Naïve Realism and Errors in Experience
Fabian Dorsch & Gianfranco Soldati

Abstract. Is the claim that perceptual experiences are by nature relational incompatible with the view that they are intentional? In this article we argue that it is not. Much depends on the way one understands the possibility for one to be wrong about the phenomenal nature of one’s own experience. We describe and distinguish a variety of errors that can occur in our first-personal access to our perceptual experiences. We argue that once the nature of these different kinds of error is properly understood, the metaphysical claim that perceptual experiences are relational can be made compatible with the view that they are intentional.

1 Introduction

From our first-personal perspective, it seems to us as if our perceptual experiences relate us to external (or mind-independent) objects. When we see something, we have the impression that the perceived object is part of our actual environment, that we would have a different experience if the object would cease to exist, and that the perceived object will continue to stay in existence even after we have finished experiencing it. In short, we have the impression that the perceived object determines or constitutes our experience, while existing independently of the it.¹

The central claim of naïve realism is that perceptual experiences are really as they first-personally seem to be. That is, it maintains that perceptual experiences do relate us to external objects, in the sense that the experiences are constituted by objects that exist independently from being experienced. But there are two options here for naïve realists. Standardly, they endorse phenomenal relationalism, which is the view that what is relational about perceptual experiences is their phenomenal character (Nudds, 2009). According to this understanding, naïve realism maintains that the perceived objects are constitutive of what the perceptual experiences concerned are subjectively like.

Alternatively, it is also possible to understand naïve realism as adopting non-phenomenal relationalism, which states that the perceived objects are constitutive of some non-phenomenal aspect of the nature of perceptual experiences (such as their necessary causal origin or their justificatory power). This view is not necessarily incompatible with the observation that we have first-personal access to the relationality of perceptual experiences, given that these experiences may themselves make us aware of their own non-phenomenal relationality – for instance, by means of their token-reflexive intentionality.²

² Some might have qualms with our decision to use the term ‘Naive realism’ to denote the weaker
Independently of whether the relationality of perceptual experience is understood in phenomenal or non-phenomenal terms, naive realism cannot accommodate hallucinations, given that the latter do not relate us to external objects. Accordingly, naive realists are forced to limit their main claim to (veridical) perceptions: only perceptions, but not hallucinations, are relational. But there can be hallucinations – we may call them perfect hallucinations – that are subjectively indistinguishable from perceptions, in the sense that we will mistake them for perceptions (rather than the other way round). Martin has this kind of error in mind when he constates that:

‘So given introspective support for naïve realism, at least some states of being appeared to must be misleading not only about the world, but as paradoxical as this may sound, also about themselves.’ (Martin, 2000, p. 221)

‘[E]ven the disjunctivist is forced to concede that we are misled about the nature of some of our experiences by introspection: after all, it can hardly be denied that it is possible for one to have an illusion or hallucination which is indistinguishable for one from a veridical perception. Given the disjunctivist’s account of veridical perception, he is required to deny that such experiences are as they seem to us to be. Such experience is misleading not only about the world, but about its own nature.’ (Martin, 2002, p. 421)

Naive realism should be able to answer the question about the kind of error we are concerned with when we mistake non-relational hallucinations for relational perceptions. Is the error to be located most fundamentally at the level of belief or at the level of experience? And do belief or experience mislead us about the phenomenal or the non-phenomenal nature of hallucinatory experiences? Our central aim in this paper is to argue that naive realists can best account for the error if they endorse non-phenomenal relation-

view that perceptual experiences are relations to mind-independent objects, rather than to follow the more traditional route of reserving the term for the stronger claim that perceptual experiences possess a relational phenomenal character constituted by mind-independent objects. But nothing substantial depends on this terminological choice. Moreover, it seems to us that the phenomenology of perceptual experience does not warrant the stronger reading, and that the weaker position therefore comes closer to our ‘ordinary’ or ‘pre-theoretical’ understanding of perceptual experience. For example, does it really make a phenomenologically salient difference whether the perceived objects are directly constitutive of the phenomenal character of the experiences concerned (e.g. due to a relation of acquaintance), or rather only indirectly, by constituting, say, the justificatory power of those experiences which is itself phenomenologically salient due to the fact that it is part of the phenomenologically salient intentional content of those experiences (i.e. due to the fact that the experiences intentionally present themselves as possessing that justificatory power)? It is not clear whether we could really decide, purely on phenomenological grounds, whether perceptual experiences simply acquaint us with external objects, or whether they instead intentionally present external objects as being among their non-phenomenal constituents. In particular, the intentional approach can accept that (veridical) perceptions relate us to the world, and that this relationality is phenomenologically salient – as illustrated in section 3. Note also that, for instance, Nudds’ formal characterisation of naive realism is neutral between the phenomenal and the non-phenomenal reading, although he subsequently concentrates on the phenomenal reading (Nudds, 2009, p. 335).

This is why Nudds, (2009), for instance, characterises naive realism from the beginning as a claim about veridical experience alone.
Accordingly, the error in question should be understood as an error in experience (on this, Martin and other phenomenal relationalists may agree with us) that concerns some non-phenomenal relation between us and the world (here, they will disagree with us).

What has been central to the preceding considerations is the priority of perceptions over hallucinations: the fact that, whenever certain hallucinations are first-personally indiscernible from perceptions, we mistake them for perceptions, rather than the perceptions for hallucinations. Hallucinations pose a problem for naive realism only in so far as they are subjectively indistinguishable from perceptions in such a way that they are wrongly taken to be relational as well. The observation of this asymmetry between perceptions and hallucinations may be said to favour (disjunctivist) phenomenal relationalism, according to which perceptions and hallucinations differ essentially in their phenomenal character.\(^4\) The underlying idea is that, if perceptions and hallucinations would have the same phenomenal character (e.g. because they share the same intentionality), this character would be neutral with respect to whether its bearers are perceptions or hallucinations. That is, we could not tell, simply on reflection about this character, whether it pertains to a perception or a hallucinations – which would contradict the observed priority of perceptions over hallucinations.

As part of our argument for non-phenomenal relationalism, we will counter this line of thought. Even if perceptions and hallucinations share the same phenomenal character, this character may still subjectively mark them as perceptions, rather than as hallucinations – namely if their shared intentionality presents the experiences themselves as proper relations to external objects. Hence, we also argue that the priority of perceptions does not entail disjunctivism about phenomenal character (i.e. phenomenal relationalism limited to veridical perceptions), but is indeed compatible with intentionalism about perceptual experiences – as long as the intentionalist view is combined with non-phenomenal relationalism.\(^5\)

We proceed as follows. In the next section, we distinguish the different kinds of essential properties that experiences might possess. We then use these distinctions in section 3 to characterise the non-phenomenal variant of naive realism. Section 4 illustrates that our proposal assumes the error involved in mistaking hallucinations for perceptions to be experiential in nature: how the hallucinations are phenomenally given to us misleads us about

\(^4\) We agree with Martin (Martin, 2002, p. 421) that relationalist views have the advantage over non-relationalist views (e.g. Searle’s or Dretske’s intentionalism) in that they have to assume that experience misleads us only about the nature of hallucinations (and illusions), but not also about the nature of perceptions.

\(^5\) One of us has elsewhere called this view phenomenal disjunctivism, and its non-phenomenal counterpart, structural disjunctivism (Author A, 2010; 2011).

\(^6\) See Author A (2013) for additional discussion. Other attempts to reconcile intentionalism (or representationalism) with relationalism have been made, notably by Schellenberg, (2011). But while her aim is to show that some version of phenomenal relationalism is true – she assumes that perceptions are relational in so far as their representational content is relation, and that the phenomenal character of perceptions supervenes on their content, thus inheriting the relationality of the latter – we recommend the endorsement of a version of non-phenomenal relationalism instead.
their nature – namely some non-phenomenal aspect of their nature. This experiential error can then explain our doxastic error: why we wrongly – but not necessarily unreasonably – come to believe that our hallucinatory experiences are perceptions. In section 5, we argue that, by contrast, phenomenal error is impossible: how experiences are phenomenally given to us cannot mislead us about some of their phenomenal properties. The crucial idea here is that the instantiation of a phenomenal property is inseparable from our phenomenal awareness of its presence. We conclude, in section 6, that phenomenal relationalism does not have the resources to properly account for the error involved in mistaking hallucinations for perceptions. On the assumption that hallucinations possess a phenomenal character in virtue of which they are subjectively indistinguishable from perceptions, the error cannot occur merely on the level of belief. But, largely for the reasons outlined in the previous section, it also cannot be an instance of phenomenal error. Our conclusion is that the error should be understood as being concerned with how the non-phenomenal nature of hallucinatory experiences is given in consciousness. This means that we should endorse the non-phenomenal variant of naive realism and relationalism.

2 The Nature of Experience

Experiences possess various properties. They are likely to possess properties that do not constitute the way it is like to have them. They may possess properties that are sometimes, or maybe even typically, unconscious (i.e. not conscious). For instance, perceptions of a certain kind may cause modifications in our body we are not aware of, modifications nobody knows about. Having that sort of causal power is a property of the experience that does not belong to its phenomenology. Properties that belong to its phenomenology are properties that characterise the way the experience presents itself in the stream of consciousness. They constitute what it is like to have those experiences. Let us call these properties phenomenal properties, and their total the phenomenal character of the experience concerned.

Among the phenomenal properties there are properties an experience has by virtue of things appearing to one in the experience. They are phenomenal properties constituted by the intentional content of the experience.

There is a philosophical position, pure intentionalism, as we should call it, which claims that all phenomenal properties are constituted by the intentional content of the experience. That means that every property which influences how an experience is given when it occurs in the stream of consciousness is determined by a property the object presented in the experience appears to have. The determination is the one we specified above: if the experience represents something as $F$, then the experience has the property of representing something to be $F$, in short of being an $F$-appearance.\footnote{The expression ‘appearance’ is notoriously ambiguous – see, for instance, Husserl’s famous complaints in Husserl, (1901/1984, B 233) or Husserl, (1901/1970, p. 341), respectively. We use it in order to characterise experiences. When something appears $F$ to the subject, then the subject has an $F$-appearance. The property $F$ is the way the object appears, but the way the object appears is not an ‘appearance’ in our sense.}
Let us now look for a moment at the identity conditions of experiences. Consider identity over time. Suppose there is a strong pain in the leg.\textsuperscript{8} As time goes by, it decreases and eventually disappears. Being strong, then, was not an essential property of the pain. The very same pain could have been less strong. Or consider the power a certain pain has to cause one’s heart to beat quicker. Again, the heart may beat slower and the pain remain just the same. A pain sometimes moves: it started in the knee, now it is in the thigh. So, location too is no essential property of the pain.

The point is not to establish these specific claims. We rather aim at understanding what is at issue when one inquires into claims of this kind. If some properties are not essential to an experience, then this may be expressed by saying that some properties do not constitute the \textit{nature} of the experience.\textsuperscript{9} Are there properties that constitute the nature of an experience? Are there essential properties of an experience? Many philosophers have submitted that at least some, if not all, of the \textit{phenomenal} properties of an experience are essential to it. It would then be essential for a pain, for instance, to be painful, to hurt. An experience cannot be a pain, it is said, if it does not hurt. What does this mean?

Should we say that the experience appears as hurting, that hurting is the way the experience appears? Although philosophers sometimes talk like that, this way of speaking can be seriously misleading. It is misleading when it suggests that a pain experience appears hurting in the sense in which an apple appears red in perception. For to be hurting would then be the property the pain experience \textit{appears} to have, instead of being a property it simply possesses. For the former to be the case there should be something, some further experience, in which the pain experience appears as hurting, just as much as we need a

\textsuperscript{8} When we use the expression ‘pain’ we mean the pain experience. So assertions such as ‘the pain is in the leg’ ought to be interpreted not as meaning that the experience is in the leg, but that the experience presents the ailment as being in the leg. The case is not specific to pains. When we say that our thoughts are with you, we do not intend to say that you are thinking our thoughts.

\textsuperscript{9} In what follows we shall assume that the essential properties of an entity determine the nature of the entity, and that the nature of the entity determines the fundamental kind to which it belongs. Thus if Socrates is essentially human, then his nature is to be a human being and he belongs fundamentally to the human kind. Socrates is also Greek, but if he is not essentially Greek, then he is not Greek by nature; and although he belongs to the kind of Greek entities, he is fundamentally not a Greek entity. Greek salads are of the same kind as Socrates, but not of the same fundamental kind. Twin Socrates, who is as wise, clever and virtuous as Socrates, but who is not human, does not have the same nature as Socrates and does not belong to the same fundamental kind as Socrates. This view has its limits when it comes to essential relational properties, such as being the son of \(a\) and \(b\). If Socrates has that property essentially, and if he is the only son of \(a\) and \(b\), then he has a nature that no other object possesses, and he is the only member of that fundamental kind. This prompts the need to make a distinction between essential properties that determine an individual nature and essential properties that determine a fundamental kind. In perception, typically, we perceive particular objects. Is it essential for a perceptual experience to be an experience of \(a\) rather then \(b\)? If all essential properties constitute the nature of the experience, and if the nature of the experience determines the most fundamental kind to which the experience belongs, then this would yield the result that the perception of \(a\) and the perception of \(b\) belong to different fundamental kinds, even when \(a\) and \(b\) are perceptually indistinguishable. Whatever the merits of this answer, and the assumptions it relies on, it would not be fitting for the view that perceptions \textit{in general} belong to a different fundamental kind than hallucinations. To formulate this view, we need a conception of a fundamental kind to which both the perception of \(a\) and the perception of \(b\) belong to.
perception for the apple to have the property of appearing red. There are many serious philosophical problems with this picture of introspection. But apart from those problems, the issue at stake here is simply that there is a difference between the claim that the pain possesses the property of hurting and the claim that the pain appears to possess that property. When we say that a pain experience has the essential feature of appearing to hurt, we are not saying that it has the essential feature of appearing to hurt.

Remember the difference we made above. An experience in which something appears to have the property of F is an F-appearance. But an F-appearance does not appear F. A red-appearance is an experience of something appearing red. The experience itself, however, does not appear red. Being a red-appearance is one of the experience’s phenomenal properties: the experience represents something as being red and this intentional content constitutes one of the features the experience presents itself as having when occurring in the stream of consciousness. Similar considerations apply in the case of pain. Hurting is one of the ways in which a certain region of the body appears in the experience of pain: the foot hurts. The experience has the property of presenting the foot as hurting, just as much as the visual perception presents the lines as converging. To be an appearance of something as hurting, then, is a phenomenal property of the experience of pain. Strictly speaking, we should not say that the pain hurts. We should rather say that the pain has the property of presenting something as hurting and that this property constitutes part of what it is like to have a pain. The essentialist claim under consideration is that this phenomenal property is a necessary property of the pain: it constitutes the nature of the experience of pain.

Is this true for all the phenomenal properties of a pain experience? Some of the examples mentioned above seem to suggest that it is not. The object of a pain appears to be located at a certain place in one’s body, but it is not immediately clear that the location it appears to have could not change without the pain experience stopping to be the very same experience (i.e. that very same pain could ‘move’ or could ‘be’ somewhere else in the body). Furthermore, does the essentialist claim apply only to phenomenal properties? Could it not be essential for a pain to cause a certain kind of behaviour? These are all genuine questions, but we shall not address them in what follows. As mentioned above, we do not intend to propose a theory about pain experiences; we rather want to suggest an understanding of the philosophical claims at issue.

There might be phenomenal properties that are not determined by an intentional content and thus are not appearances. But it is not easy to find clear examples of such phenomenal properties. Blurredness is sometimes given as an example in point. All we need for our purpose, however, is to be clear about the fact that being an F-appearance is a different phenomenal property than possessing some non-intentional phenomenal property.

---

10 The argument does not involve the rejection of the claim that the properties an object appears to possess can be identical to properties the object possess simpliciter. But it does presuppose that for a property to qualify as a property an object appears to have, it needs to constitute a way the object appears in experience.

3 Non-Phenomenal Relationalism

Some would submit that only phenomenal properties – whether they are ways of appearing or not – can count as constituting the nature of a conscious experience. But one need not accept this assumption. It seems perfectly possible that an experience may possess an essential property that is non-phenomenal. Plausible candidates are, for instance, causal or rational properties. It may be part of the nature of an experience that it is caused in a certain way, or that it possesses a certain motivational force or justificatory power. Perceptions differ essentially from sensory imaginings in providing us with prima facie justification for first-order beliefs about external objects in our actual environment. But it is far from obvious that this justificatory power is a phenomenal property.

One motivation for being skeptical about essential non-phenomenal properties of experiences is the idea that the nature of experiences has to be accessible from the first-personal perspective. The state or event in question would otherwise not count as an experience with phenomenal character in the first place. However, being a non-phenomenal property just means being a property that is not experienced in the flow of consciousness. Accordingly, if the nature of an experience is partly non-phenomenal, it cannot be completely manifest in consciousness. And this may be taken to have the problematic consequence that we have no first-personal access to the full nature of the experience in question.

But first-personal access is not limited to the phenomenal properties that constitute the phenomenal character of an experience. It also extends to the appearing properties, that is, those properties that the experience presents some object or another as having. This is part of what it means for experiences to be ‘transparent’: introspectively attending to them means attending to the presented object and its features. Hence, the assumption that the essential properties of an experience need to be first-personally accessible is compatible with those properties being non-phenomenal, as long as they are among the appearing properties.

Take the non-phenomenal property of standing in relation \( R \) to an object of a certain kind. This relational property may be intentionally given in experience. When a subject has an experience that possesses that relational property, then the experience may be an appearance of itself as standing in the relevant relation to an object of a certain kind. We can say that the experience is a reflexive \( R \)-appearance. Being an \( R \)-appearance is a token-reflexive phenomenal property of the experience. It is not a case of the experience appearing in a certain way to another experience or state. It is instead the case of the ex-

---

12 Dualists like Descartes and phenomenologists like Husserl would seem to be sympathetic to this idea. To avoid the consequence that experiences cannot possess solely third-personally accessible essential properties (e.g., neuro-functional properties), the idea may be weakened to the claim that at least differences in non-phenomenal nature between two experiences have to be first-personally accessible (see Author A, 2014).

13 See, e.g., Tye, (1995), Martin, (2002) or Speaks, (2009), as well as Author A (2010) for further discussion. It might be objected that our first-personal access is limited to an intentional object, and not a real one. But, at least in the case of veridical perception, the two are identical.
perience *appearing to itself* in a certain way: a non-phenomenal feature of the experience is phenomenologically salient in virtue of a phenomenal feature of the experience.  

In accordance with the previous considerations, not only the phenomenal property of being an $R$-appearance, but also the non-phenomenal property of standing in relation $R$ to some object may be essential to experiences, in the sense that all experiences, that possess these properties, do so essentially. In particular, if the property $R$ constitutes part of the nature of any experience that has it, being an $R$-appearance means being an appearance of a non-phenomenal essential property. In addition, since the two properties are merely intentionally linked – one constitutes the intentional presentation of the other – they can occur independently of each other, even if both are essential to their bearers.

As a result, it is possible that two $R$-appearances share the same intentional content and the same phenomenal properties, but still differ essentially in whether they possess the relational property $R$. For instance, both experiences may present themselves as being caused by an external object, or as enjoying justificatory force with respect to object-dependent beliefs about such an object, while in fact only one of them does possess this relational property. In this case, only one of the experiences presents itself correctly as having the essential property $R$. The other experience misleads the subject about the non-phenomenal part of its very nature. For, as a reflexive $R$-appearance, it intentionally misrepresents itself as having a non-phenomenal property – namely the property $R$ – which is essential to any experience that has it.

Our proposal is now that this is exactly what is the case with respect to perceptions and hallucinations: while the two kinds of experience share the essential property of being an $R$-appearance, they differ in whether they also possess the essential property of standing in relation $R$ to some external object. What this means is that perceptions and hallucina-
tions share their phenomenal essential properties, but not their non-phenomenal essential properties. Furthermore, while perceptions reveal their true nature to us, hallucinations appear to have a non-phenomenal nature that they in fact do not fully possess. Given that the non-phenomenal property $R$ concerned is a relation to an external object of experience, the resulting position counts as an instance of both naive realism and non-phenomenal relationalism.

Generally, in cases of veridical representation, how something is intentionally represented as being is determined by how it is like. Accordingly, the fact that a genuine perception is an $R$-appearance is determined by the fact that it stands in relation $R$ to some external object. So, in this sense, being $R$ is more fundamental than being an $R$-appearance. But the latter property cannot be reduced to the former, given that the presence of $R$ determines only what the experiences in questions are appearances of, but not that they are appearances in the first place. In particular, that perceptions are conscious and intentional – both in a world- and in a self-directed manner – is not due to their being $R$. Describing the fundamental nature of perceptions therefore requires more than citing their relational property $R$.

Hallucinations are also appearances, and most likely for the same (still largely unknown) reasons as perceptions. But that they are appearances of themselves as having the relational property $R$ is obviously determined by other factors than $R$ itself. These factors may differ greatly from hallucination to hallucination. And they fail to be first-personally accessible, given that they are neither phenomenal, nor appearing properties. Instead, they should be expected to consist in certain subpersonal causes or conditions (see Author A (2010)).

That we cannot recognise and discriminate these factors from our first-personal perspective might again be taken to imply that they are not essential to the hallucinations concerned. But it seems more natural to accept that perceptions are not special in possessing both phenomenal and non-phenomenal essential properties. Indeed, while it might be reasonable to expect essential properties of experiences to be first-personally accessible in cases where the conscious mind works as it should, there is no reason to assume that the same is true if significant malfunction occurs. Hallucinations count as ‘bad cases’ not the least because their essences – and thus also their essential differences among themselves – are partly hidden to the subject.\(^\text{18}\)

---

\(^{18}\) Elsewhere, one of us has suggested that it consists in the relation of providing perceptual justification for first-order, object-dependent beliefs about one’s environment. In other words, the idea is that external objects are constitutive of the justificatory power essential to perceptions, but not to hallucinations (see Author A, 2014).

\(^{18}\) Compare the discussions in Martin, (2004), Martin, (2006) and Author A (2010). Fish, (2009) seems to deny that perfect hallucinations are experiences in the first place partly in response to the observation that, otherwise, the nature of hallucinations would not be (fully) disclosed to our first-personal perspective.
4 Doxastic and Experiential Error

The view about perceptual experience just sketched assumes that we may be mistaken about the nature of experiences, namely if they are hallucinatory, but subjectively indistinguishable from comparable perceptions. Let us try to better understand this particular kind of error by distinguishing different ways in how we might be wrong about the essential properties of experiences.

To start with, we may have false beliefs about the various properties of experiences, whether they are essential or not, and whether they are phenomenal or not. For instance, we can believe that a given pain does not cause our heart to beat faster although it does. If that specific causal power is an essential property of our experience, we have a false belief about the non-phenomenal part of the experience’s nature. It is equally possible that we have a pain experience, the experience involves the property of being painful, but for some reason we do not believe that we are in pain. Maybe we should start to worry about ourselves, maybe this is the starting point of serious psychological problems. But it is hard to see what in principle could prevent that kind of situation from happening. Again, we are wrong about the nature of our experience, this time about the phenomenal part of its nature. Since the mistake in question pertains to a belief the subject has about her own experience, it is doxastic in nature: not the experience itself is misleading, but our higher-order introspective belief which is intentionally directed at that experience.

However, the mistake involved in having an experience, that is an R-appearance without being R, does not occur solely on the level of belief. As noted above, the token-reflexive intentionality, which misleads us about part of the nature of the experience in question, belongs to that experience and does not require introspective belief or any other kind of belief. Since this kind of error, where an experience occurs in consciousness in a way that misleads us about its own properties, is located on the level of experience, we suggest calling it experiential error. In the case at hand, the property concerned is essential, but non-phenomenal: although the experience conceals some part of its nature (namely the non-phenomenal properties that it possesses instead of R), it does not conceal any of the phenomenal aspects of that nature.

While experiential error is independent of doxastic error, the two are still closely related to each other in virtue of the first’s capacity to ground the second. The central aspect of this basing relation between a misleading token-reflexive experience and a corresponding misleading introspective belief is that the first suffices on its own to render it reasonable for the subject concerned to form the second. As a consequence, if the subject is rational and considers the issue, she will be moved by the experience alone to form the belief – and her belief will enjoy doxastic justification, at least from her subjective point of view.

For example, when we undergo a hallucination which we cannot first-personally distinguish from a perception, our conscious enjoyment of the experience is enough to ratio-

---

19 This is true even if it were to turn out that the content of perceptual experiences is through and through conceptual. For even then, the experience and our higher-order judgements or beliefs about it would count as distinct and independent occurrences.
nally prompt us to believe that it is a veridical perception. Accordingly, if we are rational and ask ourselves whether we are perceiving or not, we will come to the conclusion that we are. And our resulting false belief that our experience is a genuine perception is based solely on the fact that our experience seems subjectively to be such a perception. What is at work here is the priority of perceptions over hallucinations.

Translated into the terms of our own proposal of non-phenomenal relationalism, what happens in this case is that we wrongly judge the experience to stand in relation $R$ to some external object in response to our awareness of the experience’s erroneous presentation of itself as being $R$. That is, the experience’s phenomenal property of being an $R$-appearance not only misleads us about the non-phenomenal part of the nature of the experience (experiential error), but also rationally inclines us to form the corresponding incorrect introspective belief about the experience (doxastix error). In this way, some of our false beliefs about our experiences have their source in, or are formed in response to, how the experiences are given in the stream of consciousness.

## 5 Phenomenal Error

The acknowledgement of the possibility of experiential error with respect to a non-phenomenal property of the experience in question raises the issue of whether experiential error may also concern – and ground doxastic error with respect to – a phenomenal property of an experience. In other words, is it possible that an experience misleads us about one of its phenomenal properties, and renders it reasonable for us to falsely judge the experience to possess that property, simply in virtue of how it is given in consciousness – that is, simply in virtue of some of its other phenomenal properties? For reasons of simplicity, let us call such an experiential error concerning a phenomenal property an instance of phenomenal error. The question is therefore whether phenomenal error is possible; and we surmise that it is not. But before addressing this issue head-on, it will be helpful to identify a couple of cases in which the source of doxastic error about phenomenal properties might be thought to be experiential, but in fact is not so.

Consider first the case where an experience is both an $F$-appearance and a $G$-appearance, despite the fact that no experienceable object could instantiate $F$ and $G$ at the same time. In such a case, the fact that the object looks to be $F$ speaks in favour of believing that it is $F$, while the fact that the object looks to be $G$ speaks in favour of believing that it is not $F$.

---

20 Some of the non-phenomenal errors we shall consider in this section may arguably be impossible. By being more liberal then one probably should be, we wish to concede as much as possible to our potential disputants.

21 The two (sets of) phenomenal properties cannot be identical: an experience cannot mislead us about its being $P$ in virtue of being $P$. In particular, an experience’s being $P$ cannot by itself incline us to wrongly judge that it is not $P$.

22 One may naturally think of the sort of visual effects generated by some of M. C. Escher’s famous paintings such as *Ascending and Descending*, where the stairs at the top of the tower appear both to lead up and down. There are obviously special issues related to the perception of depiction, as opposed to the perception of objects, which one would have to consider here.
given that we are well aware of the fact that being \( G \) rules out being \( F \). One and the same experience may thus ground contradictory judgements about the perceived object. In such a case, the normal response for the subject concerned would be to conclude that her senses have played a trick on her, and that her experience misleads her about the features of the experienced object.\(^{23}\)

But the conflict in appearances might also cause her to cast doubt on the reliability of her own introspective abilities. For instance, she might conclude that her experience is indeed an \( F \)-appearance, but not really a \( G \)-appearance, thus entertaining a false introspective belief about the nature of her own experience. The most natural explanation of this kind of unusual doxastic error appeals to the rational pressure that general background assumptions about ordinary material objects and their possible properties exert on the subject’s engagement in reasoning. More specifically, what seems to happen in this case is that the subject interprets the fact that no object can be \( F \) and \( G \) at the same time as supporting the claim that perceptual experiences cannot – or at least normally do not – represent one and the same object as being both \( F \) and \( G \). Accordingly, she concludes that her experience cannot simultaneously be an \( F \)-appearance and a \( G \)-appearance, siding with the first option. The source of her false higher-order belief is thus not the way the experience is given in consciousness, but her wrong inference from an incompatibility between two appearing properties to an incompatibility between two appearance-establishing phenomenal properties.

In another case to be noted, a property \( P \) is phenomenologically salient in an experience in such a way that the subject may reasonably wonder whether \( P \) is an appearing or a phenomenal property – that is, whether the experience presents its object as \( P \) (i.e., is a \( P \)-appearance), or whether instead the experience is itself \( P \). Imagine, for example, a subject with blurred vision who notices the blurred character of her visual experience. She may ask herself whether her experience presents the perceived object as having fuzzy edges, or whether instead the blurredness pertains to the experience itself.\(^{24}\)

Now, her reflections may lead the subject to the wrong conclusion about the relationship between her experience and the property \( P \). For instance, she may wrongly judge that her experience represents something else as being \( P \), while in fact it is itself \( P \); or vice versa. In other words, the subject may ascribe one phenomenal property to her experience (e.g., being a \( P \)-appearance), although the latter in fact possesses another (e.g., being \( P \)). This doxastic error is, however, once more not due to an experiential error: it is not that the subject erroneously concludes that her experience is a \( P \)-appearance (or, alternatively, \( P \)) simply in response to being aware of the phenomenological salience of

\(^{23}\) Indeed, we often simply accept the fact that our experiences have dissonant properties and that we cannot come to know the relevant properties of the perceived objects on the basis of experience alone.

\(^{24}\) To demonstrate that asking such a question is not completely absurd, consider the case of a blurry photograph. If we are unable to identify the kind of object depicted, it may be very difficult for us to tell whether the picture is sharp and depicts an object as having fuzzy borders (e.g., a cloud), or whether the picture is out of focus and depicts an object as having precise borders. In a similar vein, the subject of a blurry experience of an unidentifiable object may reasonably wonder whether her experience represents blurriness, or alternatively lacks definition in its representationality.
Supplementary considerations are needed to sway her one way or another – most likely considerations about the nature of the perceived object. Recognising that the experienced object is a cloud, say, will typically move her to associate the fuzziness with that object; while identifying the object as a cushion is likely to let her judge his own experience to be unfocused. More generally, if one believes that the object is of a kind that does (or does not) have fuzzy borders, then one will normally accept (or resist) the idea that it appears blurred on some particular occasion.

In both these cases, the subject’s experience does not suffice on its own to render it reasonable for her to form the (false) judgement that her experience possesses a certain phenomenal property. Instead, what grounds her judgement is not only how her experience is given in consciousness, but also – and crucially – some of her ancillary beliefs, most notably concerning the nature of the experienced objects. Correspondingly, the doxastic error is not due to experiential error, but to some other kind of error, such as error in belief or in inference. So, when asking whether phenomenal error is possible, we have to look instead at cases where the introspective doxastic error is more directly due to how the experience in question is given in consciousness. In other words, we have to consider whether an experience could mislead us about one of its phenomenal properties in virtue of one or more of its other phenomenal properties.

More formally, the issue is whether the possession of the phenomenal property $P$ (or of a set of such properties) could suffice to mislead us in such a way as to render it reasonable for us to wrongly judge that the experience has (or lacks) the phenomenal property $Q$. If there is no link at all between $P$ and $Q$, there is no reason to assume that the presence of the first property could rationally motivate us to form a judgement about the presence of the latter. Hence, we have to look at the different ways in which the two phenomenal properties might be relevantly linked to each other.

If $P$ is identical with $Q$, or includes $Q$ as one of its parts, or otherwise necessitates $Q$, phenomenal error is certainly impossible. The aspects of $P$ unrelated to $Q$ would have no bearing on whether we take the experience to possess $Q$. So what could matter in this case is at best the ensured presence of $Q$. But this presence could not by itself render it reasonable for us to judge that the experience is not $Q$. The phenomenal quality of reddishness is not the right kind of phenomenal property to motivate us to believe that the experience in question is not a red-experience. Indeed, our phenomenal awareness of $Q$ is such that it rationally prompts us to (truly) believe that the experience is in fact $Q$.

This is in fact part of the nature of phenomenal properties. They are phenomenal in so far as we enjoy a special kind of awareness of them, which cannot mislead us about them: an experience is given in consciousness as possessing the phenomenal property $Q$.

---

25 Again, the same is true in the example of the blurry photograph.

26 This conclusion is compatible with the fact that the supplementary considerations might have an impact on the phenomenal properties of the experience. An object might in fact stop to appear blurred when one comes to believe that it cannot be fuzzy. This kind of *phenomenal contamination* may occur not only in virtue of pressure coming from background beliefs. It may also emerge from relations between phenomenal properties: an object that appears to have fuzzy edges when seen on its own may appear not to have such edges, but simply to be more distant, when seen in the background of a focussed object.
just in case it does instantiate that property. Or, in other words, a perceptual experience manifests each of its phenomenal properties in consciousness. This, we submit, is the sense one ought to give to the common claim that, for an experience, there is no gulf between being and appearing. Thus Husserl writes:27

In the psychic sphere there is ... no difference between appearance and being, and if nature is a being that appears in appearances, then appearances ... are not themselves beings that appear in further appearances. (Husserl, 1911/1996, pp. 311-312)

What Husserl suggests here is that, while a non-mental entity may ‘appear’ in the sense of being the intentional object of an experience, the experience itself ‘appears’ in a different sense. And this may be identified with the way the experience is given in the stream of consciousness – that is, with its position of a certain phenomenal character. Furthermore, what is distinctive of this second of kind of ‘appearing’ is that, according to Husserl, there is indeed no distinction between the way an experience ‘appears’ and the way it is: a way an experience ‘appears’ is a way for it to be.

Perhaps the required link should thus relate the two properties not in reality, but instead in our minds. For, on the assumption that we (rightly or wrongly) believe that the phenomenal property $P$ is inseparably linked to the presence or absence of the phenomenal property $Q$, it seems possible that our phenomenal awareness of $P$ rationally moves us to a wrong belief about whether the experience concerned is also $Q$. If we think that a red-experience is always also a square-experience (e.g., because we believe that red objects have to be square), we may come to falsely believe that we are undergoing a square-experience in response to correctly recognising our experience as a red-experience. However, as in the case of experiencing incompatible appearing properties, the error and our related motivation is primarily due to our incorrect background belief about the link between the two properties. There is no prior error on the level of experience precisely because what matters is a belief about the connection between $P$ and $Q$.

This seems to leave only one option: that the link is already salient on the level of experience, but without the presence of $Q$ (for the reasons given above). This is the case when the experience instantiates $P$, but not $Q$; and when $P$ is identical with the property of representing itself as being $Q$. In other words, we should consider the possibility of an experience that represents itself as having the phenomenal property $Q$, without in fact instantiating this property. Potential – though also rather puzzling – examples would be an experience that intentionally represents itself as a red-experience, but does not involve the phenomenal quality of reddishness; or an experience that intentionally represents itself as being painful, but is not painful (i.e., does not involve a feeling of pain). The misleading aspect of these experiences is of course that they represent themselves as having a

---

27 Husserl accepted the strong claim that the nature of appearances is uniquely and entirely phenomenal and that experiences do not belong to the realm of nature. He thought that experiences – or phenomena, as he called them – “have no real parts, and are not subject to any real change” (ibid.). Our considerations so far should help to make clear that the point Husserl makes in the passage quoted in the main text can be made independently from this strong metaphysical view.
phenomenal property, while not actually instantiating that property.\textsuperscript{28}

There are now two main strategies to show that such cases of phenomenal error are impossible. The first is to argue that the self-presentation of an experience as having a phenomenal property cannot be false. In other words, it is maintained that no experience can instantiate $P$ without also instantiating $Q$. The second strategy focuses not on the potential incompatibility between the lack of some phenomenal property and the representation of itself as having that property, but directly on the potential impossibility of such kind of self-presentation. It is therefore claimed that – independently of whether $Q$ is instantiated or not – no experience can instantiate the property $P$ which is identical with the property of representing itself as having some phenomenal property $Q$. We discuss each strategy in turn, thereby preferring and defending the second.

A $Q$-appearance that is not $Q$ (where $Q$ is a phenomenal property) is certainly impossible if, for an experience, the token-reflexive representation of itself as being $Q$ is sufficient for the instantiation of $Q$ by that experience. It has been argued that self-representation is a necessary condition on – and maybe even source of – phenomenal consciousness: that, for a mental episode or experience, the possession of a conscious character is at least partly a matter of representing its own occurrence (see, e.g., Brentano, (1995) or Kriegel and Williford, (2006)). Perhaps the relevant arguments might be extended to support the stronger claim that such a self-representation is also sufficient for the possession of a phenomenal character. Moreover, it might be argued that the self-representation concerned determines not only that an experience is phenomenally conscious, but also which phenomenal properties it has. As a result, it might be shown that, for an experience, instantiating a phenomenal property is a matter of representing itself as having that property.

We are generally sympathetic to the idea that phenomenal consciousness is at least partly due to a form of self-representation. But we doubt that the kind of self-representation needed is identical with the token-reflexive intentionality involved in perceptual experiences. The main reason for our skepticism is that the form of self-presentation responsible for the presence of a phenomenal character is unlikely to be intentional. The self-presentation assumed to be central to phenomenal consciousness is typically taken to be intransitive, meaning that it does not turn the mental episode in question into an object of awareness to which certain properties are ascribed (see, e.g., Zahavi, (2004), Kriegel, (2009) or Gallagher, (2010)). But it is not clear whether intentionality can be intransitive in this manner. In addition, the kind of self-presentation generating phenomenal consciousness leaves no room for error: involving a self-representation of this kind suffices for being a phenomenally conscious mental state (and for having the represented phenomenal property, if applicable). By contrast, it is distinctive of intentionality – including the token-reflexive form currently at issue – that it allows for error.

But if it cannot be shown that, for an experience, intentionally representing itself as having a phenomenal property implies instantiating that property, the first strategy is bound to fail. Fortunately, the second strategy is more promising. The crucial observation is that

\textsuperscript{28} The experiences under consideration are thus structurally similar to the hallucinations that represent themselves as being $R$, while not being $R$ – with the exception that $R$ is a non-phenomenal property.
phenomenal awareness and token-reflexive representation are in rational tension when both are concerned with the presence or absence of one and the same phenomenal property.

Consider, first, a subject who enjoys an experience that is not $Q$, but represents itself as being $Q$. Since $Q$ is a phenomenal property, the subject will be able to notice its absence – at least if she draws her attention to her experience and to the question of whether it instantiates $Q$. But noticing the absence of $Q$ renders it reasonable for the subject to refrain from judging that her experience is $Q$, despite the fact that her experience represents itself to be $Q$. The missing phenomenal awareness rationally trumps the existing representational awareness. Indeed, we would label a person irrational who takes herself to undergo a reddish or painful experience, while also acknowledging that she does not consciously experience the quality of reddish- or painfulness.

On the other hand, if the self-representational experience happens to be $Q$ and the subject asks herself whether her experience is $Q$, it will be reasonable for her to form the judgement that her experience is $Q$ – though not because the experience represents itself as $Q$, but because its being $Q$ is phenomenally manifest to her. Again, the phenomenal awareness rationally trumps the representational awareness. We would label a person irrational if she would defend her judgement that she is undergoing a reddish or painful experience by pointing to something else than to her acknowledged conscious experience of the quality of reddish- or painfulness.

Two distinctive aspects of phenomenal properties and our conscious awareness of them are responsible for these facts.

First, that a property of experiences is phenomenal entails that we are able to notice whether it is present or absent in our stream of consciousness (i.e., whether it is instantiated or not by one of our experiences). This is due to the fact, already noted, that the instantiation of a phenomenal property is inseparably linked to our phenomenal awareness of its instantiation, meaning also that the lack of this awareness indicates the lack of the property.²⁹

Second, noticing the presence or absence of a phenomenal property weighs more with respect to the formation of introspective judgements about that presence or absence than any other relevant piece of evidence. On the one hand, if we do not experience reddish- or painfulness, nothing can render it reasonable for us to judge that we are undergoing a red- or pain-experience. On the other hand, if we do experience those qualities, nothing can render it reasonable for us not to judge that we are undergoing a red- or pain-experience (assuming that we are sufficiently interested in the issue, not distracted by other concerns, and so on).

Returning to the case of an experience that represents itself as $Q$, this self-presentation could not by itself rationally ground – that is, provide doxastic justification for – the corresponding introspective judgement.³⁰ For such grounding requires that the subject bases

---

²⁹ See Kripke, (1980, p. 152) and Hellie, (2006, p. 2), as well as the passage quoted from Husserl, (1911/1996) above. Of course, we may still lack the conceptual capacities to describe phenomenal properties, though we can always resort to demonstrative means of reference, such as saying ‘how this feels’.

³⁰ Does it at least provide propositional justification? This question seems moot to be asked, it cannot be
her higher-order belief on the experience as its ground, and on nothing else. But there are no possible circumstances under which the self-presentation of an experience as being $Q$ would as such render it reasonable for a rational subject – and would thus indeed move her – to judge that the experience in question is $Q$. If the experience is $Q$, what rationally moves her is her phenomenal awareness of $Q$; and if the experience is not $Q$, nothing manages to rationally move her to form the judgement that her experience is $Q$.

However, the capacity to provide doxastic justification is central to the kind of representationality at issue. If an experience could never ground the judgement that some object possesses some property, then it should not count as representing that object as having that property. It does not matter which property is concerned, or whether it is ascribed to an external object or the experience itself. If an experience could under no circumstances justify us in believing that a book is red, then it does not represent the book as being red. Similarly, if an experience could under no circumstances serve as the basis for the introspective judgement that it possesses some phenomenal or non-phenomenal property, then it does not represent itself as having that property.

This close link between representationality and doxastic justification is due to the fact that the kind of representation in question is cognitive rather than, say, imaginative or conative. Conative representations are not concerned with how things are, but instead with how they should be. And while imaginings do represent things as being a certain way, they are not concerned with truth or reality, but with possibility or some non-actual situation. As a result, neither possesses the capacity to justify beliefs about the properties (or, indeed, the existence) of their objects. For example, imagining or desiring some book to be red does not provide us with prima facie justification for judging that the book is red (or, indeed, that there is a book in the first place). By contrast, cognitive representations – which include not only perceptions, but also sensations, memories, judgements, beliefs, and so on – inform us about real facts (at least if they are veridical), which is why they possess the capacity to serve as grounds for the corresponding beliefs.

Now, the kind of intentional self-representation under discussion is surely cognitive in nature. In particular, in order to constitute an instance of experiential error about the nature of the experience in question, the self-representation has to be concerned with how the experience is actually like. But this cognitivity should come with the capacity to rationally ground the corresponding higher-order beliefs. Since this capacity would be lacking if an experience were to represent itself as possessing some phenomenal property $Q$, such a cognitive self-presentation is impossible. Given that all other options have already been ruled out, it follows that phenomenal error is impossible, too: no experience can mislead us, just by the way it is given in consciousness, about its own phenomenal properties. But experiential error with respect to some non-phenomenal property – like the relational property $R$ – is still possible, since we do not enjoy any phenomenal awareness of the presence or absence of such a property, which could undermine the experience’s capacity unresolved.

31 See D. Velleman, (2000) and Martin, (2002) for more on these distinctions between different ways of regarding a proposition, or different kinds of representation.
to serve as the rational base for judgements that ascribe the property to the experience.

6 Phenomenal Relationalism

According to phenomenal relationalism, perceptions possess an essential phenomenal property $R^*$ that is partly constituted by the perceived object. Given that hallucinations lack such an object and hence also the relational property $R^*$, they turn out to differ essentially from perceptions. There are now two main options for proponents of phenomenal relationalism with respect to the nature of hallucinations.

First, they may claim that suffering a hallucination does not involve having an experience with certain phenomenal properties (though without $R^*$). Instead, it consists in some doxastic state, such as the (wrong) thought or belief that one is having an experience instantiating $R^*$ (i.e., a perceptual experience); or perhaps even just in being in an evidential situation which renders it reasonable for one to have such a doxastic state (Fish, 2009). In this case, the doxastic error does not concern the nature of an experience, but its existence. Accordingly, this proposal does not help to elucidate the issue of what it means for us to be mistaken about the phenomenal character of hallucinatory experience. Instead, it simply denies that we make such an error in the first place, by denying that hallucinating is a matter of having some kind of experience. This view has been objected to for good reasons; and we do not aim to add to this discussion here.\footnote{See, for instance, Siegel, (2008) and Logue, (2010) for objection’s to the view defended in Fish, (2009).}

Second, proponents of phenomenal relationalism may claim that hallucinations are experiences with a phenomenal character, albeit one that does not include $R^*$ as one of its constituents. The problem for this view is, however, to reconcile the fact that the phenomenal property $R^*$ is absent with the fact that the subject takes her experience to be an instance of $R^*$, namely a genuine perception. Given that $R^*$ is a phenomenal property, the subject should be able to recognise both its presence and its absence, at least if her mind is functioning normally and she considers the issue of whether her experience instantiates $R^*$. This is, again, just part of what it means for a property to be phenomenal: it is instantiated if and only if the subject concerned is phenomenally aware of its presence. But if the subject phenomenally notices the absence of $R^*$, it is puzzling why she should still conclude that her experience possesses $R^*$. For her phenomenal awareness should rationally trump any contrary non-phenomenal piece of evidence. If the quality of reddishness is not given in consciousness, then it is unreasonable for the subject concerned to judge that she is undergoing an experience which involves reddishness. Similarly, if $R^*$ is not given in consciousness, then it is unreasonable for the subject concerned to judge that she is undergoing an experience which involves $R^*$.

Martin tries to steer a middle way between the two sketched views. While he wants to maintain that hallucinations are indeed experiential, he also wants to deny that the difference in experience between them and perceptions is noticeable from the subject’s perspective. His idea is, more concretely, that there are evidential situations which do not allow
the subject to come to know, from her subjective perspective, that one of her experiences is in fact not a perception. In other words, Martin proposes that the subject may not have any evidence for the hallucinatory character of her experience: the lack of the relational feature \( R^* \) is not accessible to the subject, at least not in the case of perfect hallucinations. But there are two serious problems with this proposal.

For our current purposes, the main difficulty is that the view does not have the resources to account for our doxastic error with respect to hallucinations. More precisely, it cannot explain the fact that a subject suffering a hallucination finds it reasonable to judge that she is perceiving. It may very well be true that, as Martin claims, the evidential situation of a hallucinating subject does not render it reasonable for her to (truly) believe that she is not perceiving. But what we are really after is an explanation of why the evidential situation of a hallucinating subject does render it reasonable for her to (falsely) believe that she is perceiving. The crucial point here is that lacking rational support for believing a proposition does not entail possessing rational support for believing its negation. However, there are no other elements in Martin’s view that would be able to bridge this gap in subjective rationality.

In particular, a phenomenal relationalist cannot simply point to some phenomenal property of hallucinations as what renders it reasonable for the subject to judge her experience to be a perception. This property could not be \( R^* \), given that hallucinations lack \( R^* \). Nor could it be the property of intentionally representing itself as being \( R^* \), for the reasons outlined before. But it is entirely unclear which other phenomenal property could mark the ascription of \( R^* \) to the experience as subjectively reasonable. Compare, again, the analogous case of experiences that do not instantiate the phenomenal properties of reddishness or painfulness and also do not represent themselves as instantiating these properties. Which other phenomenal property could they possess that would be able to rationally move the subject to believe that her experiences involve reddishness (e.g., visually represent some object as red) or are painful? No plausible candidate comes to mind. And there does not seem to be any reason to assume that the case of \( R^* \) is different than the case of reddishness or painfulness.

Martin suggests that the phenomenal property \( R^* \) is special in that there can be another set of phenomenal properties \( S \), of which each hallucination instantiates one member (though not necessarily the same), such that the phenomenal difference between \( S \) and \( R \) is not accessible to the subject. The subject can identify \( R \) as \( R \), but not \( S \) as \( S \). This is just the way in which Martin tries to accommodate the priority of perceptions over hallucinations: we take both to possess \( R^* \), although hallucinations possess some member of \( S \) instead. What he insists on is the fact that the indiscriminability of phenomenal properties does not imply their identity.

Whatever the merits of that argument, it is important to see that, on pain of admitting

---

33 Indeed, Martin defends a purely epistemic account of hallucinations, according to which the subject cannot identify any of the phenomenal properties of hallucinations. One of argues against this pure form of the epistemic account and replaces it with a more moderate one in Author A (2010, 2013).

phenomenal error, the phenomenal relationalist needs to accept that our mistaken judgements about hallucinations cannot be based on the way those hallucinatory experience are given to us in consciousness. If we cannot subjectively discriminate a hallucination from a perception and wrongly take it to possess $R^*$, although it does not instantiate this phenomenal property, then our error cannot have its source in how we are phenomenally aware of the hallucinatory experience. For phenomenal error is impossible: no experience can mislead us about its own phenomenal character (e.g. that this character includes $R^*$) on the basis of our phenomenal awareness of the phenomenal properties that it actually possesses (e.g. some member of $S$). So a phenomenal relationalist like Martin would need to show that our doxastic error has an independent source, unrelated to phenomenal awareness. But since no good alternative seems to be available, the view appears to be unable to account for our doxastic error of mistaking perfect hallucinations for perceptions.\footnote{Note that the challenge to Martin’s view presented in Siegel, (2008) is different, as discussed in Author A (2011).}

In particular, phenomenal relationalism could not maintain that we are mislead about the phenomenal nature of hallucinations, not because of the way they are given in consciousness, but because of background assumptions concerning some other phenomenal properties that hallucinations share with perceptions, despite their difference with respect to $R^*$. We typically associate, for instance, the phenomenal property of \textit{subjectively seeming} to be a relation to some external object – a phenomenal property which hallucinations arguably share with perceptions – with the phenomenal property $R^*$ of being a relation to some external objects. And this association might perhaps be said to be the source of our false introspective belief about the phenomenal nature of hallucination. That is, we take hallucinations to possess $R^*$ on the basis of our (naive realist) background assumption that experiences, which first-personally appear to be relational, are in fact relational.

But this proposal would have to be confronted with the possibility of removing the background assumptions under consideration. If the reason I have to believe that my present hallucination has the phenomenal property $R^*$, although it does not actually possess this property and hence is not given as such in my consciousness, is the presence of some background assumptions, then discovering that those assumptions are misleading should open the experience to my cognitive scrutiny. One would then expect that the phenomenal difference between perception and hallucination should become accessible to my introspective scrutiny. But this does not seem right. Hallucinations do not show their supposedly true phenomenal nature once one ceases to fall prey to the cognitive illusion generated by the background assumptions that, if an experience subjectively seems to be relational, then it is indeed relational (an assumption which is precisely false in the case of hallucinations. A phenomenal relationalist like Martin must thus, as a last resort, postulate a brute and thoroughly inaccessible phenomenal difference that would be responsible for the distinction in phenomenal nature between perceptions and hallucinations.

The other problem for Martin’s proposal is that it is unclear how the view can avoid the objection against the second option for the phenomenal relationalist noted above, namely that the absence of $R^*$ is phenomenally accessible to the hallucinating subject and thus
renders it unreasonable for her to take her experience to stand in relation \( R^* \) to the world. Martin is forced to deny that the subject can become phenomenally aware of the absence of \( R^* \).

But this cannot be squared with the fact that it is part of the nature of phenomenal properties that we are phenomenally aware of them just in case one of our experiences instantiates them. Indeed, Martin seems to accept that the instantiation of \( R^* \) and our phenomenal awareness of it are inseparable; or at least part of it. For him, all perceptions – but no other mental episodes – are \( R^* \); and all perceptions – but no other mental episodes – involve phenomenal awareness of \( R^* \). But if the instantiation and our phenomenal awareness of \( R^* \) are so intimately linked to each other, the same should be true of the lack of instantiation and the lack of phenomenal awareness with respect to \( R^* \). We are phenomenally aware of \( R^* \) just in case \( R^* \) is instantiated. In particular, hallucinations neither possess \( R^* \), nor come with phenomenal awareness of \( R^* \).

### 7 Conclusion

This is the point where intentionalism may be in a position to offer an attractive alternative. Instead of challenging the idea that perceptions and hallucinations differ essentially, it could accept that they do, but insist that they differ only on the non-phenomenal level.

Combining intentionalism in this way with non-phenomenal relationalism allows us to maintain that, although perception and hallucination do in fact have the same phenomenal (and intentional) nature, they possess different non-phenomenal natures. Perceptions are indeed states in which we enter into contact with external objects in such a way that this relation determines how the objects appear first-personally. But our relation to the objects has in impact on the phenomenal character of our perceptual experiences only by determining the intentional content of those experiences. In contrast, there are no external objects to which one stands in relation when hallucinating, but hallucinations – just like perceptions – present themselves as if they were relations to such objects. Hallucinations misrepresent their non-phenomenal nature – which is a case of experiential error, without being an instance of phenomenal error.

The brand of intentionalism under consideration can thus readily admit that there is an asymmetry between perceptions and hallucinations: perceptions manifest their true (non-phenomenal and relational) nature in consciousness, while hallucinations do not. Indeed, a hallucination misleadingly provides us with a reason to believe that it is a perception, whereas a perception does not provide us with a reason to believe that it is a hallucination. The intentionalist can explain this asymmetry by reference to the fact that both kinds of experience intentionally present themselves as relations to external objects.

We can now understand why phenomenologists such as Husserl seem to have been rather agnostic about disjunctivism concerning the non-phenomenal nature of experiences. Husserl was quite clear about the fact that, from our first-personal perspective, both per-
ceptions and hallucinations seem to be relations to external objects. In the Logical Investigations, he also states that, in perception – in opposition to hallucination – the object itself is given to us. Yet this fact, the fact that, in perception, we stand in relation to an external object, does not constitute the phenomenal character of the perceptual experience. In the light of what we saw so far we know why. There is good reason to endorse naive realism and relationalism with respect to perceptions, but only in its non-phenomenal – rather than its phenomenal – variant.

References


36 It is of course a basic tenet of Husserl’s theory of intentionality, that the most important conscious features of an intentional act correspond to ways in which an object is experienced (e.g. in thought or perception). For instance, he uses the term ‘Gegenwärtigkeit’ (‘presence’) to describe the fact that perceptual experiences seem to make us aware of objects present in our actual environment. He thus writes in the Logical Investigations that in perception, as opposed to imagination, ‘the object [seems] to achieve full-bodied presence [leibhaftige Gegenwärtigkeit], to be there in propria persona’ (see Husserl, (1901/1984, B 441f.) and Husserl, (1901/1970, p. 137)). More on this in Author B (2009).

37 Acknowledgements.
Schellenberg, Susanna (2011). “Perceptual Content Defended”. In: *Noûs* 45.4, pp. 714–750.