy, insofar as Noë's declares as "inacceptable" to describe the question of constancy as the question of how experience can "continue to present things as unchanged when the character of our experience is continuously changing" (2012: 55) (which is more or less the way I set up the question), for he thinks that the question of constancy should be "how can our experience present things as unchanged when it manifestly presents them as changing" (55) (more constancy-related differences between Noë and I are evident in Noë's discussion of constancy as amodal perception; 2012: 55–58).

Second, my aim is to develop the idea of duality in perception so as to respond to pure relationalists' worries.

Third, as far as I know, Noë does not give an argument for relating constancy to mind-independence, which I do in 3.4.

3.3 The Metaphysics of Perception and the Accessibility-Requirement

Schellenberg (2008) notices that we sees objects from particular perspectives and under specific conditions, hence "an explanation is needed for how one can have knowledge of the intrinsic properties of objects through perception" (56). The main goal of her account is to contribute such an explanation. Schellenberg distinguishes between two kinds of properties of objects, properties which are systematically related to two different kinds of contents: the *intrinsic*, mind-independent perceptible properties that objects have regardless of their relations to other objects, and, the *relational*, mind-independent, perceptible properties that objects have relative to their situational features, such as their orientation and distance relative to a perceiver, as well as the lighting conditions under which they are perceived – Schellenberg calls this second kind of properties, which depend on the intrinsic features of an object plus situational features of the kind mentioned above, *situation-dependent properties*. According to Schellenberg, perception represents situation-dependent as well as intrinsic properties.

What mainly drives Schellenberg is the epistemological concern of how we can acquire perceptual knowledge of intrinsic perceptible properties, given the situation-dependency of perception. Her solution consists in attributing a pivotal role to situation-dependent properties, insofar as "the perception of intrinsic properties is epistemically dependent on the representation of situation-dependent properties" (57). To illustrate this, Schellenberg considers the case of a subject who perceives two same-sized trees, one tree being nearer to the perceiver than the other. According to Schellenberg, the nearer tree is presented as larger given its situational features, and the subject has experiential evidence for this; at the same time, the subject has experiential evidence that the trees are of the same intrinsic size. However, the second layer of evidence *depends* on the first:

> It is because the evidence for the situation-dependent property is in the line of evidence for the intrinsic property that defeat of the former entails defeat of the latter. And it is because the evidence for the intrinsic property is not in the line of evidence for the situation-dependent property that defeat of the former does not entail defeat of the latter (77).

In other words, if it turned out that the nearer tree is not situationally larger, that would undercut the perceptual evidence for thinking that the two trees have the same intrinsic size. By contrast, evidence that the two trees do not have the same intrinsic size would not undercut the evidence for thinking that the nearer tree is situationally larger than the other. It is quite obvious how the account could be extended to other properties: it is because the glass is presented as elliptical given its situational features that it can be known to be intrinsically circular, and it is because the brightly illuminated parts of the yellow wall are presented as brighter given the situational features that they can be known to be the same colour as the other parts.

The account is intended as neutral concerning phenomenological issues, and Schellenberg points out that it is important "to distinguish between what is primary in perceptual consciousness from what is causally primary and what is epistemically primary" (78). She also emphasises that perception does not "represent whether a property is a situation-dependent property or an intrinsic property" (68) and that

although situation-dependent properties are relational, this fact "need not reveal itself in the phenomenology of perception" (68). This phenomenological neutrality is reflected in the rendering that she offers of the content of a subject s experience of the two same-sized trees at different distances:

(*Tree*$_1$ and *Tree*$_2$ are the same size' *Tree*$_1$ and *Tree*$_2$ are different in size") (69)

Metaphysically speaking, the single-primed property is the intrinsic size of the trees, while the double-primed property is their situation-dependent size. Thus, there is a difference between the perception of the two trees with regard to the properties represented, and hence "a difference in the externally individuated content of perception. In the veridical case, experience represents the trees as having the same intrinsic-size properties, but as having different situation-dependent size properties" (66).

Prima facie, it might seem that Schellenberg is equally well placed to answer Travis's challenge, because she admits that a plurality of facts can determine content and, in some way to be specified, the phenomenology of perceptual experience. For example, she could explain the change in the way the glass appears from different points of view in terms of a change in the representation of the situation-dependent properties (these would coincide with the representation of the intrinsic properties when the glass is seen from above, and differ from these when one sees it at an angle).

I have two related qualms about Schellenberg's account: one concerns its "phenomenological neutrality" between intrinsic and situation-dependent property, and the other the divorce between the phenomenology and the epistemology of perception, which follows from the phenomenological neutrality.

Let us consider the phenomenological issue first: Schellenberg emphasizes that situation-dependent-properties do not need to be represented as such, and, concerning the relation between representation and phenomenology she writes that "whatever stance is taken toward the way *intrinsic* properties are reflected in phenomenology should be taken towards the way situation-depend properties are reflected in phenomenology" (69). The problem is that the proposal does not accommodate the condition placed by Travis on the accessibility of perceptual content: by Schellenberg's lights, a glass seen at an angle is represented both as intrinsically circular and relationally elliptical. Now, we as perceivers are typically more interested in intrinsic than situation-dependent properties, so we might have an interest in knowing whether the glass is intrinsically circular or elliptical. And if perception yields knowledge by representing things as being some way, this means that we might be interested in knowing whether the glass is *represented* as intrinsically circular or elliptical, although we wouldn't quite put it this way in ordinary talk. Crucially, Schellenberg's account leaves us in the dark in this respect. Consider again Travis's motivation for the accessibility-requirement:

> …that we are represented to in experience is meant to be a familiar phenomenon; something we can tell is happening. It is not just events occurring in visual processing mechanisms of which we are all ignorant. It should not come as a complete surprise someday, to be sprung on us by future neurophysiologists, that we are thus represented to (uselessly, of course, since we were all ignorant of it) (Travis 2004: 86).

If we replace Travis's neurophysiologist with Schellenberg's metaphysician, we get exactly the same point: it should not come as a complete surprise one day, to be sprung on us by a metaphysician, that the circularity represented in our experience referred to the intrinsic shape of the glass, whereas the ellipticality to its situation-dependent shape.

The phenomenological neutrality of the account also affects its epistemological aptness. Let us suppose with Schellenberg that situation-dependent properties are epistemically prior. Given that we as perceivers are more interested in intrinsic properties, the epistemic primacy of situation-dependent properties had better not imply a phenomenological primacy, on pain of the (to most) unappealing consequence that we are primarily aware of the situation-dependent properties, and only indirectly aware of the intrinsic ones. In effect, Schellenberg is keen to emphasise that we need to distinguish between what is primary in perceptual consciousness on the one hand, and what is primary from a casual and epistemological point of view on the other, and that "no implication about phenomenological primacy follows from either epistemic or causal primacy" (78). But even if the separation between what is prior in perceptual consciousness from what is epistemologically prior is acceptable, this in combination with phenomenological neutrality cannot yield a satisfactory account of perceptual knowledge. We can see why that is so by considering a concrete case. Suppose that knowledge that the two trees are of the same intrinsic size is epistemically dependent on the representation of their situationally-dependent different size (of the fact that they are presented as different in size given the situational features). Now, by Schellenberg's own lights, perception does not represent situation-dependent properties as being relational. But this raises the question of how a subject is supposed to recognize that it is the trees' situation-dependent difference in size that is evidence for their sameness in intrinsic size, rather than their sameness in intrinsic size being evidence for their difference in situation-dependent size. In other words: why is it that we are normally able perceptually to know that two same-sized objects at a different distance do have the same intrinsic size (the starting point of Schellenberg's puzzle) rather than mistakenly judging, due to the way they are presented given the situational features, that they are different in their intrinsic size? Just as Schellenberg's account leaves us in the dark as to how we access perceptual content, and *because* it leaves us in the dark concerning that question, it also leaves us in the dark as to what the answer to the epistemological question is.[12]

To complete my case for my two-layered conception of experience, I want to consider how the mind-independent nature of material objects is made manifest in perception when we see them from different perspectives. In the next subsection I give an argument for this claim and relate it back to the question of content and the silence of the senses.

[12] Schellenberg says *en passant* that situation-dependent properties can be evidence for intrinsic properties even if a subject is not even aware of those situation-dependent properties, because "a subject can have evidence without being aware of this evidence" (78). Clearly, this is coherent with the proposed separation between the phenomenology and the epistemology of perception. However, it still leaves the main question unanswered: how is it that the subject can know that two objects are the same (intrinsic) size on the basis of the evidence that they are presented as different in size given the situational features, if the subject is left in the dark as to which properties are intrinsic and which are situation-dependent?

3.4 A Sense of the World: Content and Mind-Independent Objects

The point of the following argument is to give further support to the conception of experience as two-layered, by showing that that conception best explains how we get a sense of being aware of an objective, mind-independent world in perceptual experience**.** But before we proceed, a couple of qualifications are in order.

First, I should clarify the sense in which I speak of mind-independence. Relative to the ordinary objects of perception, apparent mind-independence involves at least two things: (i) in perception, the *existence* of the objects of perception seems not to depend on us perceiving them; (ii) in perception, at least a subset of the (perceptible) *properties* of the objects of perception seems not to depend on us perceiving them.[13,14]

Second, the argument concerns material objects, not *sensibilia* such as clouds and lights. When I discuss the third premise of the argument, I will explain why this is the case, and argue that the argument retains its interest despite this limitation.

I now state the argument and then I turn to a defence of its premises:

> P1: The mind-independent nature of material objects is phenomenologically evident in perception;
> P2: So there must be a feature of perceptual experience that is revelatory of this mind-independent nature;
> P3: This feature is a duality of perception: material objects appear to retain their properties as the conditions of perception change, while at the same time appearing differently as the conditions so change;
> P4: If material objects appear to retain their properties as the conditions of perception change, while at the same time appearing differently as the conditions so change, then a particular look is selected in perception as the look which determines what property an object appears to have;
> C: A particular look is selected in perception as the look which determines what property an object appears to have.

P1 says that material objects are perceived as being mind-independent. This is a claim that has appeal for a variety of approaches to perception, and certainly both representationalists and pure relationalists would subscribe to it. Indeed, it is very natural to explain phenomenal features of our perceptual experiences in terms of stable, mind-independent features of perceptual objects. A pure relationalist like Brewer emphasizes this:

> We appeal to ordinary objects in understanding the actual and counterfactual course and nature of our perceptual experience of them from different points of view over time (Brewer 2018, forthcoming).

[13] It might be that colour partly depends on perceiving subjects in a way that does not apply to shape and size. However, there is a sense in which mind-independence also applies to colour, insofar as colour, just as shape and size, does not change as we change perspective on coloured objects; furthermore, it *appears* not to change (provided the perspectival changes fall within the boundary of perceptual constancy).

[14] Siegel (2010, chapter 7) puts forward a similar claim with respect to both properties and existence – for example: "The objects we seem to see are presented to us as subject-independent" (176).

In addition, the very distinction between after-images and perception proper is often cashed out in terms of the sense of a mind-independent world that we get in perception as opposed to the case of after-images (Siegel 2010: 178; Textor 2009: 141).

The second premise says that if the thesis at stake in P1 is to be given substance, more needs to be said about what aspect of conscious experience makes it so that mind-independence is given in perception. I assume that no one would want to object to this.

The third premise says that mind-independence is made manifest precisely by that dual character of perception that I emphasised when first introducing constancy, namely that material objects appear to retain their properties as the conditions of perception change, while at the same time looking differently as the conditions so change. Precisely this duality is required if we are to have a sense of experiencing a mind-independent world in perception. For if things seemed to change all the time as a consequence of our spatiotemporal routes, we could not experience material objects as mind-independent. What is perhaps less obvious is that we couldn't perceive them as mind-independent if there were not a change in the ways they appear from different vantage points either. The simplest way to appreciate this is to consider size constancy. Suppose one sees a tower which looks to be a hundred meters tall. Suppose that one then walks some distance away and looks again at it. Wouldn't it be absurd if one were to say that one's senses are deceiving one because the tower looks smaller now? That this would be absurd is clear when one asks how the tower should look in order for it to look the same size as it did on the first occasion, for the answer certainly cannot be that it should look exactly the same; in that case one would indeed have grounds for thinking that one is hallucinating, or for supposing there to be some trick in place. Therefore, it seems that variation in constancy, so to speak, contributes to constituting a sense of mind-independence.

This defence of P3 requires at least two qualifications, though. First, P3 applies to material objects, not to all objects of perception. In order for there to be constancy in play, it has to be possible to mark a difference between objects' properties appearing to remain stable on the one hand, and those very same properties appearing differently on the other. Now, suppose you are looking at a cloud in the sky. Presumably, it looks to be mind-independent. However, the way its appearance changes over time doesn't fully accord with the rules prescribed by constancy. More precisely, there doesn't seem to be anything like a cloud changing its shape-appearance without its shape appearing to change. A similar point applies to lights: if the apparent colour of the light changes, then the colour of the light appears to change.

Despite the fact that the argument doesn't apply unrestrictedly to the domain of the visible, I think that the duality I describe is a necessary condition for a very large class of objects perceived in a variety of conditions – objects such as tables, rocks, books, flowers, pens, cigarettes, glasses, laptops; also for persons, animals, trees, and larger objects such as airplanes and towers.

A second qualification concerning P3 must be added: even within the realm of material objects, there might be cases in which an object seems mind-independent but a perceptual experience of it does not unfold fully in accordance with the rules of constancy. Sometimes, material objects are experienced in conditions that are beyond the limits of constancy: if I'm flying on an airplane and look outside the window, people will perhaps look so small that they won't look like they have the size of person

at all. Still, it doesn't seem implausible to say that they seem mind-independent. Likewise, suppose you look at a starry sky (stars are giant masses of gasses rather than material objects such as rocks, but maybe they *could* be rocks; perhaps if they were giant bright rocks, they would look to us just as they actually do): although the stars look mind-independent, they do not change appearance according to vantage point (they are either visible or not); so in these cases there is apparent mind-independence without constancy.[15]

This shouldn't be particularly surprising: if the conditions are beyond the limits of constancy, then, in those cases, constancy does not help constituting a sense of mind-independence. However, this does not mean that constancy is not necessary for apparent mind-independence when the conditions *are* within the limits of constancy. Consider again the case in which, as you walk around the glass, you are suddenly appeared-to squarely. As I suggested in 3.2, the glass would no longer seem to retain its original shape. Now, it might still be that some weaker condition on mind-independence is satisfied, such as that the glass still looks to *exist* independently of the experience, insofar as you are still able to change your position relative to it. However, there is more to mind-independence in perception than this: we also have a sense that the properties of the objects do not change as we move around.[16,17]

P4 says that if the mark of mind-independence is the duality described in P3, then in perception a look is selected as the ground look; this is the heart of the argument, insofar as it connects things that are as prima facie disparate as mind-independence, constancy and the debate over content. To appreciate the plausibility of P4, we can reason by *modus tollens*: we suppose that the duality described in P3 is the mark of

[15] Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing these cases.

[16] One might find weird the idea that some items are represented as mind-independent via perceptual constancy, whereas others are represented as mind-independent in some other way. However, the differences in the representation of mind-independence are not random, but grounded in important differences in the *kinds* of perceived items or in the *conditions* of perception. First, take the case of a ray of light of variable intensity. Lights, just as rainbows, shadows, clouds and the sky, belong to that group of entities often called *perceptual ephemera* (Martin 2010, Crowther & Mac Cumhaill (2018, forthcoming)), namely entities which neither are nor look fully material. Given the substantially different nature of perceptual ephemera, it is not exceedingly surprising that different mechanisms should be at work and a different phenomenology exemplified. Further, insofar as we want to accept that the perceptual ephemera listed above are represented as mind-independent, we are not completely in the dark as to how that could come about: presumably, to the extent that a ray of light seems to exist independently of our perception of it, that is at least partly due to the fact that we have the possibility of changing our position relative to it. But I would still insist that there are more demanding conditions for the apparent independence of ordinary material objects. Other cases are to be explained at least partly by reference to the conditions of perception: it is not uncommon in psychology to assume that there is a maximal perceptible distance beyond which any object is perceived as being at a constant distance (Gilinsky 1951; Indow 1991), and that size constancy does not hold for very far objects (Higashiyama 1992). Thus, objects such as stars, or persons seen from an airplane high in the sky, fall well beyond maximal perceptible distance and size constancy. They might still be perceived as mind-independent insofar as we perceive them from different perspectives, but they are also perceived as merely having *some* size and being at *some* unspecified distance, so this marks a striking difference with more ordinary cases of perception; if a glass on the table in front of one in ordinary circumstances were perceived in the same way as stars normally are, as being of *some* determinable size at *some* unspecified distance, I doubt that we would get the same sense of it being mind-independent that we actually do.

[17] A different suggestion on how to treat the case of seeing the stars comes from Noë, who also treats it as an example of constancy breakdown. According to Noë, we don't actually see stars: "you don't actually visually experience *the stars;* what you see, rather, are points of light in the night sky, points of light you reasonably take to be stars (or to be marks or signs or traces of stars)" (2012: 70).

mind-independence, and that perception does *not* select a ground look; if we find that this combination is impossible or very unlikely to be true, we have established P4 and hence the conclusion of the argument.

Let us suppose that perception did not select a ground look. What would perceptual experience of material objects be like? What we would have is a mere plurality of facts as to how things look, just as pure relationalists emphasise. But how, then, would we get a coherent and stable picture of reality from perception, instead of a representation on which things may or may not change as we move about? Let us consider again the case of the tower seen at a distance. There are several truths involving the ways it looks. To mention two: it is true that the tower looks the same size as it did when it was seen close by, and it is also true that it looks smaller. How is it, then, that we typically do not suppose something to be wrong, either with our visual system or with the environment? Likewise for our circular glass seen at a skewed angle. If I am right, the fact that it covers a different part of one's visual field than it does when seen from above is to be partly understood in terms of it looking elliptical. But it is also true that it looks circular. But how, then, do we get a sense of perceiving a mind-independent, unchanging object? The same question arises for colour: if I move around a uniformly coloured table so that the way the light is reflected onto my retina changes, parts of the surface will look brighter than they did before I started moving, but at the same time they will look to be the same colour as the rest of the table. How is all this possible?

The conception of a two-layered experience gives a straightforward answer to these questions, because it can explain how different facts as to how any one object looks can contribute differently to the constitution of content: the ground look is an index of the property that an object is represented to have, while other looks can contribute to perceptual content by adverbially modifying the experience. Only if what I call a ground look is selected in perception, can we explain why the glass looks *to be* circular, although it also looks elliptical; why the tower looks *to be* the same size as it did when one was standing near it, although it also looks smaller when seen at a distance; and why some parts of the table look *to be* the same colour as the others when seen from a different perspective, although they also look brighter.

By contrast, it is not clear how pure relationalists could find the resources to answer these questions. Let us suppose, as Travis does, that all looks are on a par, and that perception does not effect a selection among them. If that is so, it becomes obscure how an object can perceptually appear to remain constant in its properties while looking differently under different conditions. Brewer's more sophisticated account does not fare much better than Travis's. According to Brewer, if an object looks F from a given spatiotemporal point of view, that is due to its visually relevant similarities to paradigm exemplars of F-things from the point of view in question. This can explain some of the relevant phenomenal facts: for example, it can explain why the glass seen at an angle looks elliptical, or why the shaded parts of the table look darker. Generally speaking, it can explain the variation aspects of constancy. However, it cannot explain the constant aspects of constancy, as it were, because it cannot explain why the glass looks circular, the shaded parts of the table look to be the same colour as the others, and the tower does not seem to shrink. This strongly suggests that the notion of openness to the world that motivates pure relationalism is unduly narrow and phenomenologically inadequate.

With respect to the first horn of the supposed dilemma for the representationalist, the foregoing argument shows two things: (i) content is not bound to be incoherent,

provided that different looks of an object can play different roles in the constitution of content; (ii) that perception does effect a selection between looks is the best explanation of how we have a sense of being in touch with a mind-independent world in experience.

With respect to the second horn, an objection to my view was that it implies an arbitrary way of determining perceptual content. In light of our previous considerations, I think this only has bite against a static, snapshot view of perception and its content. When one considers dynamic experience, one can say that the content of the experience is made manifest to the subject through the whole series of adverbial modifications, and that the content at a given instant is recovered through that series.

I contend that there is a principled way to determine a coherent, unique and reflectively accessible perceptual content.[18]

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