A (Qualified) Defense of Diaphaneity

1. Introduction

All naïve realists agree that when a subject enjoys an ordinary perception, the mind-independent objects and qualities she perceives are actual constituents of her experience. They also agree that what the subject’s experience is like depends on which mind-independent objects and qualities she is aware of. After decades of being ridiculed as a relic of a scientifically ill-informed philosophical past, naïve realism has recently been enjoying something of a renaissance. As the number of self-avowed naïve realists grows, so does the number of quite different positions that are labelled “naïve realist” by their advocates. This kind of diversification is, for the most part, a welcome development and a sign of the view’s growing impact on the field. But there are different reasons *why* one might choose to be a naïve realist, and these differences in motivation can sometimes be obscured by adherence to a common label. This makes the present moment a timely one to revisit the question of what reasonsthere are to be a naïve realist in the first place.

I want to consider this question of motivation in relation to a particular commitment that has recently been presented as a key choice point for naïve realism. Philosophers who claim to be sympathetic to the main tenets of the view have questioned whether it needs to embrace the rather strong claim that *any* difference in the character of our experiences has to ultimately be accounted for by a difference in which mind-independent objects and qualities the subject is presented with. In other words, they have questioned whether naïve realism’s core commitment that worldly constituents of experience shape the character of our experiences must be interpreted so strongly as to require that nothing else can also contribute. In the literature, this principle has come to be known as *Diaphaneity*. The strongest version of the principle takes the form of a biconditional:

*Diaphaneity:* Necessarily, two perceptions differ in phenomenal character *if and only if* they differ in the concrete objects or sensible qualitiesthat the subject is presented with.

A proponent of this version of *Diaphaneity* is committed to there being a one-to-one correspondence between phenomenal character and the elements—objects and qualities—that a subject is presented with. If this version of *Diaphaneity* is true, a difference in either entails a difference in the other. Recent critics of the principle—many themselves naïve realists—have suggested that naïve realism does not in fact require a commitment to *Diaphaneity*, that *Diaphaneity* is incompatible with certain empirical findings, and that *Diaphaneity* forces some unwieldy and unwanted metaphysical baggage onto the naïve realist. Better to shed the principle and travel light, these critics argue.

In this paper, my goal is to offer a word of caution about just how much weight we ought to shed. I will look at two recent attempts to develop non-diaphanous versions of naïve realism, formulated by (Beck 2019a) and (French and Phillips 2020). I will argue that each of these versions fails to do justice to certain key motivations of naïve realism, and that they fail precisely because of the way in which they reject *Diaphaneity*. Naïve realists are sometimes motivated by phenomenological considerations; other times, they are concerned with our ability to refer to and have knowledge of the world around us. I will argue that the versions of non-diaphanous naïve realism under consideration suffer in both domains. While these views are able to make room for phenomenological *particularity—*a desideratum that many naïve realists take seriously—they lose the ability to say that the worldly qualities we are presented with play a substantive role in fixing how particulars look.

The inability to carve out the right kind of role for worldly qualities in fixing the character of our experiences has particularly problematic consequences for the payoffs that naïve realists hope to secure with respect to reference and knowledge. According to an influential argument for naïve realism, developed most extensively by John Campbell, only a naïve realist view of experience can explain the kind of demonstrative knowledge we have of our surroundings. But the naïve realist is able to secure this explanatory advantage for the view only if she maintains that the objects and qualities we have knowledge of show up to us in the character of our experiences. In line with some of Campbell’s remarks, I will suggest that for certain objects or qualities to show up to us in the character of our experiences, it must be the case that the existence and identity of those entities is apparent to us in the character of those experiences. While non-diaphanous versions of naïve realism are able to secure this verdict for the particular *objects* we are presented with, they fail to secure the parallel verdict for qualities. That is, on the non-diaphanous versions of the view, experience cannot make apparent to us *which* color or shape we are perceiving and whether we are perceiving the *same* color or shape over a course of experience. If I am right that such “experiential transparency” is a requirement for the kind of demonstrative knowledge and reference that the naïve realist cares about, it follows that extant non-diaphanous versions of naïve realism fail to secure some of the key epistemic payoffs that draw most of us to naïve realism in the first place.

Having argued for this conclusion, I will then consider whether we need to hold on to the strongest version of the principle, as stated above. That version takes the form of a biconditional and so is composed of the following two conditionals:

1. Pdiff🡪Cdiff: Necessarily, if two experiences differ in their presented elements, they differ in phenomenal character.
2. Cdiff🡪Pdiff: Necessarily, if two experiences differ in phenomenal character, they differ in their presented elements.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In their rejections of *Diaphaneity*, I will suggest that (Beck 2019) and (French and Phillips 2020) effectively reject *both* sides of the biconditional.[[2]](#footnote-2) They replace a one-to-one correspondence between phenomenal character and presented elements with a many-to-many relation: they explicitly argue that different phenomenal characters are compatible with sameness of presented elements (a rejection of Cdiff🡪Pdiff), but they also end up allowing for different presented elements to result in experiences with the same phenomenal character (a rejection of Pdiff🡪Cdiff). It is this latter allowance that is the source of their trouble. While naïve realism can survive introducing a one-to-many function from presented elements to phenomenal characters, it is fatally wounded if it endorses a one-to-many function from phenomenal characters to presented elements. To put it in more concrete terms: while a naïve realist can accommodate the possibility that a color like redness or a shape like roundness be experienced in different ways, they must resist the idea that different colors or different shapes can each be experienced in the *same* way. It is only if different qualities make differential impacts on the character of our experiences that we can know *which* quality we are presented with on the basis of a particular experience. This is the kind of knowledge that naïve realism was uniquely meant to secure – in giving it up, then, we give up one of the central reasons to endorse the view.

1. Naïve Realism Without Diaphaneity

The thesis that the character of our experiences is entirely fixed by what the objects of those experiences are like traces all the way back to early sense-datum theorists like Moore and Russell. Moore, for instance, writes:

We have then, in every sensation two distinct terms, (1) ‘consciousness’ in respect of which all sensations are alike; and (2) something else, in respect of which one sensation differs from another. It will be convenient if I may be allowed to call this second term the ‘object’ of a sensation.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Moore rarely argues for this picture of experience; instead, he seems to consider it an indubitable starting point for theorizing about experience. So the question then arises, whether we have any good *reasons* to embrace the thesis that alldifferences in character must derive from differences in the objects experienced. This question becomes especially pressing given the costs that this principle imposes on its adherents. An acceptance of *Diaphaneity* requires us to deny that one and the same element can be experienced in multiple ways. But this seems at odds with our basic understanding of how perception works. As MGF Martin puts it:

…we not only suppose that we can know about objects through sense perception, but we know that the conditions for coming to know about objects vary, and hence our experience can vary too. One can see the bluish-white sample under rather less good conditions – under artificial shop lights, or in the fading light of a late afternoon; against one strong background colour, or another. All of these experiences will be different from each other…When we think of the variety of circumstances under which we can confront the colour or the shape of objects, then we are much less likely to assume that there is one distinctive way of experiencing the colour or the shape.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Martin is surely right – we know that not only the objects of our perceptions vary, but also the conditions under which we perceive those objects vary. To deny that the latter can contribute to the character of our experience, then, seems entirely unmotivated. If it is possible to remain a naïve realist, without a commitment to a thesis like *Diaphaneity*, it is natural to conclude that this is the approach we ought to adopt. While Martin expresses his deep suspicions about the plausibility of a principle like *Diaphaneity*, he does not develop in much detail what a version of naïve realism that rejects the principle might look like. This is precisely the task that Beck (2019a) and French & Phillips (2020) take upon themselves, and so it is to these views that I will turn my attention. I will argue that each view in fact struggles to secure the foundational motivations for naïve realism once they give up *Diaphaneity.*

* 1. Neurocomputational Naïve Realism

In his paper, “Rethinking Naïve Realism”, Ori Beck develops a view he calls neurocomputational naïve realism (NNR). According to NNR, the character of a perceptual experience is fixed by a three-place relation that a subject (S) stands in to a worldly item (x) and an appearance property (W). When a subject stands in this perceptual appearance relation to a red car and a red appearance property, for instance, the car looks red to her. The worldly items are the things that appear to the subject—the presented elements—and they include both mind-independent objects and ordinary sensible qualities like color and shape. Appearance properties, in contrast, are entirely fixed by the neurocomputational state of a subject’s brain, and they determine the *way* in which the subject is appeared to. Key to Beck’s view is the thought that both of these relata—the presented elements and the appearance properties—can directly shape the character of a subject’s experience. The rejection of *Diaphaneity*, then,is built into the very foundations of the view.

How do the different elements of the perceptual appearing relation fit together? To understand the view better, it is helpful to start with Beck’s account of hallucination. Hallucinations, on NNR, do have sensory phenomenology, but they are not phenomenologically identical to their perceptual counterparts. Imagine a subject hallucinating a red car. Unlike in a case of perception, in such a hallucination, the subject fails to stand in the perceptual appearance relation because she fails to be related to any particular car or any particular car’s color. Nonetheless, the subject does still instantiate a set of neurally determined appearance properties. And so the subject’s phenomenology, when she hallucinates, is *similar* to her phenomenology when she perceives—it overlaps with respect to the appearance properties that the subject instantiates—but it is not *identical* to the phenomenology of a genuine perception. In the perception, a particular red car appears to the subject; in the hallucination, no physical object appears to her. In the former, the car’s redness appears to the subject; in the latter, no color appears any way to her.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Now we know that in a hallucination, it *seems* to the subject as if she is presented with a red car. Given Beck’s analysis of what occurs in hallucinations, he must accept that a subject instantiating a set of appearance properties is sufficient for it to seem this way to her. One might then wonder what work is left over for the worldly items to do in the case of perception. If the appearance properties are sufficient, by themselves, for it to seem to the subject as if she is presented with a red car, isn’t this all there is to the phenomenology of a veridical perception as well?

Not necessarily. First, remember that, as a disjunctivist, Beck can and does deny the move from subjective indistinguishability to phenomenal identity. So even though hallucinations and veridical perceptions are indistinguishable to the subject, Beck does not think that they in fact have the same phenomenology. Having made the familiar disjunctivist move, though, Beck is obligated to tell us *which* phenomenal features the veridical perception possesses (and the corresponding hallucination lacks) in virtue of the subject standing in the perceptual appearing relation in the former but not the latter. Here, one can expect Beck to appeal to phenomenological particularity.[[6]](#footnote-6) Many philosophers of perception think that a good account of perceptual phenomenology must make room for particulars to show up, not only as the causes of our phenomenal states, but within those phenomenal states themselves. When I perceive my best friend, for example, I do not just have an experience as of *someone* who has dirty blonde hair and greyish blue eyes, where this experience happens, normally, to be caused by my friend, Masha. Rather, it is argued, I have an experience of *Masha* herself. And the mere fact that I may not be able to tell this experience apart from a hallucination in which Masha is clearly not present, does not mean that my perception cannot be a perception of *Masha*.

On this reading of NNR: when I stand in the perceptual appearance relation to Masha and a set of appearance properties, W, the appearance properties I instantiate make it seem as if there is someone with dirty blonde hair and greyish blue eyes present before me. This much is guaranteed even if I were hallucinating. But the appearance properties by themselves, insofar as they are intrinsic to my mind, cannot present any particular person who has these features to me. What makes it the case that it is *Masha* who appears this way to me is the fact that when I perceive Masha, she is a constituent of the perceptual appearance relation.[[7]](#footnote-7)

I think this view gives the presented elements a clear, though limited, role to play in fixing the phenomenology of our perceptual experiences. To get a sense of why it is a *limited* role, let’s shift our focus from the particular objects we perceive to their qualities. So far, I have suggested that the object at the end of the perceptual appearance relation determines *which particular* I am presented with and that this can be a distinctively phenomenological component of our experience. But now it seems like howthis particular *looks* is entirely determined by the intrinsic neurocomputational appearance properties of my brain. So what phenomenological work is left to be done by the mind-independent *qualities* that Beck explicitly includes in the list of presented elements?

Perhaps Beck can insist that perceived qualities do the very same work that objects do – that is, they determine *which* properties a subject is aware of. So, when our subject perceives a red car and it looks red to her, she can be said to perceive *redness*, rather than greenness, say, in virtue of standing in the perceptual appearance relation to the car, redness, and a red appearance.

It is crucial to remember that on NNR, the fact that the car’s color is red, as opposed to green, does not have any consequences for howthe car looks to the subject. As Beck makes fully explicit, an experience in which a car looks red can just as well be an experience in which we are presented with redness, orangeness or greenness. Beck may insist that experiences that involve these three different colors must count as having different total phenomenology, just in virtue of three different colors being at the end of the perceptual relation, but this difference in colors makes no difference to how things look to the subject. The differences between such experiences, then, is not unlike the differences between experiences of three numerically distinct cars of exactly the same shade of red. There are distinct property-instances at the end of the perceptual relation, but which properties they are instances of is largely irrelevant to how things look to the subject. On NNR, it is not just the case that there isn’t a single way that a red object must look; far more strongly, there are no ways of looking that are in any way distinctive of a red object.

Can a subject be presented with a *particular* color—redness, as opposed to greenness—in virtue of having an experience in which the object looks a way that it could look even if the subject were presented with greenness? I want to suggest not. If a proponent of NNR holds that being presented with a color makes a positive contribution to the character of our experiences, they have to specify what contribution the color makes. They cannot just insist that like objects, the qualities we are presented with determine *which* color or *which* shape we are presented with. Subjects are not presented with a list of discrete items that include both particulars and qualities: Masha, Masha’s bag, the tree behind her, the color greenness, and the shape cylindricality. There is a crucial asymmetry between how particular objects and qualities show up to us in experience: objects are indeed presented to us as discrete particulars, but qualities are presented to us only in virtue of fixing how those objects look. In the case of particular objects, it is true that I can be presented with Masha on one occasion, and her twin Maria on another occasion, despite the fact that both Masha and Maria look exactly the same. That’s just how particularity works – the fact that it is Masha (or Maria) doesn’t have to make a difference to *how* Masha (or Maria) looks; it just fixes that it is Masha (or Maria) who looks that way. Beck seems to think that qualities can do the same kind of work. That we can accept that redness and orangeness can look the same way while nonetheless insisting that it is *redness* that looks that way on one occasion, and *orangeness* that looks that very way on another occasion. But this is just to make a category mistake and treat qualities like particulars. Redness cannot look red; an object looks red; squareness cannot look circular even though a square object can. And so if being presented with redness is meant to be distinct in character than being presented with orangeness, this can only be achieved if the two qualities make differential contributions to how the *objects* we are presented with look.

But we know that on Beck’s view, how the object appears to a subject is not fixed by which qualities the object actually possesses; rather, it is fixed by which appearance properties the subject instantiates. So even though Beck explicitly includes mind-independent qualities in the list of the elements that can perceptually appear to a subject, and even though he insists that phenomenal character is fixed by the perceptual appearance relation, once we look at the details of the view, it is not really clear what phenomenological work these qualities can do. Note that critics of *Diaphaneity* often aim their criticisms at the claim that the presented objects must *exhaust* the character of our experiences. But having given up *Diaphaneity,* Beck now seems to offer us a view on which the qualities of objects do *no* discerniblework in determining how things look to the subject. For the way that things look, on NNR, is fixed entirely by a subject’s neural state.

If I am right that properties cannot contribute to phenomenal character in the same way that objects do—that they have to, instead, fix how those objects look—we see that NNR effectively involves a rejection of both conditionals that make up *Diaphaneity*. Insofar as the character of our experience is fixed, in part, by appearance properties that are not presentedto us, the view straightforwardly rejects Cdiff🡪Pdiff. But once we put aside the *particularist* aspects of our phenomenal character, and focus on qualities as the relevant presented elements, we see that the view is also forced to give up Pdiff🡪Cdiff. Two experiences can present us with very different qualities, despite there being no difference in the phenomenal character of those experiences.[[8]](#footnote-8)

This is a surprising verdict. On Beck’s version of naïve realism, the world ends up playing an extremely limited role in fixing phenomenology. It provides the particulars that the subject perceives but it is silent when it comes to fixing how those particulars look to the subject. This seems to violate at least the spirit, if not the letter, of naïve realism. When it comes to phenomenological considerations for their view, the naïve realist was motivated by the idea that what experience is like is ultimately a matter of what the experienced world is like. But now we have ended up with a view on which the world provides us, at best, bare particulars (objects and, perhaps, property-instances) but plays no role in determining what those particulars are experienced as being like. Note that rejecting *Diaphaneity* was meant to give us the ability to say that features *other than* the worldly objects and qualities can shape how things look to us. But now we seem to have ended up at another rather extreme view, where the qualities we are presented with fail to place any substantive constraints at all on what our experiences are like.

* 1. Simple Austere Naïve Realism

At this stage, it is natural to think that Beck’s particular route to rejecting *Diaphaneity* is too radical. Surely, we can find a more moderate way to give up the principle*.* This is precisely what French & Phillips hope to do. On their view, which they label Simple Austere Naïve Realism (SANR), there is no one-to-one function from presented elements to phenomenal character. But, they insist, this is compatible with those presented elements playing an ineliminable role in fixing the character of our experiences. In fact, they are keen to distinguish their view from Beck’s on precisely these grounds: on Beck’s view, the *ways* in which objects can appear to a subject are themselves logically independent of any objects appearing to subjects. Subjects can instantiate appearance properties in the absence of any objects; and, when they do so, they have experiences with phenomenal characters of certain types.

On SANR, in contrast, *ways* of perceiving cannot be instantiated in the absence of objects and qualities being perceived by a subject, nor do they fix any determinate phenomenal characters in isolation. So a subject can perceive a red car in natural daylight or she can perceive a red car in sodium lighting. These experiences will be different in character, but the difference is explained by appeal to both the qualities that a subject is presented with *and* the way in which the quality is presented. Importantly, perceiving in sodium lighting is not associated with any single kind of experience, the way that instantiating a red appearance is for Beck. If S perceives a red car in sodium lighting, it will look orange to her, but if she perceives a blue car in sodium lighting, it will look green to her. Ways of perceiving fix the character of an experience only in conjunction with the elements that are perceived.

The purported advantage of French & Phillips’ view is that it gives the worldly qualities of objects an ineliminable role in fixing the character of our experiences. But let’s explore this thought a little further. Consider two experiences in which one perceives a red car in sodium lighting and an orange car in ordinary daylight. Let’s assume that things look just the same to the subject in both of these experiences. Why is this the case if there is neither a similarity in presented elements nor a similarity in the ways in which these elements are presented? In one case, we have the car’s redness being presented to us in sodium lighting; in the other, we have a car’s orangeness being presented in daylight. French and Phillips are willing to acknowledge that in both cases the cars *look orange* – they agree that this is the obvious way to characterize the experiences that the subject enjoys. But unlike some diaphanous naïve realists who introduce looks as additional elements that can be presented to the subject, and unlike Beck who treats looks as properties of the subject’s brain, French and Phillips insist that the orange look in each case is just to be identified with the car’s distinct colors, redness and orangeness respectively. “The car’s orange look”, they write, “can be identified with its red color.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

But if the orange look of the orange car is to be identified with its orangeness, and the orange look of the red car is to be identified with its redness, and orangeness is clearly not identical to redness, we are back to needing an explanation for why the two experiences at least seem to have the same phenomenal character. French and Phillips respond in the following way:

In what way is redness similar to orangeness? The answer is that in the circumstances of Car Case [:*S* sees a red car under streetlights; it looks or­ange to her], the subject looking at the red car will be *inclined to find* the actual color of the car before her as more like orangeness than anything else. Thus, the *psychological impact* that the red color of the car has on the subject in Car Case is similar to the *psychological impact* that the orange color of a car has on a subject who sees it in natural daylight—a paradigmatic circumstance for encountering orangeness.[[10]](#footnote-10)

What is this psychological impact that the two cars have on the subject? If it is just a matter of what the subject *believes* about the car’s color—as talk of the subject’s “being inclined to find” suggests—or how she is disposed to act in relation to the cars, then we have located the similarity too far downstream. We need a similarity that is properly *experiential*, that can explain the subject’s downstream beliefs and actions. If, alternatively, we are to treat the “psychological impact” that the colors have on the subject as genuinely experiential in nature, it is not clear how French and Phillips avoid positing a common subjective element between the two cases. And once they do so, it seems like it is really this “psychological impact” on a subject that fixes why the car looks the way that it does on both occasions. The notion of psychological impact now seems to do all the same explanatory work in SANR that Beck’s appearance properties do on NNR.

Would French and Phillips accept my claim that being presented with redness or orangeness can make exactly the same contribution to the phenomenal character of the resulting experiences? Their own take on this question is not entirely clear. They do concede that in genuine cases of subjective indistinguishability, there is a common *experience* that the subject enjoys.[[11]](#footnote-11) Acknowledging that there is an experience in common is compatible with naïve realism, they argue, because it is still the case that there is no “fundamental experiential kind” in common. Rather, they suggest, “the experience in one case will be fundamentally one of seeing a red car in sodium light, the experience in the other case will be fundamentally one of seeing an orange car in daylight.”[[12]](#footnote-12) But what we care about—what *Diaphaneity* is concerned with—is the *phenomenal* kind that these experiences fall under, not their fundamental nature. And given that French and Philips concede that, in both cases, the car looks the same and the *experience* enjoyed is the same, I will interpret them as conceding that the phenomenal character of the two experiences is also the same.[[13]](#footnote-13)

On this interpretation, SANR, like NNR, involves a rejection of both conditionals that make up *Diaphaneity.* It is clear that the view is incompatible with Cdiff🡪Pdiff. SANR is built on the assumption that one and the same set of presented elements can be perceived in different ways, resulting in experiences with different phenomenal characters. But as the discussion above has revealed, the view also must hold that different presented colors and shapes can be experienced in the same way. And so, the view is incompatible with Pdiff🡪Cdiff as well, at least where the relevant difference is a difference in which qualities the subject is presented with.

The question I want to pursue now is whether a naïve realist should be happy with where we have reached. That is: Is it compatible with the key motivations for naïve realism that the specific objects and qualities that a subject is presented with be relevant to individuating, at best, the *fundamental* kind that the experience belongs to but not relevant to individuating the *phenomenal* kind that the experience belongs to? Alternatively, is it compatible with the key motivations for naïve realism that the specific objects and qualities that a subject is presented with only be relevant to fixing which *particulars* we are aware of, and not play any role in fixing how those particulars look? If the presented objects and qualities having such a limited phenomenological role turns out to be compatible with those motivations, perhaps Beck and French & Phillips can just accept everything I have said so far. They might acknowledge that their approach seems initially counterintuitive, but insist that I have not succeeding at pinpointing any significant theoretical costs to this approach*.* In the following section, I take up this kind of defense and argue that there are indeed significant theoretical costs that come with a denial of *Diaphaneity.*

1. Naïve Realism and Demonstrative Knowledge

In *Reference and Consciousness*, John Campbell argues that a naïve realist (or, in his words, a relationalist) view of experience is essential to securing a certain kind of demonstrative knowledge. He begins his discussion with an intuitive analogy. Imagine living in one of a terraced row of houses, where you can hear rather clearly a series of noises coming from the house next door. You’ve never had a look inside but you can hypothesize that certain objects exist entirely on the basis of the sequence of sounds that you hear. Let’s suppose that you hypothesize that a child lives in the house because of the high-pitched cries you often hear emanating through the walls. You may also hypothesize that this child plays with a model railway in the mornings based on the whistles and bells that you hear every day. But now, many months later, you’re finally invited over and you get a look inside. Is there anything new that you learn when you *see* the inside of the house? Campbell writes:

Perhaps the hypotheses you formed had been amply confirmed long before your look inside, so the existence of objects with these particular functional roles [i.e., making a whistling sound, bumping into the wall, etc.] does not get significant further confirmation from your observation. Nor is it that you can now refer to those particular objects but could not refer to them before. You could have referred to those particulars before…The contrast between the knowledge you have now, on the basis of a look at the objects, and the knowledge you had before of the existence of objects with particular functional roles, is that when you see the thing, you are confronted by the individual substance itself. On seeing it, you no longer have knowledge of the object merely as the postulated occupant of a particular functional role. Your experience of the object, when you see it, provides you with knowledge of the categorical grounds of the collections of dispositions you had earlier postulated.[[14]](#footnote-14)

As Campbell points out, there isn’t a difference in whatyou can refer to or what you know or how strong your evidence is. You could already have extremely strong evidence for the belief that a child lives in the house next door, stronger perhaps than any evidence a single visual experience could provide. You could also already refer to the child as the producer of the sounds that you have been hearing. The difference, rather, seems to be a difference in *how* you know what you know or *how* you can refer to the child. Before you get a look inside, you only knew the child *as* the cause of a certain series of sounds. But when you see the child, you are, so to speak, directly confronted with her – you no longer need to identify her as the individual who produces the sounds you hear. You are now directly acquainted with her, you can just refer to her directly as *that child*.

Campbell’s target, in this discussion, is a representationalist view on which perceptions and hallucinations involve experiences of the very same kind. His thought experiment is meant to offer an analogy to the different kinds of knowledge that a relationalist and a common-factor representationalist can accommodate. The takeaway is meant to be something like the following: a common-factor representationalist can only make room for us to know and refer to objects in the world *indirectly*, that is, *as* the typical causes of certain experiences we enjoy. All we can have direct access to are the experiences themselves, but these experiences, in so far as they can exist in the absence of any perceived worldly objects, cannot contain those worldly items as constituents. On a relational view, by contrast, the worldly objects and qualities that I perceive serve as genuine constituents of my experiences. When a subject enjoys a visual experience, she is just confronted with the worldly objects and qualities in experience itself. And so the subject has the ability to directly refer to (and have knowledge of) *that* object, or *that* color.

Will a representationalist who is committed to a common factor view of experience accept this line of reasoning? It’s not clear to me that they will. Let’s assume that they grant that in Campbell’s example, seeing the child directly provides the subject with a special kind of demonstrative access to the child that she lacks when she merely hears the sounds that the child is responsible for.[[15]](#footnote-15) Despite accepting this point about the original example, I think the representationalist is likely to argue that this example serves as a poor analogy for a representationalist view of experience. For the analogy to work, the representational state or experience would have to play the role of the sounds that the resident of the terraced house hears, and the worldly objects that cause that representational state would have to play the role of the child herself.

But, the representationalist will argue, this is not how one ought to understand their view. The key disanalogy is that, on representationalism, a subject is not *aware of* her representational state in the way that Campbell’s subject is *aware of* the noises that emanate from the neighbor’s house. Rather, a representationalist will insist, a subject is only ever directly *aware of* the worldly objects themselves. She is aware of those objects in virtue of *having* certain kinds of experiences or being in certain representational states, but it is not as if the subject must first demonstratively refer to those states, and only then indirectly posit the existence of worldly objects as the causes of those states. On the contrary, the subject can directly demonstrate *what* is represented; that is, the objects and qualities out there in the world. Now of course, the representationalist has to grant that we may sometimes fail to demonstratively pick out anything – namely, when we are in a certain kind of representational state in the absence of the relevant worldly items. But that there can be such failures of reference is a possibility that the relationalist has to concede just as much as the representationalist.

For someone with naïve realist inclinations, this kind of response, offered on behalf of the representationalist, is likely to come across as uncompelling. There seems to be some kind of cheat going on with the notion of awareness that the representationalist is deploying. That is, it seems like they implicitly assume a causal definition of awareness—on which S counts as being aware of *x* so long as *x* is the cause of S’s experience—in order to secure the verdict that the subject is only ever aware of worldly objects and their qualities, and not her representational states themselves. But this is not the notion of awareness that the naïve realist cares about. Rather, we want the notion of awareness to be a phenomenologically robust notion. That is, we want the objects and qualities we are “aware of” to fix what the experience is like for us, to fix, that is, the phenomenal character of the experience. And this is what the common factor theorist cannot accommodate. For it is built into the definition of their view that the presence or absence of the objects of awareness can make no difference to the phenomenal character of the resulting experience.[[16]](#footnote-16)

This point is emphasized more clearly when Campbell moves on to present his actual argument for a relational view of experience. The key idea is that only a relational view allows us to recognize the validity of certain inferential patterns of reasoning. Imagine that you are watching a woman in front of you and you think the following series of thoughts on the basis of your perceptual experiences:

1. That woman is running;
2. That woman is jumping.

On the basis of these thoughts, you then conclude:

1. That woman is running and jumping.

As we have seen, the representationalist can allow for the possibility that you directly demonstrate a particular woman in (1) and (2). Remember, the fact that you must be in some representational state when you do so does not mean that your demonstrative can only indirectly refer to the woman as the cause of that representational state. To the contrary, the representationalist insists that you are able to directly refer to the woman herself in each case. And then, so long as you have in fact demonstrated the same woman in (1) and (2), it just follows that your inference in (3) is valid.

What is missing here, according to the relationalist? The first thing to note is that Campbell is not concerned with whether the inference *is* valid or not; instead, he is primarily interested in the question of how the subject *recognizes* or *understands* the validity of her inference; how, that is, the validity of the inference is apparent to the subject. In order to *recognize* the inference as valid, then, we must *recognize* that it is the same woman across both instances of demonstration. Here is where a difference between the two views begins to emerge. We know that the representationalist, in virtue of being a common factor theorist, cannot insist that the existence or identity of the woman makes a difference to the *phenomenal character* of the subject’s experience. But this is precisely what Campbell seems to be after as a condition on the subject understanding the validity of such a pattern of reasoning. He writes:

The validity of the inference cannot be guaranteed by conscious attention to the object, as conceived on the common factor model, because that would not be enough to secure the existence and uniqueness of the [woman] in question. Experience of the object, conceived on the Relational model, in contrast, does have the capacity to make the validity of these inferences comprehensible to us: *it makes existence and identity over time and across sensory modality transparent to us*.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Campbell suggests that in order for a subject to recognize the validity of the inference in (3), the sameness of the object must be *transparent* to the subject. But this is possible only if the sameness of the object is somehow reflected in the phenomenal character of her experience. While a subject’s phenomenology may indeed *outstrip* what is transparent to her—perhaps attending to the relevant phenomenal aspects is also essential—it is hard to deny that a minimal requirement on a feature being accessible to a subject in experience is that it somehow be reflected in the phenomenology of that experience. For the phenomenal character of an experience, almost by definition, includes those features of a mental state that the subject has access to or can come to know about.

So let us accept, then, that for a subject to be able to recognize the above inference as valid, the sameness of the object needs to be reflected in her phenomenology. We have already considered the question of how particulars can contribute to the phenomenal character of an experience. We have pointed to the fact that our experiences have phenomenological particularity; that is, they are not silent on *who or what*, in particular, I am experiencing. I do not just experience *someone* running and jumping; I experience *Masha* running and jumping. We know that naïve realists think that their view is uniquely suited to explain this feature of phenomenological particularity. On a relationalist analysis, in a series of experiences of Masha, Masha herself is an actual constituent of my phenomenal states and *she* directly shapes how things look to me. First, it is *Masha* who looks to me to be running and then again, *Masha*, who looks to be jumping. That it is the same person over this period of time is just transparent to me through the character of those experiences, in virtue of the fact that in each of them, I am phenomenally presented with one and the same person—Masha. In Campbell’s words, in my experiences, I am confronted “with the individual substance itself.”[[18]](#footnote-18) Given that on a common factor view, in contrast, the character of the experience is constitutively independent of which particular object the subject is actually presented with, the existence or identity of Masha is not something that can be reflected in or tracked by the character of my experiences.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Campbell’s point about the sameness of the object being transparent in experience needs to be handled carefully here. When the subject comes to believe, on the basis of what her experience is like, that it is the same person who is running and jumping, it is not as if she can “claim to know the falsity of various skeptical hypotheses (for example, relating to unobserved multiple substitutions of one object for another over a brief period).”[[20]](#footnote-20) If, unbeknownst to me, Masha was swapped out for her twin, Maria, while I was distracted, it is not as if I could tell that it was no longer Masha who I was seeing. So we need a way of understanding Campbell’s point that the sameness of an object can be transparent to a subject in experience, that does not amount to him claiming that the subject is able to tell such an experience apart from a bad case – a case, for instance, in which I am presented with a series of indistinguishable but distinct particulars.

But this is familiar territory for naïve realists. We know that most naïve realists do not take indistinguishability to always be a good guide to phenomenology. So the fact that a subject can sometimes be misled into thinking that she is having a series of experiences of a single object, when in fact she is not, does not mean that the sameness of the object cannot be phenomenologically apparent to her when she is in fact presented with the same object. On a relational view, an experience that contains Masha as a constituent is just a different phenomenal experience than one that contains her identical twin. If Masha is absent, it cannot be Masha who looks any particular way to me.

The key point here is as follows: for the relationalist to have an argumentative advantage over the representationalist, she must insist that a subject has a special kind of access to the object that the representationalist cannot make room for. We have already seen that the representationalist can allow for direct demonstrative reference to the object. So that can’t be the relevant difference between the two views. A brute appeal to fundamentality won’t really distinguish the views either, for at least two reasons. First, a representationalist can very well concede that perceptions have a fundamental nature distinct from that of their corresponding hallucinations in virtue of having mind-independent objects of awareness that hallucinations lack (or that perceptions of Masha and perceptions of Maria have distinct fundamental natures). The causal connection to the object, in other words, can just be built into the fundamental characterization of a perceptual state. This is entirely compatible with their view that insofar as the *experiences* go, these experiences would be the same. So a mere appeal to fundamentality need not insert any distance between the two views.

Second, and more importantly, even if we reject the proposal that a representationalist can posit a difference in fundamental kind, the naïve realist would need some story about why particular objects being part of the fundamental nature of a perception matters when it comes to how the subject can know and refer to those objects. In other words, the naïve realist would have to establish a link between what is present at the fundamental level and what is subjectively available to the subject. But describing what is subjectively available to a subject just is describing the phenomenal character of her experience. And so a difference in fundamental kinds can only matter for what the subject can know and refer to if that difference shows up, in some way, in the phenomenal character of the experiences. But now that we are back to demanding that the existence of the object matter to the phenomenal character of the subject’s experience, whether it is part of the fundamental nature of the experience or not becomes largely irrelevant. And so we come to the following conclusion: If there is going to be an epistemic or cognitive advantage to thinking of experience in relational terms, this advantage will have to be found in the role that objects play in fixing the character of our experiences. If there is a kind of demonstrative knowledge that only the naïve realist can make room for, it must be of a kind that requires the object’s existence to make a difference to our phenomenology.

The non-diaphanous versions of naïve realism that we have considered so far should have no trouble giving *objects* the phenomenological role that I have outlined above. On both NNR and SANR, particular objects are character-constituting elements of our experiences, such that the existence and persistence of these objects can be read off the character of those experiences. The problem for these views arises when we consider a parallel argument for the case of qualities. For it is not only particular objects that we track, come to know about, and refer to on the basis of our sensory experiences. Our experiences also reveal the colors and shapes of those objects and make those qualities available for thought and reference.

Imagine that you are looking at a bright red cardinal in a tree outside your window. You are transfixed by the color of the bird. You first think:

1. That shade is brilliant.

A moment later you think:

1. That shade is brighter than most shades of red.

Putting these two thoughts together, you infer:

1. That shade is brilliant and brighter than most shades of red.

The inference you make in this case is an inference about a specific shade of redness—let’s call it cardinal red. You infer, on the basis of your experiences, that this shade is both brilliant and brighter than other shades of red. And just like in the case of the object discussed above, here too, you recognize the validity of your inference. You recognize, that is, that you are perceiving the same shade on both occasions.

But how is it that you can recognize this? If we follow our discussion of the case of objects from above it is not enough that it is in fact the same shade that is causing your two experiences and that you can demonstratively refer to the shade that is causing your experience on each occasion. The representationalist can allow for all of that. In the case of objects, Campbell suggests that our ability to recognize the validity of the inference requires the identity of the object to be phenomenologically apparent to the subject. If we extend this point to the case of qualities, we get the verdict that a subject can only recognize that it is the same shade that is presented to her if the sameness of the shade is *phenomenologically* apparent to her. That is, we need the sameness of the shade to be something that the subject can track in the character of her experiences.

Here, the disanalogy between the role that objects and qualities play in fixing our phenomenology becomes relevant again. Objects contribute to the character of our experiences by fixing *which* particulars we are aware of. Masha’s identity is apparent to me just in virtue of it being *her* who appears to me on each occasion. *How* she looks may differ across my experiences—she may appear to first be running, then jumping—but it is, in both instances, the same person appears to be doing these things. Qualities, in contrast, typically do a different kind of work in fixing phenomenal character. The role of qualities is to fix how objects appear. If it is to be apparent to you that you are presented with a certain shade of redness, as opposed to a shade of orangeness, say, the objects you are presented with must look a way that they would not look if it was orangeness that you were presented with. For the existence and identity of the cardinal red color to be phenomenologically apparent to you as you watch the bird outside your window, there must be some distinctive way that the bird looks over that course of experience with respect to its color, a way that it would *not* look if the bird were orange at any point in that course of experience.

But this is precisely what the non-diaphanous versions of naïve realism under consideration fail to secure. Neither Beck’s neurocomputational naïve realism nor French & Phillips’s Simple Austere Naïve Realism can secure the possibility of it being phenomenologically apparent to us that we are perceiving one color as opposed to another, or that we are perceiving the same color over a course of experience. On Beck’s view, the qualities that objects possess play no role in fixing how the particulars we are aware of look; the character of our experience is entirely fixed by which appearance properties we ourselves instantiate. So, the fact that an object continues to look cardinal red to us over a course of experience cannot reveal to us that we are perceiving the same color out there in the world. On Beck’s view, there are no ways that an object looks which are sufficient to distinguish between the subject being presented with a single color—cardinal red—as opposed to a series of different colors. We can of course hypothesize that the sameness in appearances is *caused by* a sameness in color out there in the world, and we may even have excellent evidence in support of this hypothesis. But this is to place the naïve realist in no better a position than her representationalist counterpart. The validity of the inference is *not*, on this view, phenomenologically transparent to the subject.

Despite their best attempts, French and Phillips don’t fare any better. While they continue to insist that the character of an experience is ultimately fixed by which qualities you are aware of and the way in which those qualities are perceived by you, it still remains the case that *which* color a subject is perceiving, and whether it is the *same* color over a series of experiences, cannot be apparent to her on the basis of her phenomenology. On my reading of SANR, being presented with different qualities can result in experiences with the same phenomenal character, and so we cannot read off which specific quality we are presented with on the basis of the character of those experiences. No aspect of your *phenomenology* can make it apparent that you are perceiving an object that is, specifically, cardinal red in color as opposed to some other shade of red, orange or green. And likewise, no course of experiences can make phenomenologically apparent that you are perceiving the *same* color—cardinal redness—as opposed to a series of different colors.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Non-diaphanous naïve realists may push back on this line of thought by suggesting that the constitutive claim that they are committed to is enough, by itself, to explain how the subject can recognize the validity of the inferences under discussion. On this proposal, we can explain how the subject recognizes that it is the same shade of red just by pointing to the fact that the relevant shade is a *constituent* of each of the relevant experiences, even if this sameness is not tracked by any feature of how things look to the subject. So even though the bird first looks cardinal red and then looks orange, so long as cardinal redness is a constituent of both experiences, the subject can recognize the validity of the inference that it is a single shade that she is aware of. The proponent of this approach might also point out that the constitutive claim is one that the representationalist cannot endorse and so it locates an epistemic advantage that is unique to the naïve realist.

The problem with this strategy is that it’s just not clear how the same shade being a constituent of the relevant experiences is enough to explain how the subject can *recognize* that it is the same shade across those experiences. For the latter to be possible, the fact that it is the same shade must have some impact that is apparent to the subject. And it can only do this by contributing something to the character of the experience. To see this point, imagine an identity theorist who holds that certain bits of neural machinery are constituents of our conscious states; they are what our conscious states are made up of. Surely, such an identity theorist need not accept that facts about one’s neural machinery are in any sense transparent to a subject just in virtue of their being in such conscious states. Constitution is cheap, in other words. An entity being a constituent of an experience makes room for knowledge and reference only if the constituent shows up in the *character* of that experience. And to once again emphasize a point I have made before, the way qualities impact the character of experience is by impacting how the objects of experience appear to the subject. If entirely different qualities can have the same impact on how an object appears, it’s just not clear how the subject can recognize that it is cardinal redness that she is presented with, and not some shade of orange or green.

One might wonder why one should accept the requirement that a subject be able to recognize the existence and sameness of the objects and qualities she perceives from within her experience. Surely one can have demonstrative knowledge and demonstrative reference without these abilities. I can, for instance, refer to an individual that I see as *that* individualwithout knowing whether it is the same individual I saw a moment ago. A perceptual experience may even be said to put me in contact with a certain individual, thereby giving me the ability to have demonstrative thoughts about *that* individual, even if the very same kind of experience could, on a different occasion, put me in contact with a different individual. Similarly, in the case of qualities, one might think that I can refer to a quality as *that* color without knowing that it is the *same* color as the one I saw a moment ago. Similarly, one might suggest that an experience can put me in contact with cardinal redness, thereby giving me the ability to have demonstrative thoughts about *that* color, even though the very same kind of experience could, on a different occasion, put me in contact with a shade of orange. On each occasion, I could think of *that color—*cardinal red on one occasion, blood orange on another—that it is brilliant.[[22]](#footnote-22)

I do not want to take on the burden of convincing a reader that these cases fail to be genuine instances of demonstrative reference or knowledge. I am happy to allow that they are. The dialectical problem though is that these abilities are just as well explained by the representationalist as they are by the naïve realist. So if our goal is to find a set of epistemic achievements that only the naïve realist can explain, these basic forms of demonstrative reference and knowledge won’t do the job. Furthermore, the point that Campbell is making is that we *do* have the more full-blooded referential abilities we have been discussing. We do, that is, typically have the ability to recognize which object or color we are perceiving and recognize that it is the same object or the same color over time. It is these more sophisticated cognitive accomplishments that are difficult to secure without an appeal to naïve realism, and so it is these more sophisticated achievements that naïve realists should be particularly keen to make room for.

My conjecture is that many naïve realists who are critical of *Diaphaneity* find a version of Campbell’s argument compelling when it comes to particular *objects*. That is, they think that naïve realism is uniquely poised to explain the kind of knowledge that we have of mind-independent objects and the specific way in which we can demonstratively refer to those mind-independent objects. These kinds of cognitive payoffs are often laid out as some of the key motivations for the view. But, as I have suggested, we can secure this theoretical advantage only if we insist that our knowledge of, and reference to, objects come *via* the phenomenal character of our experiences. Most naïve realists seem to implicitly agree with this claim in the case of objects, when they insist that particular objects constitute, and thereby shape, phenomenal states themselves.

But if that is right, why should naïve realists be willing to adopt such a radically different stance on our epistemic and referential relations to the qualities that we perceive? Surely, naïve realists of all stripes agree that experience provides us knowledge of, and referential access to, not only the worldly objectswe perceive but also their qualities. But if these naïve realists agree that a condition on such knowledge and reference is that the existence and identity of objects be phenomenologically manifest to us, what grounds do they have to reject this condition when it comes to worldly qualities? In other words, if one’s commitment to naïve realism is motivated, at least in part, by the thought that genuine knowledge and reference to worldly items requires the existence and identity of those items to be manifest to us in experience, then so long as we agree that such knowledge and reference extends to worldly objects *and* qualities, this requirement must hold just as much for the latter as it does for the former. If this is right, then given that the role that qualities play in contributing to the character of our experiences is to fix how the particulars we are aware of *look*, the naïve realist must accept a view on which the existence and identity of a certain quality is manifest in how things look. This is possible only if the specific qualities we are aware of *differentially* fix how things look to the subject of experience.

1. Qualifying Diaphaneity

So far, I have argued that in order to maintain the epistemic and referential motivations for naïve realism, we must accept that a difference in qualities results in a difference in how things look. In this section, I will argue that accepting this only requires a qualified commitment to *Diaphaneity*.

The full-blown version of *Diaphaneity* requires that the phenomenal character of two experiences can differ *if and only if* there is a difference in the elements that the subject is presented with in those experiences. The biconditional is composed of the following two conditionals:

1. Pdiff🡪Cdiff: Necessarily, if two experiences differ in their presented elements, they must differ in phenomenal character.
2. Cdiff🡪Pdiff: Necessarily, if two experiences differ in their phenomenal character, they must differ in presented elements.

The argument from the previous sections requires that we accept Pdiff🡪Cdiff with respect to both the objects *and* the qualities we are presented with. A difference in which object a subject is presented with must be tracked by a difference in the phenomenal character of the resulting experiences. But likewise, I have argued, a difference in which color or shape a subject is presented with must be tracked by a difference in the phenomenal character of the resulting experiences.

But, accepting Pdiff🡪Cdiff does not require us to also accept Cdiff🡪Pdiff. That is, we can accept the argument from the previous section while nonetheless rejecting the claim that a difference in phenomenal character always implies a difference in presented elements. In other words, upholding the key motivations for naïve realism outlined above only requires one of the two conditionals that make up *Diaphaneity*. Naïve realists only need to accept that the presence of redness—as opposed to orangeness, say—can be read off the phenomenal character of our experiences; they do not have to to insist that there is only *one* experience that can successfully indicate the presence of redness. If we accept Pdiff🡪Cdiff while rejecting Cdiff🡪Pdiff, we reject the one-to-one correspondence between character and presented elements that *Diaphaneity* posits. But contra Beck and French & Phillips, we need not replace a one-to-one correspondence between those notions with a many-to-many correspondence. The qualified defense of *Diaphaneity* I have presented in this paper remains open to a one-to-many correspondence from presented elements to phenomenal characters while denying a one-to-many correspondence from phenomenal characters to presented elements.[[23]](#footnote-23)

On this kind of qualified commitment of *Diaphaneity*, being presented with cardinal redness, say, fixes a *range* of phenomenal characters that are unique to cardinal redness. If a subject enjoys an experience with any one of these characters, the only property she can be presented with is cardinal redness. This kind of view allows that there are different ways in which one can be presented with a property (a rejection of Cdiff🡪Pdiff) while nonetheless insisting that a difference in presented elements necessitate a difference in the kind of experience the subject enjoys.

To see what I mean, go back to the case in which you are watching a cardinal in the tree outside your window. Even though the illumination conditions change as the bird hops from one branch to another, and even though these differences do result in differences in your experience, the bird nonetheless continues to look cardinal red to you. This is a case of perspectival variation that does not lead to you suffering any kind of illusion. In each of these cases, even though you enjoy different experiences, it continues to be transparent to you that you are presented with one and the same color. Cases such as these suggest that there may indeed be different ways in which a subject can be presented with a single color, where the ways in question need not conceal from the subject which quality she is presented with. As long as the bird continues to look cardinal red to the subject through these changes in the character of her experience, we can conclude that it is the bird’s cardinal redness that the subject is being presented with.

Contrast a case of non-illusory perspectival variation with a case of genuine illusion now. Unbeknownst to you, there is a movie set that has taken residence across the street from you and they have set up some old-fashioned sodium streetlamps. The very same cardinal that you saw a moment ago in your tree now flies across the street and starts to look orange to you. Your experience is different, but unlike the change in the previous example, this change *does* affect your ability to know what color the bird is; it affects your ability to see that the bird’s color has remained the same throughout.

Rejecting Cdiff🡪Pdiff because we want to maintain that the subject can be presented with cardinal redness in cases of perspectival variation does not undermine the motivations for naïve realism. Rejecting Pdiff🡪Cdiff because we want to maintain that a subject can be presented with cardinal redness despite the bird looking orange to her does.

Once we acknowledge the phenomenon of non-illusory perspectival variation – once we acknowledge, that is, that there are a number of experiences a subject can enjoy, all of which count as the subject being presented with one and the same color, how are we to demarcate which experiences count as cases of genuine presentation and which one’s don’t? One might worry that any way of answering this question will be *ad hoc* or unprincipled. But here’s where an appeal to vision science can come in handy. To see what I mean, return briefly to the case of objects. Campbell himself appeals to facts about our visual systems and how perceptual processing works in order to identify the conditions under which an object can be made available to consciousness. He relies on details of Treisman’s Feature Integration Theory, for instance, to elaborate what kind of low-level perceptual processing must take place in order for a particular object to be available to a subject at the level of conscious experience. We know that the naïve realist resists any proposal to identify these lower-level perceptual states with our conscious experiences, but they can take the states in question as enabling conditions for such conscious perception to occur. We can appeal to the details of the psychological theories of perceptual processing, then, to demarcate cases in which we successfully track a single object and cases in which we fail to.

In a similar vein, we can look at facts about how our visual systems process qualities like color and shape to determine when we are consciously presented with and able to track a particular color or shape. We know, for example, that our perceptual systems have the ability to track stable colors and shapes in the environment despite significant differences in the proximal input caused by those colors and shapes. When I walk around a table, even though the proximal stimulus on my retina changes quite dramatically, I do not experience the table as changing in shape. Contra Russell and Hume, the table continues to look rectangular to me.[[24]](#footnote-24) Similarly with color, when I look at a red cardinal flying across a dappled sky, despite significant changes in the properties encoded by my retina, the cardinal continues to look red. Perceptual psychology gives us robust explanations of how and when our perceptual system is ableto track such constancies. These explanations can give us precisely what we are looking for. They give us a way to demarcate those cases in which our experiences, despite potentially differing in some aspects of their phenomenal character, nonetheless count as presenting the same color or shape from cases that involve genuine illusions in which we fail to track sameness of color and shape across changes in viewing conditions.

The explanations from perceptual psychology undergird what we already have access to in conscious experience: while some changes in viewing conditions are compatible with a red object still looking red, other changes in viewing conditions actually distort what color or shape the object looks to be. The mechanisms underlying constancy give us a way to determine where to draw the line without appealing to characterizations of the object as “looking red” or “looking square” – characterizations that some may find question-begging. Just as in the case of objects, these perceptual processes *enable* conscious experience of a particular color; they determine *when* we will be able to track the sameness of the color and when we will be misled. But it is the conscious experience itself that makes the color manifest to us, that makes it possible for us to recognize that our patterns of reasoning about the world are valid.

1. Conclusion

Naïve realism has long been an unpopular view. Recently, some philosophers have tried to sanitize the view by excising what they take to be its most problematic elements. For those engaged in this project, *Diaphaneity* has become a leading candidate for the chopping block. The strongest formulation of the thesis has it that there can be differences in phenomenal character if and only if there are differences in which elements a subject is presented with. *That* thesis is indeed hard to stomach: surely, there is no single way that a color or shape must be presented to a subject in order for it to be perceived. In order to avoid this implausible consequence, philosophers have recommended throwing the principle out altogether.

In this paper, I have argued that naïve realists should not take up that recommendation. First, I have highlighted that one can excise the most counterintuitive aspect of *Diaphaneity* without giving it up altogether. That is, we can allow for there to be more than one way in which a color or shape can be presented to a subject, while nonetheless maintaining that different colors or shapes must be presented in different ways. Second, I have shown that this latter component of *Diaphaneity* is absolutely crucial to the naïve realist project. Without it, naïve realists are unable to uphold the phenomenological and epistemic motivations for their view.

Perhaps non-diaphanous naïve realists don’t care about the motivations I have discussed in the paper. If that is right, they need to provide an alternative set of motivations for their version of naïve realism. Much of the existing literature arguing against *Diaphaneity* is written in a defensive spirit. Beck, for instance, is keen to show that naïve realism is compatible with certain empirical findings that purportedly reveal our experiences of sensible qualities to be internally dependent.[[25]](#footnote-25) French and Phillips are keen to chart out an “austere” version of the view that accommodates illusions in a metaphysically lightweight way. The risk, though, in adopting this defensive posture is that we lose track of the reasons we had for endorsing the view in the first place. What I hope to have shown is that naïve realism, as a metaphysical thesis about the structure of sensory experience, is only as compelling as its motivations: there is little reason to hold on to the metaphysical thesis if one can no longer accommodate those motivations. If I am right, some of the key motivations for naïve realism require at least a qualified version of *Diaphaneity*. Better to remain unpopular and true to one’s principles than to retreat to a more palatable, but less philosophically powerful position.[[26]](#footnote-26)

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1. These two principles line up, respectively, with French and Phillips's *Sameness Principle* and *Difference Principle.* (Beck 2019a) calls the version of naïve realism that adopts *Diaphaneity* ‘Selectionism’. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. (French and Phillips 2020) say that the focus of their paper is the *Difference Principle*.But if I am right, the version of naïve realism they develop in fact involves a rejection of both principles. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. (Moore 1903, 444). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. (Martin 2015, 175-176). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. (Beck 2019a, 627). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Beck (2019b) for details. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Hallucinations can strike us as being of particulars, but their ability to do this is derivative on our having perceived those particulars before. See (Johnston 2004) for a discussion of how hallucinations only have objects in this secondary, derivative sense. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Again, Beck will likely deny this characterization and insist that a difference in *which* color is presented is a difference in which relata stand in the perceptual appearance relation, and that, on NNR, this just definitionally amounts to a difference in phenomenal character. What I am suggesting is that he cannot just build this into the definition of the view *unless* he gives us a positive account of *how* a difference in qualities can lead to a difference in character. Given the asymmetry between objects and qualities mentioned above, the only work qualities can do is fix, in some way or other, how objects appear to us, and this work, on Beck’s view, is entirely done by the neurocomputationally-determined appearance properties. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. (French and Phillips 2020, 12). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. (French and Phillips 2020, 12). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. (French and Phillips 2020, 14). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. (French and Phillips 2020, 14). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. French and Phillips conclude that there is a common experience here because, following Martin (2004), they rely on indiscriminability as the relevant criterion to individuate experiences. But unlike Martin, who offers a *purely* negative characterization of hallucinations that possess the indistinguishability property, French and Phillips are happy to grant that illusions have positive phenomenal character. Once you grant that these states have positive phenomenal character, *and* you grant that everything *looks the same* in both cases, it becomes almost impossible to insist that the phenomenal character of the two experiences is nonetheless different. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. (Campbell 2002, 115-6). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Interestingly, Campbell’s case of the terraced houses assumes a sort of Berkeleian view of the relation between sounds and the objects that produce them: “for instance, when I hear a coach drive along the streets, immediately I perceive only the sound; but, from the experience I have had that such a sound is connected with a coach, I am said to hear the coach. It is nevertheless evident that, in truth and strictness, nothing can be *heard* but *sound;* and the coach is not then properly perceived by sense, but suggested from experience.”(Berkeley 1949, 204) [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. At this stage, a common factor representationalist will likely argue that particular objects and qualities are not merely the causes of my experience; rather, they show up in the content of those experiences. They will suggest that I can have an experience *as of* Masha and thereby have *Masha* show up to me within the character of my experience in virtue of it being *Masha* that is represented. This is compatible with their being common factor theorists because Masha can “show up” in this way in cases of perception *and* hallucination. The problem with this approach is that, at least on standard versions of the view, *all that it is* for Masha to “show up” in the content of a representational state is for her to be the typical cause of the subject’s state. But as we’ve been suggesting, just being the extrinsic *cause* of a subject’s state does not in any way make that cause phenomenally accessible to the subject. So once again the representationalist seems to be deploying illegitimate vocabulary to describe their view. Much more needs to be said here to fully flesh out the worry that externalistically individuated contents cannot be within the subject’s ken in the right way. My goal in this paper is *not* to provide a full defense of Campbell’s style of argument. Rather, my primary goal is to show that this kind of argument for naïve realism, which many naïve realists have themselves found compelling, requires a commitment to certain aspects of *Diaphaneity.* [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Campbell, 2002, 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Campbell, 2002, 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Some representationalists do embrace object-dependent notions of content. Burge, for instance, argues that a perceptual state that is tokened by Mashawill have a different content than a state that is tokened by her twin, Maria or a state that is not tokened by any individual in the world at all. (See (Burge 2010)) Crucially, though, Burge does not think that this difference results in a difference in the phenomenal character of the two experiences – this is why he is still a common factor theorist when it comes to the character of perceptions and hallucinations. Given that the vast majority of representationalists accept that hallucinations and perceptions have the same phenomenology, they cannot accept that the existence or identity of an object makes a difference to the *character* of the experience, even if they accept that it makes a difference to its total content. They typically achieve this bifurcation by arguing that the character of the experience is fixed by some narrower aspect of the content of the relevant state. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Campbell, 2002, 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Again, it is important to remember that the point is not about the possibility of being misled. Rather the point is about whether there is a distinctive phenomenal state (or set of phenomenal states) that corresponds to the presentation of the color red, even if I may sometimes mistakenly take myself to be in this state when in fact I am not. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Alford-Duguid (2020) puts forth this kind of view when he argues that perception of properties (like perception of objects) must be tolerant of a certain degree of misperception. He argues that, at least for some pairs of F and G, a subject can perceive a property F and think thoughts about F despite suffering an illusion in which the object appears G. For example, S can be said to perceive the roundness of a vase even when it looks oval to her, and she can be said to think thoughts about the vase’s roundness, such as “I mistook *that shape* for oval, whereas now I see it as round.” (5) It’s not clear to me that we should interpret these thoughts as thoughts about *roundness* (as opposed to thoughts about that object’s shape, whatever it might be). But even if we grant Alford-Duguid’s point, we must recognize that such a misled subject has a fairly minimal kind of perceptual access to the property in question, a kind of access that is far too thin to secure the kinds of epistemic payoffs that Campbell is interested in. And so if the claim is that naïve realism is specifically suited to explain those thicker epistemic abilities—which include being able to know *which* property is being perceived and being able to recognize that it is the same property over time—then the naïve realist cannot settle for the kind of thin (explicitly non-diaphanous) notion of perception that Alford-Duguid is working with. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Note that it is still open to a proponent of *Diaphaneity* to defend Cdiff🡪Pdiff on independent grounds. Naïve realists who posit additional appearance properties may indeed choose to defend Cdiff🡪Pdiff and thereby defend the full-blown version of *Diaphaneity.* In this paper, my goal has merely been to extricate the minimal components of the thesis that are necessary to secure the key motivations for the view. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. (Hume 1975; Bertrand Russell 1912) [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. See Pautz (2021) for a detailed development of the argument for internal dependence. See Epstein (forthcoming) for a response. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. I first began thinking about *Diaphaneity* and its relation to naïve realism as a graduate student at UC Berkeley, thanks in large part to many conversations with Mike Martin and John Campbell. The conference on New Waves in Relationalism, organized by Farid Masrour and Ori Beck in the summer of 2021, gave me the opportunity to return to some of these issues in relation to more recent literature on the topic. I want to thank the organizers and participants of that conference for much stimulating discussion. A special thanks to Ori Beck, Craig French, Farid Masrour, and Ian Phillips for their thought-provoking contributions to the conference, and to Ori and Farid for their detailed comments on an earlier draft. Additional thanks to Alex Kerr and Dominic Alford-Duguid for conversations that have helped refine the details of this paper. As always, I am indebted to Peter Epstein for his extremely detailed feedback at every stage of the process. Finally, the entirety of this paper was written while I was a fellow at the National Humanities Center. My time at the center was made possible by the William J. Bouwsma Fellowship and the National Endowment of the Humanities, and I am grateful to everyone affiliated with the Center for giving me the opportunity to spend a year there. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the national Endowment for the Humanities. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)