

## Can Perceptual Experience Be Both Representational and Relational?\*

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### **Abstract**

The representationalist thesis that perceptual experience has content has been recently criticized by a group of philosophers who take perceptual experience to be fundamentally relational. Interestingly enough, some representationalist responses to this criticism are not denying relationalism but trying to reconcile its main theses with their notion of experiential content. In this paper, however, I argue that this compatibilist attempt to reconcile the two views cannot succeed. It will be shown that even the minimal commitments to the notion of experiential content proposed by a compatibilist like Susanna Siegel are still in tension with the core relationalist theses. Then the two views are in fact competing views within a debate of the metaphysical structure of perceptual experience.

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## 1. Introduction

The philosophical debate about the metaphysical structure of perceptual experience has entered into a new phase when a group of philosophers revived an old view once rejected by the sense datum theorist.<sup>1)</sup> This view has been called by numerous names, such as *naïve realism*, *the relational view*, *austere relationalism*, and so on. For the sake of clarity, I call it *relationalism about perceptual experience* or *relationalism* for short. Roughly put, the main thesis of the view (and its variants) is that perceptual experience consists in nothing more than the subject being perceptually related to the mind-independent world. It is understandable that its proponents advocate their view by criticizing representationalism, which has been the most popular view of perceptual experience during the last couple of decades. Unlike relationalism, representationalism has it that perceptual experience has representational content, such that it represents the world as being a certain way. This notion of representational content in representationalism has been under attack by several relationalists.<sup>2)</sup>

Some philosophers, however, think that this debate between relationalism and representationalism about perceptual experience is futile. In particular, it is argued that the views are perfectly compatible,

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1) See Campbell (2002), Martin (2002 and 2004), Travis (2004), Brewer (2006, 2011), Fish (2009), Logue (2012), and Genone (2014) for various arguments for this view. For a traditional criticism from the sense datum theory, see Price (1964).

2) See Travis (2004) and Brewer (2006) for the relevant criticisms.

or mutually complementary even, within a single account of perceptual experience. These compatibilists typically say that the relationalist's resistance to the notion of experiential content is misguided and they should welcome the notion for their own benefit. In this paper, however, I shall argue that this compatibilist approach to the debate is untenable. That is, relationalists are right to forsake the notion of experiential content for their relationalist framework.

This paper consists of three parts. In Section 2, I first put some preliminary remarks on the current debate about perceptual experience. The section mainly focuses on interpretive issues of each view, preventing possible misunderstandings. In section 3, I discuss the main features of relationalism about perceptual experience with which these compatibilists must reconcile their representational view. In Section 4, I present a compatibilist argument in detail and the reason why it cannot succeed. The compatibilist argument on which I shall focus is Susanna Siegel's. She is not the only compatibilist but her argument comes with a minimal commitment to representationalism compared to others in the literature. My criticisms of her argument, however, identify a certain issue in choosing among different versions of relationalism. I shall address this complication at the end.

## 2. Preliminary Remarks

Before going into the details of each view that this paper mainly concerns, some preliminary remarks are in order.

First, it must be said that relationalism and representationalism

formulated in this paper are to be understood as views of the metaphysical structure of perceptual experience.<sup>3)</sup> They are proposed answers to the following question: what fundamentally constitutes the kind of mental state that we refer to by the term ‘perceptual experience’? Each view in this debate seeks for a fundamental fact or facts about perceptual experience. This proposed fact might well be used to account for other features of perceptual experience, such as its sui generis phenomenology and/or belief generation. But the debate itself only concerns its metaphysical structure.

Even with this clarification in mind, there still leaves much room for different interpretations of both views. But some weak interpretations of representationalism must be set aside from the outset to prevent the debate from being too trivial.<sup>4)</sup> To illustrate, consider the following interpretation of representationalism:

(WEAK) A perceptual experience  $E$  has content if and only if there is a proposition  $p$  associated with  $E$ , such that the subject can use  $p$  to report informatively the way things perceptually appear to her in virtue of having  $E$ .

Suppose that you are looking at a ripe tomato placed in front of you. When someone asks you about what you see or the way the thing visually appears to you, you might use a proposition that there is a

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3) Both representationalism (or intentionalism) and relationalism are often formulated as a theory of the phenomenal character of perceptual experience. Although the metaphysical structure of perceptual experience and its phenomenal character are closely related topics, this paper mainly focuses on its metaphysical structure unless the latter is relevant for a discussion at hand.

4) Similar line of thoughts can be found in Pautz (2009) and Schellenberg (2011).

red, bulgy thing in front of you. According to WEAK, this is enough for your experience to have content. Note, however, that WEAK does not tell us anything about what fundamentally constitutes perceptual experience, such that almost anyone can accept it. As Schellenberg (2011) points out, a correct diagnosis seems to be that “the thesis that such a content can be articulated and associated with the experience does not entail that the relevant experience has content in any substantive sense of ‘has’” (p, 729).

In order not to make the debate trivial, I make explicit two necessary conditions for perceptual experience to have content. These conditions are also intended to reveal minimal representationalist commitments for compatibilists to start with since most compatibilists are representationalists. First, perceptual experience has content only if it is constitutively determined by its content. One might take this condition for experiential content to be unnecessarily strong, but this condition seems almost inevitable for a compatibilist project to accommodate the relationalist framework. Since all relationalists argue that perceptual experience is constitutively determined by its object, either physical objects and/or their properties, no relationalist would consider compatibilism without this particular constraint. Secondly, perceptual experience has content only if it is fallible. Although perceptual experience typically informs the subject about the world more or less accurately, representationalists argue that it has accuracy conditions like belief. For instance, when you see a straight stick half immersed in water, it will look bent. That is, your visual experience misrepresents the stick as being bent when it is in fact straight. To capture this, representationalists typically say that perceptual experience

is false or inaccurate when its representational content is. The details about how perceptual experience has these properties might vary among representationalists, but all compatibilist arguments clearly accept these conditions either implicitly or explicitly.<sup>5)</sup> From now on, any weaker interpretation of representationalism that fails to take any stance on these matters will be set aside.

In addition, it will be helpful to note that there is a terminological difference between the two views and also among different versions of relationalism. When representationalists use the term ‘perceptual experience,’ they often mean three different kinds of mental phenomena: (1) veridical perception, (2) illusion, and (3) hallucination. So when they say that perceptual experience has content, it applies to them all. Veridical perception has true or accurate content while illusion and hallucination do not. As in our stick example, an illusory content is inaccurate because the perceived object fails to have the property it purports to have. A hallucinatory content is inaccurate because there is no perceived object whatsoever. Unlike representationalists, however, relationalists typically distinguish only two different kinds of mental phenomena, the good case and the bad case. For all relationalists, the good case includes what representationalists take to be veridical perceptions; and some also allow some illusory experiences to be a

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5) Compatibilists like Susanna Schellenberg and Heather Logue explicitly endorse these two conditions in their respective compatibilist projects. See Schellenberg (2011) and Logue (2014) for the details of their views. Siegel’s compatibilist view is less explicit on these conditions but given her commitment to representationalism (*the content view* in her label) and targeted versions of relationalism on which she mainly focuses, these two conditions are clearly required. More on her view later.

good case.<sup>6)</sup> Every relationalist agrees that hallucination is the bad case. Under these classifications, however, relationalism only aims to explain the metaphysical structure of the good case while representationalism is a view of experiential states in general.<sup>7)</sup>

Then, what do relationalists say about the bad case? This question demands an introduction of another view in the vicinity of relationalism, that is, disjunctivism. As M. G. F. Martin (2004) says, “[t]he prime reason for endorsing disjunctivism is to block the rejection of . . . *Naïve Realism*.” (p. 38). As mentioned, a relationalism such as naïve realism holds that the good case fundamentally consists of the subject’s standing in a perceptual relation to the actual constituents of the mind-independent world. Hallucination, by definition, belongs to the bad case in which such constituent is absent. Since relationalism does not aim to explain the bad case of experience, disjunctivism complements relationalism by holding that the good case like veridical perceptions and the bad case like hallucinations are fundamentally different kinds of mental state and require different explanations. For there must be two different theories if experience comprises two fundamentally distinct kinds of mental states. For instance, M. G. F. Martin, as a disjunctivist himself, argues that we can only give a negative explanation about the bad case. That is, it must be explained by its negative features with respect to the good case, such as its

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6) For relationalist accounts of illusion as the good case, See Brewer (2011) and Genone (2014).

7) This is also a major difference between a traditional sense datum theory and relationalism. Although both views see perceptual experience as being fundamentally relational, only the former takes its object to be mind-dependent so as to provide a unified account of experiential states including hallucination.

subjective indiscriminability from its veridical counterpart. According to him, the only viable thing we can say about the bad case is that the subject cannot tell the difference between a hallucination and its veridical counterpart based on how things phenomenally appear to him. The question about how successfully disjunctivism supports relationalism, however, is beyond the scope of this paper. The main question here is whether relationalism and representationalism are compatible views even as an account of veridical perception (or the good case). Thus, I shall limit our discussion to veridical perception from now on and examine their compatibility even within such limited scope.

### 3. Relationalism about Perceptual Experience

Compatibilism holds that relationalism and representationalism are compatible; thus the following two claims can be both true in a single account of perceptual experience:

- (1) Perceptual experience fundamentally consists in the subject being perceptually related to the mind-independent world, and
- (2) perceptual experience has representational content.<sup>8)</sup>

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8) Admittedly, there seems to be a simple compatibilist solution right from the beginning if we construe the key notions here in certain ways. For instance, if we construe representational content as information brought about by our perceptual systems and perceptual relation as a purely causal relation between the subject and the external world, we can simply call it a day and move on. For almost anyone in the debate would accept them no matter how their

In this section, our main focus will be on (1) and its further relationalist commitments that pose apparent threats against the compatibilist project.

(1) says that whenever a perceptual experience (the good case) occurs, a certain kind of perceptual relation necessarily holds between the subject and her physical environment. The first thing to clarify in understanding (1) seems to be what relationalists mean by “perceptual relation”. I suspect that the notion is primitive, resisting a further analysis. But since many relationalists derive strong claims against representationalism from this notion, it will be helpful to see what they say about the notion. Bill Brewer, one of the adamant proponents of relationalism, says that “... in perceptual experience, a person is simply presented with the actual constituents of the physical world themselves” (2006, p. 169). Here he takes the notion to be a simple presentation of the subject’s physical environment. Charles Travis, another relationalist, similarly says that “perception, ... , simply places our surroundings in view; affords us awareness of them” (2004, p. 65). Right after this remark, Travis also adds that in virtue of having a perceptual experience, “I simply confront what is there” (p. 65).

With these remarks on the relation in mind, it seems clear that both of these relationalists particularly emphasize a cognitively passive aspect of perceptual experience. A simple presentation of the subject’s surroundings or a mere confrontation of the things around us does not seem to require much of cognitively active work on the

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metaphysical views of perception are. But as we shall see shortly, even compatibilists have more restrictive notions in mind for these key terms. Thanks to anonymous referee for prompting these clarificatory comments.

subject's part. To be sure, the subject is also a relatum of the perceptual relation. But as I see it, most of relationalists do not want to attribute to the perceiving subject any sophisticated cognitive operations essential for other mental activities like judgment and imagination. This also shows that relationalists take perceptual experience to be a distinct mental module from belief. One might think that this is a particularly plausible part of the view since it can naturally explain the primitive character of perception relative to these other mental activities. Other animals might fail to form a judgment or belief about the world as we do given their limited mental capacities but they do perceive the same mind-independent world. Let us call this relationalist conception of perceptual relation *RELATION*:

(RELATION) The perceptual relation that the subject holds in virtue of having a perceptual experience is passively receptive and cognitively primitive.

RELATION is crucial for our discussion since it motivates other relationalist claims that are the most hostile towards the notion of experiential content.

As briefly mentioned above, representationalists focus on two characteristics of perceptual experience: (1) it represents the world as being a certain way and (2) it has accuracy conditions. To be fair, both of these characteristics of perceptual experience are remarkably intuitive. We are correctly informed about the way things are in virtue of having a veridical experience. As in belief, there seems to be something about the world that an experience conveys to us. Using the

previous example, when you perceive a red tomato located in front of you, your experience correctly represents to you the way your environment is, that is, that there is a red, bulgy thing in front of you. Moreover, the perceptual experience could have misrepresented the world. What they convey to us might have been false or inaccurate as we always take illusions or hallucinations to be a genuine possibility. Then, each experience necessarily comes with a set of conditions that specify the way the world should be for it to be accurate.

On the face of it, however, these characteristics are in tension with RELATION. If perceptual experience is essentially constituted by a perceptual relation characterized by RELATION, it is something that simply occurs whenever the perceptual relation holds between the subject and the mind-independent world. You are either perceptually related to the tomato or you are not. How come being perceptually related to the tomato and its visible properties is taken to be representational? The tomato cannot represent itself unlike its photos or an English word 'tomato' does. So it is not surprising that relationalists are particularly unsympathetic to the notion of representational content. As Brewer (2006) says:

Perceiving is not a matter of being saddled with representational content, however world-dependent this may be. 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. (p. 172)

Similarly, Martin (2004) remarks:

The Naïve Realist, however, claims that our sense experience of the world is, at least in part, non-representational. Some of the objects of perception—the concrete individuals, their properties, the events these partake in—are constituents of the experience. ... In this, sense perception contrasts with imagining and thought. (p. 39)

Travis (2004) also argues:

To take things to be thus and so just is to represent them to oneself as that way. Such representing is *all* in the attitude.” (p. 60)

All relationalists here seem to criticize the representational conception of perceptual experience. Perceptual experience is a distinct cognitive state from other representational states such as belief. Belief is typically construed as a propositional attitude, a mental state of having an attitude towards a representational content like propositions. But perceptual experiences do not represent the world as a belief does. It is not an attitude although it typically brings about such states.

Similarly, RELATION also leads relationalists to argue that perceptual experience is not fallible. It is not something that might have been false in a sense in which a person’s true belief about the world might have been had the world been different. In the relationalist conception of perceptual experience, the same perceptual experience cannot hold had the subject’s environment been different. Although some perceptual experiences might be misleading when they typically bring about false

beliefs as we know in certain cases of illusions, they are not themselves false or inaccurate. For instance, Brewer (2006) says:

The intuitive idea is that, in perceptual experience, a person is simply presented with the actual constituents of the physical world themselves. Any errors in her world-view which result are products of the subject's responses to this experience, however automatic, natural or understandable in retrospect these responses may be. *Error*, strictly speaking, given how the world actually is, is never an essential feature of experience itself. (p. 169)

Similarly, Travis (2004) says:

Perception leads me astray only where I judge erroneously, failing to make out what I confront for what it is. The possibility of error thus arises with, and only with, autorepresentation. (p. 65).<sup>9)</sup>

Both Brewer and Travis here seem to argue that fallibility is not a fundamental character of perceptual experience. Note, however, that this claim is a downright rejection of the second necessary condition for perceptual experience to have content. That is, perceptual experience has content only if it is a fallible cognitive state. But as RELATION says, if our perceptual relation to the mind-independent world is passively receptive and cognitively primitive, it does not take any stance on the way the world might be. It is rather a mere confrontation of it, borrowing Travis's words.

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9) Travis defines the notion of autorepresentation as something that the subject does to herself when she represents things as so and so. An obvious case of autorepresentation seems to include, among other things, imagination.

Our discussions of relationalism and its core theses thus provide at least two *prima facie* reasons to think that the core insights of relationalism and representationalism are irreconcilable. First, relationalists reject the claim that perceptual experience is fundamentally representational. Second, they are also not convinced by representationalists when they say that the good case can be construed as a fallible cognitive state. One might well think that these two issues are closely related. Mental representation might well necessitate a possibility of misrepresentation. But compatibilists must deal with them separately given the separate criticisms from relationalists. First, they must provide an account of how standing in a relation to physical objects and properties can be representational as in other propositional attitudes such as belief. Moreover, they also need to convince relationalists on how the relationalist conception of the good case can make room for the notion of fallibility. Fortunately, possible solutions to both of these issues can be found in Siegel's representationalism and her compatibilist argument. But in the next section, I shall show that they are still in tension with relationalism and its core insights.

#### 4. Representationalism and Compatibilism

Our brief discussion about representationalism above has revealed the two major representationalist theses, that is, it is fundamentally representational and that it comes with accuracy conditions. Therefore, the notion of experiential content must capture the way perceptual experience represents the world and specifies its accuracy conditions.<sup>10)</sup>

Since many representationalists including Siegel explicitly endorse these characteristics of perceptual experience, it is the compatibilists' job to convince relationalists to accept them without jeopardizing their relationalist framework.

One of Susanna Siegel's arguments for representationalism is that it is compatible with almost all variants of relationalism.<sup>11)</sup> Before presenting her argument for the view in detail, however, Siegel rejects two old claims often associated with representationalism: (1) veridical perception, illusion, and hallucination belong to a single kind of mental state and (2) the contents of veridical perception, illusion, and hallucination are constituted by intentional objects.<sup>12)</sup> (1), often called *the common kind assumption*, would then make us think that disjunctivists must reject representationalism. (2) seems to be motivated by cases in which a veridical perception and a hallucination share the same phenomenal character as well as content. Since hallucination lacks any mind-independent object that the subject perceives, they must share the content constituted by the same intentional objects. But philosophers

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10) Siegel in fact identifies the content of experience with its accuracy conditions and some might take the identification to be problematic. But I assume for our discussion that the issue simply depends on how one spells out the nature of accuracy conditions.

11) But there is an important exception, which is Brewer's. His relationalist view does not allow physical properties to be the object of perception. But as we shall see this is a downright rejection of the key premise of Siegel's compatibilist argument.

12) See Siegel (2010), especially pp. 5-6, for the relevant discussions. She calls the combination of (1) and (2) *the internalist outlook*. It is also worth pointing out that almost all contemporary representationalists reject (2) in fear of falling for the same problem once had by indirect realist views of perception, such as the sense-datum theory.

who have a more naturalistic inclination might reject representationalism because of (2). However, as Siegel correctly points out, these two claims do not necessarily follow from representationalism since the view merely says that perceptual experience has content. Representationalism's departing from (1) and (2) thus seems to provide a great starting point for a compatibilist. The reason why relationalism must reject (1) is already mentioned. Moreover, relationalists must be skeptical about the postulation of intentional objects for the object of perception. After all, relationalism only aims to explain the good case. If they have to endow content with any explanatory role at all, it should be constituted by something physical.

In any case, Siegel argues that representationalism departing from misleading (1) and (2) is compatible with relationalism. She says that all it takes for a relationalist to accept representationalism is to acknowledge that properties are presented in perceptual experiences.<sup>13)</sup> This last claim might seem innocuous, but it is not. To show this, I will present her argument for representationalism first to show how this claim stands in the core of her compatibilist project. The following argument is what Siegel calls *argument from appearing*:<sup>14)</sup>

- P1. Perceptual experience presents a cluster of properties as being instantiated.
- P2. If P1, things are the way an experience presents them to be only if a cluster of properties presented as being instantiated is in fact instantiated.

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13) Ibid., p. 75.

14) Ibid., p. 45.

P3. If things are the way an experience presents them to be only if a cluster of properties presented as being instantiated is in fact instantiated, then an experience has an accuracy condition *C*, such that it is accurate iff *C*.

P4. If an experience has an accuracy condition *C*, such that it is accurate iff *C*, then it has content.

Conclusion: Perceptual experiences have contents.

According to this argument, perceptual experiences have contents simply because they have accuracy conditions. In turn, they have accuracy conditions because they necessarily present to the subject properties as being instantiated.

Recall the necessary conditions I proposed to block some possibly trivial interpretations of representationalism, such as WEAK. Siegel's argument can satisfy both. First, the constitution condition. Given what she says in her argument above, perceptual experiences must have properties as their contents. More importantly, it is a fundamental fact about perceptual experience for her that they present clusters of properties to the perceiving subject. This last fact on which Siegel's entire argument depend can fit particularly well into the relationalist framework if we take contents to constitute perceptual experiences. That is, they have contents as their constituents. To illustrate, suppose that a person is seeing a red, bulgy tomato under a normal light setting. Her veridical perception of the tomato, according to Siegel, has a certain content in virtue of presenting, among other things, its properties. These real physical properties presented in the experience are directly involved in the perceptual experience as its constituents. Secondly, the argument, the premise P4 in particular, shows that perceptual experiences have

accuracy conditions. Siegel spells out accuracy conditions of perceptual experiences in terms of matches (or mismatches) between properties presented in experiences and properties that are in fact instantiated. This clearly confers veridical experience a possibility of error. Although veridical experiences must, by definition, present properties that are in fact instantiated, there is always a possibility of a mismatch between the properties a perceptual experience presents and the properties that are actually instantiated.

It is also obvious that the representational and fallible characteristics of perceptual experience stem from P1 of her argument from appearing. Siegel as a compatibilist then must convince relationalists to endorse P1. The following is her argument for P1:

- Pi. Perceptual experience involves a perceptual relation to objects.
- Pii. If Pi, then objects are always presented in perceptual experience.
- Ci. Objects are always presented in perceptual experiences.
- Piii. Perceptual experience does not present objects as bare particulars.
- Piv. If Ci and Piii, then perceptual experiences present a cluster of properties as being instantiated (by objects).
- P1. Perceptual experiences present a cluster of properties as being instantiated (by objects).<sup>15)</sup>

There seems to be no reason for relationalists to reject Pi and Pii unless they want to hold that only properties belong to the object of perception. But this position would make their relationalism

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15) Ibid., p. 46.

unnecessarily restrictive. The first puzzlement for them might come with Piii. For relationalists, perceptual experience (the good case) is constituted by a perceptual relation to physical objects and/or properties in the environment. Since bare particulars belong to neither of these things, this possible puzzlement, however, should not give them any reason for rejecting Piii. It rather seems to show why relationalists must accept it. Bare particulars, no matter how one conceives them, are not involved in perceptual experience. They can never be part of it.

This leaves us Piv. And according to her, it is the only claim relationalists need to adopt for them to accept her view. This means that if relationalists can accept that properties are presented as being instantiated in perceptual experience then they can incorporate the notion of experiential content into their relationalist framework.<sup>16)</sup> Unfortunately, there is a complication. Siegel's reason to believe Piv comes from Piii. But her reason to accept Piii cannot be the same as the relationalist's. Perceptual experience, according to her, never presents objects as shorn of properties. If this only meant that objects are presented in a perceptual experience only if properties are also presented with them, and vice versa, then relationalists might be able to accept it. They might say that the subject cannot stand in a perceptual relation to an object without also standing in the same relation to its properties. But Siegel takes this to entail, as shown in Piv, that properties must be presented as being instantiated by objects. This

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16) She nonetheless acknowledges that there is a version of relationalism that cannot accept Piv, which she calls *radical naïve realism*. The reason is clear. The view, as she formulates, has it that only objects are presented in perceptual experience. See *Ibid.*, (pp. 65-76) for her criticisms of the view.

means that there are the third element in perceptual experiences that binds these two. In other words, physical objects and properties must be presented in a veridical perception as being structured in a certain way.

Siegel's claim that physical properties must enter into a veridical experience as being instantiated thus implies that constituents of perceptual experience must be structured in a certain way. And it is often revealed by sentences like 'Hanna sees this lemon as yellow and that tomato as red but not the other way around.' The right attribution of properties to right objects is essential for a veridical experience. This implication seems crucial. For it can further support the two characteristics of perceptual experience that representationalists emphasize. If perceptual experience is fundamentally representational, one might wonder how physical objects and their properties can be part of their own representation in a veridical perception. As mentioned above, a red tomato cannot represent itself in a way that its pictures can. But P1, which says that a perceptual experience presents a cluster of properties as being instantiated, can explain how this might be the case. A veridical experience involving physical objects and properties can be representational just in case it represents them as having certain structures, that is, different properties are represented as being instantiated by different objects. Moreover, this structural nature of perceptual experience can be also used to explain why perceptual experiences including veridical ones are fallible. If veridical experiences merely present physical properties and objects individually, it does not seem clear how the mere presentation of these physical things can be fallible as many relationalists point out. Our experience either presents

them or not. But since even a veridical experience presents these things as being bound together in a certain way, that is, properties are always presented as being instantiated by some object, the way it binds them might not have been the way they are in fact bound. For instance, even if the subject perceives a tomato as being red and a banana as being yellow, it could have been in a different order.

Thus the discussion about the structural nature of perceptual experience implied by Siegel's argument for P1 shows a fair motivation for compatibilism. For representationalists might attempt to explain how standing in a perceptual relation to physical things can be representational and fallible by appealing to the structural nature of perceptual experience. But how can this third element of perceptual experience fit into the relational framework? There seem to be only two ways for compatibilists to answer this question. Unfortunately, none of them succeeds.

First, a compatibilist might argue that this structural element is also a relatum of the perceptual relation. Let us call this structural element, that is, the way objects and properties are bound in the good case, *instantiation*. As relationalists say, the good case consists of nothing more than the subject being perceptually related to physical objects and/or their properties. But now, the subject is also perceptually related to instantiation as well. She is now perceptually related to how objects have their properties in a metaphysical sense of 'have'. There are many reasons, however, for relationalists to be reluctant to add it to their list of possible relata of their primitive perceptual relation. For it is still controversial in metaphysics whether instantiation is the real constituent of the physical world, let alone a visually perceivable one. Many would

be reluctant to say that we see it as we see a tomato and its redness. But more importantly, there is an even stronger reason for relationalists to avoid this. As discussed above, merely standing in a particular relation to real constituents of the physical world does not explain how the good case can be representational or fallible. If instantiation enters into the good case as physical objects and properties do, and is related to the perceiver as they are, a compatibilist encounters the same problem in convincing relationalists who are already hostile towards those characteristics of perceptual experience. A mere confrontation of things in the world, regardless of what they are, cannot be automatically representational or fallible even if it is a metaphysically special entity like instantiation.

One might argue, however, that this only shows a problem for relationalism. Veridical experiences undeniably inform us that ordinary objects have certain properties. They present not just a tomato but also a cluster of properties instantiated by it. Consider the following criticism from Alex Byrne (2009):

What is it to be “simply presented” with the constituents of the physical world? Take an ordinary situation in which one sees a yellow lemon and a red tomato. One is “simply presented” with the lemon, the tomato, yellowness, and redness—perhaps that amounts to the fact that one sees the lemon and the tomato and sees yellow and red. But that is not all: the lemon is “simply presented” as yellow, not as red. ... How does the fact that the lemon is yellow get into the perceptual story? (p. 439)

The issue Byrne raises here is that relationalism lacks any resource to

explain how objects are bound with right properties in the good case. In other words, their account of the good case simply assumes that the correct predication of properties to objects is always guaranteed. His solution for relationalism seems to be that relationalists can always accept that perceptual experience is a propositional attitude. In this way, the good case guarantees a certain structure or ordering of its constituents. For it is fundamentally a relation to true propositions. As some representationalist says, in virtue of having a veridical experience, the subject sensorily entertains a true proposition that the lemon is yellow and the tomato is red.<sup>17)</sup>

Byrne's solution thus leads us to the second possible way for a compatibilist to reconcile the structural element of perceptual experience with the relationalist framework. Under this compatibilist picture, the subject of a veridical experience can be perceptually related to true propositions or facts.<sup>18)</sup> Unlike individual objects or properties, these are structured entities, such that right properties are paired with right objects in them. But although this might be a perfectly coherent view of perceptual experience on its own, relationalists cannot pursue this route unless they jettison the core insights behind their view. As Mark Johnston argues:

The decisive problem with the Fact-Directed Attitude View is that it does not earn the right to the metaphor of the senses taking in concrete reality. According to the View, the relation

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17) E.g., Pautz (2009).

18) This is in fact Heather Logue's compatibilist claim. See Logue (2014). Siegel also makes a similar point acknowledging that certain variants of relationalism can accept that the good case constitutively involves facts or true propositions.

what we sense and what we sometimes go on to judge is particularly intimate. It is identity. If the sensed scene is simple enough we can visually sense that p and then judge that p; here the very same item is sensed and judged. The objects of judgements are bearers of truth-values, and when their subject matter is contingent those bearers can be either true or false. Since the truth about the scene before the eyes is mostly contingent, most perceptual judgments are directed at truth-value bearers that might have been false. *But concrete reality does not consist of items that could have been false.* Concrete reality consists of items whose existence accounts for the truth of what is contingently true and for the falsity of what is contingently false. (2006, p. 269)

This is an important criticism of the second compatibilist strategy. For Johnston's passage shows that it violates almost all core theses of relationalism. First of all, if veridical experience consists of the subject being perceptually related to, or directed at, true propositions or facts, perceptual experiences and beliefs share the same type of content. But as discussed in section 3, the relationalists reject that perceptual experience is representational based on their claim that experience and belief are different cognitive states. For them, only the latter is a genuine representational state.<sup>19)</sup> Secondly, it is a fundamental fact

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19) An anonymous referee points out that the relationalist notion of perceptual relation does not, by itself, imply that perceptual experience cannot be representational as belief is and criticizing Siegel's compatibilism based on it may amount to begging the question. This is an important criticism against relationalists and their adamant anti-representationalist claim. But it is still true that anti-representationalist claim is at the core of their view and their notion of perceptual relation in particular. Then the burden of proof is on the compatibilists convincing them that their view can accommodate perceptual

about perceptual experience for relationalists that it directly presents to the subject the mind-independent world. But the world is not a truth bearer like propositions. Rather it is a complex truthmaker that makes some propositions true and others false. Even true propositions or facts cannot replace the world for such role. Thus, even if the second compatibilist solution might be a coherent view of perceptual experience on its own, no relationalist would be convinced by it. For to accept it is to abandon their original view.

One might wonder, however, whether there is a sense in which facts can play such role. Suppose that facts are actual states of affairs, which are real constituents of the mind-independent world.<sup>20</sup> The world is a complex state of affairs made out of simple ones such as a tomato being red or a lemon being yellow. Luckily for compatibilists, Armstrong himself argues that facts or states of affairs are not truth bearers but truthmakers. Then we can at least accommodate the relationalist claim that perceptual experience simply takes in the mind-independent world for the subject. But then there is no hope for compatibilists to convince relationalists on perceptual representation and its fallibility. We have already seen multiple times that no objects and properties can be part of their own representation by themselves. There should be a third element, such as instantiation to make that happen.

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representation. Siegel's solution is, as discussed above, that they only need to accept that properties are presented as being instantiated in experience. But as I argued this strategy cannot succeed due to the metaphysical binding problem. Thanks to the referee for pressing me on this point.

20) This is in fact David Armstrong's view. See Armstrong (1996) for the details of his overall ontological project taking states of affairs to be fundamental building blocks of the reality.

But the same worry resurfaces here if we allow facts or states of affairs to be a relatum of the perceptual relation. How can they be part of their own representation? How can being perceptually related to them be fallible? If perceptual experience is nothing more than the subject's being perceptually related to these facts, neither of these characteristics sustains their grounds.

Therefore, none of the compatibilist strategies succeeds. For every strategy to make relationalism and representationalism compatible faces an insurmountable problem. Siegel's argument for representationalism and her compatibilism have an issue of how to account for the correct binding of objects and their properties in the good case. It would be a particularly controversial part of the relationalist view if their proponents say that the subject can be perceptually related to the metaphysical relation such as instantiation. But when they accept structured entities instead as the relata of perceptual relation, they are forced to abandon their core intuitions that drive their view from the very beginning. For true propositions or facts, no matter how we understand them, does not fare well in the relationalist framework.

But one important question still remains: how can relationalists account for the structural element of perceptual experience? When we see a red tomato and a yellow lemon, we naturally form a belief that there are a red tomato and a yellow lemon but not that there are a yellow tomato and a red lemon. Even if perceptual experience does not have representational content as relationalists adamantly maintain, our perceptual judgements or beliefs do have contents with a particular structure. How can a mere confrontation of the world make this possible?

This is, I think, a critical issue for relationalism regardless of whether or not it is compatible with representationalism. Although a complete solution for the problem is beyond the scope of this paper, preliminary suggestions can be helpful to navigate different versions of relationalism. I take it that there are only two options for relationalists to solve the problem. The first solution is already hinted above. Relationalists can accept Armstrongian states of affairs as the sole relata of the perceptual relation. Given this relationalist variant, the subject is perceptually related to entities that are already structured such as a lemon being yellow and a tomato being red.<sup>21)</sup> This particular relationalist view, however, comes with an ontological commitment to facts or states of affairs as real constituents of the mind-independent world. This commitment might be considered burdensome to some philosophers, however. Another possible way for a relationalist to avoid the structural problem is to go with only one logical type as the perceptual relatum. This means that the perceiving subject is perceptually related to either objects or properties but not both. Brewer champions this type of view. For him, perceptual experience only presents physical objects to the subject.<sup>22)</sup> Properties are essentially too general in nature to be part of perceptual experience. So the qualitative differences between seeing a lemon and seeing a tomato are to be explained solely by similarities or differences among objects. When the

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21) Fish (2009) formulates his relationalist view along these lines without being fully committed to the ontology of facts. As a result, his view lacks any substantive explanation of the structural element of perception that Byrne's passage above demands.

22) Thus, he names his relationalist view *the object view*.

subject is perceptually related to a tomato and a lemon, there are similarities and/or differences of which the subject becomes aware between the objects.<sup>23)</sup>

Although there is no room for going into the details of these more restrictive relationalist views, it should be clear that they are preferable to the standard relationalism, which has it that the subject can be perceptually related to both objects and properties. As Byrne says above, simple presentation of objects and properties do not account for the complex structures that ordinary perceptual experiences manifest. We do not just see a tomato or redness individually. In real ordinary experiences, we see multiple objects and properties arranged in many different ways. As far as I know, no standard relationalism has provided any plausible response to Byrne's criticism.

## 5. Conclusion

Philosophical debates on perceptual experience have mainly concerned themselves with one of the proprietary characters that makes it a unique kind of cognitive states, that is, its phenomenology. It should not surprise anyone, however, that the philosophical issues concerning perceptual phenomenology depend on one's view of what perceptual experience is. The relationalist challenge to representationalism has thus had a significant impact on other philosophical debates on perceptual experience. The main thesis of relationalism is that perceptual experience consists in nothing more than the subject being perceptually

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23) See Brewer (2011) for his overall defense of the object view.

related to items in one's physical environment. This is an undeniably controversial claim although it has its own merits. Interestingly enough, some representationalists' response to the relationalist thesis has been that perceptual experience can be both representational and relational. They say that one can accommodate the standard relationalist insights with minimum theoretical commitments to representationalism.

In this paper, however, I have argued that the compatibilist attempt to reconcile representationalism with relationalism is not tenable. I have first tried to make explicit certain conflicting intuitions behind the two views. These intuitions come down to the fact that they attribute different cognitive roles to perceptual experience as well as its subject. In reconciling them, however, we have faced a structural problem about the objects of perceptual experience. Ordinary experiences have undeniable complexities presenting various objects and their properties simultaneously. But ordinary perceivers successfully discriminate its structures, arrangements, or orders. My discussions in this paper, however, show that the two views cannot account for this trivial fact with the shared theoretical commitments. While the notion of experiential content readily accounts for the structure of its constituents, it does so by forsaking the relationalist notion of perceptual relation. If we try to accommodate the latter, however, an explanatory goal that the former is supposed to achieve must be given up.

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## 지각 경험이론으로서의 재현주의와 관계주의는 양립 가능한가?

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지각 경험을 둘러싼 형이상학적 문제에 대해 거의 정설로 받아들여지던 재현주의 이론은 최근 관계주의를 표방하는 다수의 철학자에 의해 도전받았다. 하지만 이러한 도전에 대해 수잔나 씨글(Susanna Siegel)과 같은 몇몇 재현주의자들은 재현주의와 관계주의를 구성하는 기본 원리들이 사실 상호 양립 가능하다는 논변을 펼친다. 나는 이 양립론이 틀렸다고 주장한다. 이를 증명하기 위해 씨글의 재현주의 및 양립론을 뒷받침하는 핵심 전제들이 왜 관계주의를 구성하는 기본 원리들과 양립 불가능한지 보이고, 관계주의가 지각 경험이론으로서 가지는 한계를 극복하기 위한 보완점 또한 제안한다.

**주제분류** : 심리철학, 지각철학

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