Reply to Jackson and Schellenberg

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While both Frank and Susanna take on the topic of (alleged) singular perceptual representation, their argumentative aims are quite different. Frank gives a series of arguments designed to show that there is no such thing as singular perceptual representation (at least, when that is understood in a certain way). Susanna is on the other side of this debate. But her focus is less to defend the existence of singular perceptual content than to explicate one particular way of understanding those contents, and show its virtues. I'll therefore discuss their two papers in turn.

1 FRANK

One can think of Frank's paper as separable into three argumentative threads. The first is an argument that the contents of experience are best thought of as sets of centered worlds. The second is an argument against Existentialism, the view that the contents of experience are existentially quantified contents. The third is an argument

that, despite the falsity of Existentialism, there is a clear sense in which the contents of experience are general rather than particular. I'll to discuss these in turn.

1.1 A multiple choice test

A good way to approach the first two argumentative threads is with the following multiple choice test:

(Q1) Are the contents of experience inherently perspectival?

    (1a) Yes

    (1b) No

(Q2) Are the contents of experience ever indeterminate?

    (2a) Yes

    (2b) No

(Q3) What sorts of things are the contents of experience?

    (3a) Sets of circumstances (which may be possible worlds, or centered worlds, or incomplete circumstances)

    (3b) Structured entities of some sort

(Q4) Are the contents of experience existentially quantified contents?

    (4a) Yes

    (4b) No

Now, Frank and I almost agree on the answers to our multiple choice test. Frank thinks that the right answers are (1a), (2a), (3a), and (4b). I disagree only on (Q3).

But rather than asking what the right answers to these questions are, I want to ask whether these questions are independent. Does one's answer to any of these questions constrain one's answer to the others?

Before reading Frank's paper, my answer would have been: These questions are all independent. Any answer to any of these questions is consistent with any answer to any other. But in making his case for the centered worlds view and against Existentialism, Frank takes the opposite view.

1.2 The argument for centered worlds

Frank's central arguments for the view that the contents of experience are centered worlds take as their main premises, respectively, (1a) and (2a). Let's look at these arguments in turn.

1.2.1   From (1a) to (3a)

First, Frank suggests that the fact that perceptual content is inherently perspectival counts in favor of the view that propositions are sets of centered worlds. I agree with him that the perspectival nature of perceptual content can be given an adequate treatment by the friend of centered worlds. I'm less sure, though, that this is the only theoretical framework which can provide such a treatment.

It is natural for the the believer in structured propositions — at least, if she is a Russellian — to also accept the existence of structured properties. If the sentence

> Violet admires Amelia.

expresses a structured proposition with Violet, the relation of admiring, and Amelia as constituents, then presumably the property corresponding to the open sentence

> x admires Amelia

is also a structured entity, with the relation of admiring and Amelia as constituents.

Suppose that this is right. Then the proponent of a structured content of experience might propose that the content of an experience is a structured property which subjects of experience self-ascribe. So, for example, consider the property corresponding to the open sentence

> there is a red circular tomato such-and-such distance from x and in such-and-such direction from x and in such-and-such orientation relative to x and ...

Perhaps, the proponent of a structured content of experience might say, in an experience I self-ascribe properties such as this one. This would seem to capture the fact that, as Frank puts it, in experience

> 'The information concerns how far from one's face some glass of wine is, the direction in which one's hand will have to move in order to grasp the glass, the relative angle between that direction and the direction in which one's hand will have to move to pick up the knife next to the glass, whether the path of an oncoming car will intersect with the direction in which one is currently walking, and so on.'

Of course, there is a sense in which the view of perceptual content just sketched is not so far from Frank's favored way of modeling perspective in terms of centered worlds. Much as structured propositions as ordinarily conceived determine a set of possible worlds, so structured properties like the above determine a set of centered worlds (namely, the set of centered worlds in which the thing in the center instantiates the property). But that just brings out the point that, when it comes to modeling the perspectival nature of perception, there is no special advantage for unstructured conceptions of content.

Now, it may be that I am reading too much into Frank's argument here. Perhaps he is not claiming that the perspectival nature of perceptual content rules out any view according to which the contents of experience are structured, but only a view according to which those contents are the sorts of structured propositions which many

take to be expressed by sentences relative to contexts. If so, then we are on the same page. But in that case, we are not — at least not yet — entitled to conclude that the centered worlds picture of perceptual content is to be favored over a structured approach.

1.2.2 From (2a) to (3a)

Let's now look at Frank's second argument in favor of the unstructured approach, which turns on the indeterminacy of perceptual representation. As he says,

> 'the information an experience delivers will vary greatly in how determinate it is. Right now I am having an experience as of a laptop directly in front of me. The information being delivered about the distance between me and the laptop, the laptop's color and its relative position with respect to my body, is not completely precise but is, all the same, reasonably determinate. That isn't true for the information my experience is delivering about the color, shape and distance away of, for example, the window at the left periphery of my field of vision.'

This is, I think, clearly correct. And I again agree with Frank that it can be handled neatly by a theory of perceptual contents as uncentered worlds. The worlds in the set will just vary to some degree with respect to the distance of the window at the left periphery of the center's field of vision, and will vary to a much lesser degree with respect to the relative position of the laptop.

But can the proponent of structured contents also handle this phenomenon? I think so — at least if he helps himself to a somewhat permissive theory of properties. The key is that some properties are more determinate than others. So, for example, the property of being scarlet is more determinate than the property of being red. Given this, it is natural to think (on a structured view of contents) that the contents of experience will sometimes include relatively more determinate properties, and sometimes relatively less determinate properties.

And so, when the proponent of structured contents turns to experiences like Frank's laptop experience, he will model the differences in relative determinacy by supplying more or less determinate properties to give the contents of different aspects of the experience. So, for example, the orientation property which Frank's experience ascribes to his laptop will be more determinate than the orientation property ascribed to the window in the periphery of his visual field.

Again, it is worth emphasizing the close connection between structured propositions and properties on the one hand, and centered worlds on the other. Structured propositions determine a set of worlds, and structured properties determine a set of centered worlds. If worlds but not structured contents can model indeterminacy, then there must be some sets of centered worlds which are not determined by any structured property. But — at least if we have a suitably abundant theory of properties — I don't yet see why this should be the case.

Of course, one might still prefer the worlds story over the structured properties picture if one wanted a less abundant theory of properties. That is fair enough. Most Russellians, though, who are accustomed to supplying properties as the meanings of predicates, will have already reconciled themselves to an abundant theory.

1.3   The case against Existentialism

Let's turn now to Frank's case against the Existentialist. Here too there are two main lines of argument.

1.3.1   From (1a) to (4b)

The first is swift, and again turns on the perspectival nature of experience. Existentialism says that the content of experience is given by some formula like

$$\exists x Fx \ \& \ \exists y Gy \ \& \ \ldots$$

where all properties mentioned are qualitative. But, Frank says, then

> 'If Existentialism were true, we could specify the content of any experi-
> ence in terms of the worlds that are consistent with it. The information
> delivered by any experience of yours would be that you occupy a world
> that is thus and so. But that's the wrong answer. As we detail above,
> the perspectival nature of the information delivered by your perceptual
> experiences means that we need a set of centered worlds to capture the
> information they deliver.'

I agree with Frank that the perspectival nature of experience shows that Existentialism, as just defined, is false. But it seems to me that the Existentialist has a natural fallback position:

> Existentialism*: the content of experience is a perspectival content which
> only ever represents it as being the case that there is something (or some
> things) which have certain qualitative properties and stand in certain
> qualitative relations to oneself.

When confronted with the perspectival nature of experience, I think that many Existentialists will be happy to reformulate their position as Existentialism*. What Existentialists are most concerned to oppose, I think, is the view that experience represent specific objects as in the environment of the subject, rather than just representing there being some objects or other with certain properties. They will, not, I think, be bothered by having to admit that we also represent those objects (whatever they are) as standing in certain relations to ourselves.

If the Existentialist* goes for structured properties as the content of experience, she will take the contents of experience to be properties like, to use the above example, the one corresponding to the open sentence

> $\exists y(y$ is red $\& \ y$ is such-and-such distance from $x \ \& \ y$ is in such-and-such
> direction from $x \ \& \ y$ is in such-and-such orientation relative to $x) \ \& \ \exists z$
> $(\ldots$

The Existentialist* might then point out that this property is a purely qualitative one. Hence this sort of Existentialist* position seems very much in the spirit of Existentialism.

On an unstructured view of the contents of experience, the Existentialist* position would be that the contents of experience are the centered worlds determined by properties like this one. So far, then, I think that Existentialism* survives Frank's arguments.

1.3.2 Existentialism* and 'identity as such'

Frank, however, has another argument against Existentialism which, if correct, would seem to be equally an argument against Existentialism*. This argument turns on the claim that in experience we sometimes represent 'identity as such.' What he means by this can be brought out by his example:

> 'when you see a person walk behind a tree and emerge on the other side, typically you see the person emerging *as* being the very same person – that's part of the nature of your experience. . . . what unites the centered worlds that are the content of your experience in cases like these cannot be captured in purely qualitative terms. Each center in its world will be temporally extended and there will be a single object that interacts with the center at two different times.'

I think (again) that what Frank is saying here about experience is quite plausible. Can it be accommodated by the Existentialist*?

Here is a try. Simplifying massively, the Existentialist* might say that the content of the experience Frank describes is given by

> $\exists y(y$ is a person walking out from begin a tree) $\& \exists z(x$ saw z walk behind the tree a little while ago) $\& y = z \& \ldots$

This appears to be formulated in terms of purely qualitative properties, and so would seem to be fair game for the Existentialist*. But this open sentence, I think, determines just the set of centered worlds that Frank uses to give the content of the experience. An individual in a world will satisfy this open sentence, after all, just in case 'there is a single object that interacts with the center at two different times.'

Frank is not an Existentialist. But I suspect that he may be an Existentialist*!

1.4   The case for generalism

I have been focusing on the question of how an Existentialist* might resist Frank's arguments against this view. But I am not an Existentialist*; I am inclined to think that the contents of experience include particular objects, and not just qualitative properties and relations. So let's turn now to Frank's argument against this view, and in favor of generalism.

Here is the core of that argument:

> 'What would have to be established to show that this experience is veridical? . . . We need to make the right discoveries about the properties . . . of the objects in my vicinity. Are they the right colors, shapes etc., do they have the right locations and causal connections relative to me, and so on. One thing we do not need to find out are the essential properties of the objects. Why do I say that? I am sure that I have often had veridical perceptions. I am sure that you are sure that you have often had veridical perceptions. Neither of us has known the essential properties of the objects we were seeing when we had those perceptions. Ergo, what needs to be established to show that a perception is veridical does not include the

essential properties of the objects around us. Enough information about objects' shapes, relative positions to the perceiver, causal connections and all that is enough is to settle whether or not a perception is veridical.'

A first reply to the argument is to say that the particularist (at least, my sort) never had in mind a view about the perceptual representation of essences. The view was not that in perception we represent haecceities, or the sperm and egg from which some individual originated. I agree with Frank that that sort of view is not at all plausible. The particularist says, not that essences of individual objects are parts of the contents of experience, but rather that the individuals themselves are. (Here I give the view a Russellian spin; one could instead, as Susanna does, replace talk of individuals with talk of de re modes of presentation of individuals. Nothing will turn on this here, so I stick with the Russellian version for simplicity.)

But even if the particularist (in my view) need not be particularly worried about Frank's claims about essential properties, she can't simply ignore this argument. For there is a way of taking Frank's argument on which it *does* pose a problem for particularism. For, as the last line of the above quote makes clear, Frank is not just presenting an argument against perceptual representation of essential properties, but is also defending a positive claim about the veridicality conditions of experience.

Frank's view can be illustrated by considering a simple experience of something red. Frank's idea is that the experience is veridical just in case *something* is red (and stands in the right relations to the perceiver, etc.) But suppose that the red thing is o. The particularist will supply as the content of this experience some content like

o is red (and stands in the right relations to the perceiver, etc.)

But then, if Frank is right about the veridicality conditions of experience, the particularist has made a mistake. Supposing for simplicity that an experience is veridical iff its content is true of the perceiver, the set of centered worlds which give the veridicality conditions of this experience will not include every world in which something or other has the relevant properties, but instead the subset of worlds in which o — that very object — does.

Who is right? It is not altogether easy to say. In ordinary cases, the particularist and Frank will agree about which experiences are veridical, so it is hard to use intuitions about veridicality to arbitrate between them. The disagreement is mainly not about the veridicality of certain experiences, but about the 'possible (centered) worlds' truth conditions of those experiences. And that is not something about which we have very clear intuitions. (This is a contrast with disputes about the truth conditions of sentences; there we can generate intuitions, in part, by embedding the sentence under a modal operator. But it is not so easy to do anything analogous with experiences.)

One might try to defend Frank's view by saying this: imagine some scenario in which you are confronted by a red thing $o*$ distinct from o, and imagine that you had the very experience, with the very same phenomenal character, as in the case above. Surely your experience would be veridical. But that contradicts the particularist claim that the experience is veridical iff o (not some other thing!) is red.

But I think that the thought experiment is not conclusive. For on the most straightforward way of construing the thought experiment, the particularist will say

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that the new experience has a different content than the original one: it represents $o*$ as red, whereas the old one represents o as red. So the particularist will agree with Frank that the new experience is also veridical, while disagreeing with Frank about whether the two experiences have the same veridicality conditions.

Now, I have not made any attempt to show that Frank's view of the veridicality conditions of experiences is incorrect, and to argue in favor of the particularist's view. Instead I've argued that, as far as veridicality intuitions go, it is a draw.

2   SUSANNA

When it comes to singular content, I am basically on Susanna's side. I agree with her that indiscriminable experiences of distinct objects can nonetheless differ in content. Most of her paper is devoted to developing a positive view of content consistent with this thought, and so I will begin there, before returning to the case she makes against some of the views which she rejects.

2.1   MOP's

Susanna goes for a structured view of contents, according to which the constituents of the contents of experience are, not objects and properties, but de re modes of presentation of objects and properties. I think that this view is fascinating, and superior in many respects to more familiar sorts of Fregean views.

Since some of my questions about the view are about its proper interpretation, it will be useful to begin by sketching the way in which Susanna represents the view. Let's take an experience of some object o as red. Whereas we might represent the Russellian's view of the content of this experience as

< o, red>

on Susanna's view, this content can be represented as involving a pair of singular modes of presentation, as follows:

< $MOP_1(o), MOP_2(\text{red})$ >

Susanna's positive theory can then be partially characterized by the following theses:

[S1] There is a stock of distinct singular MOP's, MOP_1, MOP_2, ... which (in a sense to be explained) combine with objects and properties to form singular modes of presentation of objects and properties.

[S2] $\forall x \forall y (x \neq y \supset MOP_n(x) \neq MOP_n(y))$ (And analogously for properties.)

[S3] Experiences differ in their phenomenal character iff there is a difference in the MOP's involved in their content. So, for any x, y, F, G, the phenomenal character of an experience with the content

< $MOP_1(x), MOP_2(F)$ >

will differ from one with the content

$$< MOP_3(y), MOP_4(G) >$$

iff $MOP_1 \neq MOP_3$ or $MOP_2 \neq MOP_4$.

Theses [S2] and [S3] can be seen as the key to Susanna's strategy of finding a middle path between the extremes of austere representationalism and austere relationalism. [S2] gives the identity of the object perceived a genuine role to play in fixing the content of the experience — something which the austere representationalist fails to do. [S3] provides an explanation of the possibility of hallucinations and veridical experiences sharing a phenomenal character – something that the austere relationalist fails to do.

This is an attractive middle ground. It is of course not only open to the Fregean. The Russellian might offer parallel views. She might say that objects are part of the contents of experience (thus making room for the relational component of which the austere representationalist can give no adequate treatment). And she might say that the phenomenal character of the experience is fixed by the properties which are part of the content – thus, unlike the austere relationalist, explaining how hallucinations and veridical experiences can share a phenomenal character.

I'll come back to Russellianism in a bit. First, I want to ask four questions about Susanna's view.

2.1.1 How should we understand '$MOP(o)$'?

Let's return to our toy experience, in which an object is represented as red, and which will on Susanna's view have a content of the form

$$< MOP_1(o), MOP_2(\text{red}) >$$

A first question is how we should understand expressions like '$MOP_1(o)$', as they are used in stating the theory.

Here is the intended interpretation:

> *The function-argument interpretation*
>
> In the object place of this content we find a mode of presentation. 'MOP_1' is a functional expression, which denotes a function from objects to modes of presentation. Hence in the object place of the above content we do not find two things, MOP_1 and o, but rather find just one thing, namely the value of the MOP_1-function when it takes o as argument. (And analogously for the predicate position.)

I have two questions about the basic ontology of the theory, so understood. Both questions are about the nature of the functions which are (on this interpretation) denoted by 'MOP_1', 'MOP_2', etc.

It is clear that Susanna takes these functions to be closely related to perceptual capacities. In particular, as I understand it, these functions are supposed to be paired one-to-one with perceptual capacities. In discussing an example, Susanna says

> '$MOP_r(\alpha)$ is constituted by the perceptual capacity employed and the particular α thereby singled out ...'

But to endorse a one-to-one pairing of this sort is not to answer the following question:

> How are perceptual capacities related to the functions from objects to de re modes of presentation which correspond to 'MOP_1', 'MOP_2', etc.?

The claim that there is a one-to-one pairing does not tell us what the one-to-one pairing is. Perceptual capacities are not themselves functions, after all. If I can identify some perceptual capacity, how do I derive the relevant function?

This question is intertwined with another:

> MOP_1, MOP_2, etc. are functions which take objects and properties as arguments. What are their values?

In one sense, I know how to answer this question: the values are de re modes of presentation. But then I wonder what these are. Is this just a sui generis category in our ontology? If so, then the metaphysical complaints about Russellianism (about which more below) seem less biting. If we already have independent reason to believe in properties, one might think, it seems better to believe in uninstantiated properties than to add a new category to our ontology.

This is the worry which lies behind my admittedly nitpicky questions, since I suspect that Susanna will not be altogether happy positing this new realm of entities. I think, on the contrary, that she would like to understand the occupant of the object place of our toy experience in a more naturalistic way, as, in some sense, involving nothing more than an object and a specific perceptual capacity. I agree that this would be an attractive sort of view. But it is hard for me to see how that can be the full story on the function-argument interpretation. For on that interpretation, the theory requires not just objects, properties, and perceptual capacities, but also de re modes of presentation (which are distinct from any of the above) and functions from objects and properties to these de re modes of presentation (also distinct from any of the above).

To keep these separate in what follows, I'll use 'MOP's' for the functions, and 'modes of presentation' for their values. Both MOP's and modes of presentation play a central role in the theory, and both would seem to invoke the sort of 'two realm' ontology for which Russellianism was criticized.

Now, I think that there is a way to avoid this sort of problem — though I don't think that it is a direction that Susanna would like to go. The escape route would invoke a different interpretation of the basic vocabulary of the theory than given by the function-argument interpretation:

> *The ordered pair interpretation*
>
> It might be that in the object place of this content we find both a MOP and an object, so that both of these things are constituents of the content. On one natural way of developing this view, the object place is occupied by something like an ordered pair. So, on this view, the entity singled out by '$MOP_1(o)$' is something like $< MOP_1, o >$. (And analogously for MOP_2 and redness.)

A natural thought would be that we could then treat expressions like 'MOP_1' not as denoting functions from objects and properties to third realm-y modes of presentation, but rather as simply standing for conceptual capacities. '$MOP_1(o)$' would just

stand for the pair of an object and a perceptual capacity. The above questions about the ontology of the theory would then be simply skirted; there would be no need for either modes of presentation or functions from objects and properties to such, and all of the theoretical work could be done by objects, properties, and perceptual capacities.

I think that the ordered pair interpretation is compatible with all of [S1-3]. But I don't think that Susanna will like it, since it collapses her view into a version of the 'multiple contents' view which she criticizes in her paper for failing to adequately connect the aspects of perceptual experience which are responsible for its phenomenal and relational nature. So in what follows the function-argument interpretation will be my focus.

2.1.2 What should we say about cases where perceptual capacities misfire?

One of the attractive features of Susanna's account is the treatment she can give of cases of hallucination. In these cases, we have a perceptual capacity activated without the presence of the object or property it functions to single out.

But if we turn from hallucination to illusion, I think that the account faces some difficult questions. Let's suppose that MOP_{blue} is the MOP corresponding to my perceptual capacity for singling out the color blue. In veridical experience, this perceptual capacity is triggered by blueness, in which case the predicate position of the content of the experience will be filled by

$$MOP_{blue}(\text{blue})$$

But now suppose that we have a case of illusion, in which this perceptual capacity is triggered by some color other than blue — say, red. Then, as I understand it, the content of the experience will contain in predicate place

$$MOP_{blue}(\text{red})$$

It follows from [S3] that the phenomenal character of the experience will be the same as the phenomenal character of a veridical experience of blue – which seems just as it should be.

But we know from [S2] that its content cannot be the same as the content of a veridical experience of blue. So what is its content? There would appear to be just two options. Either it represents the object as some color other than blue (under some mode of presentation), or it represents the object as blue, but under a different mode of presentation (though crucially not a different MOP) than the veridical experience.

The first option seems like a nonstarter. Suppose that the experience represents the object as red (although under a blue-ish mode of presentation). But then suppose that the illusion ceases, and the subject's red-detecting perceptual capacities kick into action. Then the content of the experience will include

$$MOP_{red}(red)$$

and by [S3] the experience will have a 'reddish' phenomenal character. It will certainly seem to the subject that the color she is visually representing the object to have has changed radically; she would be quite surprised to be told that she was, the whole

time, representing the object as red! Parallel surprising results would follow if we supposed that the subject was, at the time of the experience, representing the object as orange, or yellow, or some color other than red.

So it must be that, in the illusory experience, the subject is representing the object as blue. This need not conflict with [S2], since on Susanna's view contents are more fine-grained than Russellian contents; she can say that a pair of experiences which differ only with respect to substitution of the contents

$$MOP_{blue}(red)$$
$$MOP_{blue}(blue)$$

both represent the object in question as having the property blue, but under different modes of presentation.

But although this position in logical space is available, it seems to me a somewhat unattractive one, for two reasons.

First, it is just hard to see what this difference in mode of presentation could consist in. How could two experiences which are phenomenally identical — as they must be, given [S3] — and represent the same color property as instantiated differ with respect to the mode of presentation under which that color property is presented? What does the difference in mode of presentation consist in?

Second, this implies a surprising asymmetry between the perceptual representation of objects and the perceptual representation of properties, on Susanna's view. For recall her example of the phenomenally indiscriminable experiences of the distinct deer in the Jersey wasteland. Those, I take it, will have contents

$$< MOP_{deer}(\text{deer \#1}), \ldots >$$
$$< MOP_{deer}(\text{deer \#2}), \ldots >$$

These will (by [S3]) be phenomenally identical, but will on Susanna's view represent distinct deer. Why, then, should a pair of experiences with contents

$$< \ldots, MOP_{blue}(\text{red}) >$$
$$< \ldots, MOP_{blue}(\text{blue}) >$$

represent the same color property as instantiated?

Susanna might just reply by saying: 'Well, object representation and property representation are just very different things, and the veridicality conditions of experiences are determined quite differently in the two cases.' I think that that is probably the best thing for her to say about this case. But it would be good to have some explanation of why MOP's seem to work so differently in these two cases.

2.1.3 Are there experiences which differ only in their MOPs?

We just considered a puzzle that arises from thinking about experiences whose contents differ in the property which is the argument of a constituent MOP, but are alike with respect to all of their MOP's. Different, but also puzzling, cases can be generated by considering the opposite sort of case, in which two experiences differ in their MOP's but not in any of the arguments to those MOP's.

So consider, for example, a pair of experiences whose contents differ only in the mode of presentation of some object:

$$< MOP_1(o), \ldots >$$
$$< MOP_2(o), \ldots >$$

where $MOP_1 \neq MOP_2$. By [S3], these experiences must differ in their phenomenal character. But it is hard to see how there could be experiences of this sort. I say this only because I cannot think of examples. These would be experiences which differ in their phenomenal character, and yet are the same with respect to (i) the object represented, (ii) every property represented as instantiated in the scene, and (iii) every mode of presentation of every such property.

Since Susanna's theoretical framework appears to make room for cases of this sort, it seems that we need to do one of two things: either make a plausible case that pairs of experiences of this sort are possible, or add to the theory extra constraints on MOP's which explain their impossibility.

The latter route seems to me more promising. One might pursue this route by adopting the view that the MOP under which an object is presented in an experience is fixed by the the properties represented in that experience, and the modes of presentation under which those properties are represented.

I wonder, though, whether this pushes Susanna in a direction she would rather not go. Recall that the MOP under which an object is perceptually represented is fixed by the perceptual capacity by means of which that object is detected. On the present proposal, which perceptual capacity for recognizing objects is operative is fixed by the explanatorily prior facts about which properties are perceptually represented. And this seems to deprive perceptual capacities for representing objects from playing the fundamental role which Susanna wants them to play.

Consider, for example, her worry that on David Chalmers' picture of perceptual representation,

> 'The layer of content that grounds the phenomenal character of the experience does not itself determine an extension.'

But if we take the course just recommended, just the same is true of Susanna's view. For then the layer of content that grounds the phenomenal character of the experience would be the representation of properties (and the modes of presentation under which they are represented). And that layer would not itself determine which objects are represented by the experience. To put the same point another way, I worry that this way of modifying her theory would push it too close to the conjunctivist views of perception she wishes to avoid.

I can't resist adding that this problem goes away if we remove MOP's from the picture, and treat singular representation in perception as Russellians suggest — namely, by letting objects themselves be constituents of the relevant contents. Then there is just no space for the possibility of pairs of experiences of the sort described above — which, I think, is what we should want, since such pairs of experiences don't seem to be possible.

2.1.4   How fine-grained are perceptual capacities?

A last question concerns the individuation of the perceptual capacities which play a central role in Susanna's theory.

It follows immediately from Susanna's explanation of sameness and difference of phenomenal character in terms of content — namely, [S3] — that two possible subjects have with the same phenomenal character iff their experiences involve the same MOP's. But (as I understand it) the MOP involved in the content of a given perceptual experience is fixed by the perceptual capacities deployed by the subject of that experience. From this the following principle seems to follow:

$\forall x \forall y$ (x, y are having experiences with the same phenomenal character iff x, y are deploying the same perceptual capacities)

One easy way to make this principle come out true would be to analyze perceptual capacities in terms of phenomenal character. But it is pretty clear, I think, that this is not how Susanna wants to understand perceptual capacities. She says

'when we perceive we employ perceptual capacities the possession of which can be analyzed in terms of perceptual relations to external, mind-independent particulars. Indeed, perceptual capacities are individuated by the mind-independent particulars they function to single out.'

One can imagine various ways of making this precise; but it makes clear, I think, that Susanna wants some independent way of characterizing the notion of a perceptual capacity. I want now to present a kind of dilemma for the view.

The first horn of the dilemma comes from consideration of cases in which quite dissimilar subjects nonetheless enjoy experiences with the same phenomenal character. A familiar and dramatic example is a standard sort of 'brain in a vat' scenario. Let BIV be a synthetic brain constructed for purposes of a nefarious scientific experiment. To many it has seemed possible that BIV might have hallucinations phenomenally indiscriminable from my own. But then it follows that BIV and I have, and are employing, the same perceptual capacities. And this seems hard to understand given the above gloss on the latter notion.

Susanna might reply by just denying that there could be a brain in a vat with the requisite phenomenal properties. Maybe this is the right thing to say. But it is surely possible that there be some being which is quite different from me in many ways but which, at some time, has an experience with the same phenomenal character as mine. Call such a being a 'surprising phenomenal twin' of mine. In general, the possibility of surprising phenomenal twins will argue for a relatively coarse-grained account of perceptual capacities, since (given the above principle) sameness of phenomenal character entails sameness of perceptual capacities deployed.

The other horn of the dilemma comes from consideration of cases in which quite similar subjects nonetheless enjoy experiences with different phenomenal characters. Consider my experience at two times, t1 and t2, which differ only slightly with respect to my visual representation of the color of some thing. By the above principle, I must be deploying different perceptual capacities in the two experiences. Since the difference between me at these two times will be rather small, this argues in favor of a relatively fine-grained account of perceptual capacities.

The dilemma, then, is this. Can we come up with an account of perceptual capacities which satisfies the twin desiderata of giving surprising phenomenal twins the same perceptual capacities, and me at t1 and t2 different ones? I have no impossibility proof to give — but I worry that this looks like a tough needle to thread.

2.2   Two alternative views

I've raised a series of questions for Susanna's positive view; I'd like to close by briefly thinking about the comparative virtues of two opposing views, one which Susanna discusses, and one which she does not.

Susanna lays out the terrain with the help of the following four (lightly reworded) theses, which together define the position she calls 'austere representationalism':

[AR1] Experiences have content.

[AR2] A perception, an illusion, and a hallucination can have the same phenomenal character.

[AR3] Experiences have the same phenomenal character iff they have the same content.

[AR4] Perceptual content is not constituted by perceived mind-independent particulars.

As Susanna says, the first three of these jointly entail the third. But, as we have seen, Susanna thinks that [AR4] is false, and so that one of [AR1-3] must go. I'm on her side here. The question is then which of [AR1-3] should be rejected.

2.2.1   A Russellian alternative

Susanna rejects [AR3], and crafts in response the theory we've been discussing. But one might join her in rejecting [AR3], and yet adopt a quite different picture of perceptual content. This would be to adopt the Russellian view that the constituents of the contents of experience are, not singular modes of presentation of objects and properties, but the objects and properties themselves. Such a Russellian might follow Susanna in accepting [AR1], [AR2], and [AR4]; and she might replace [AR3] with the thesis that experiences share a phenomenal character iff they are alike with respect to the properties they represent. So we get many of the virtues of Susanna's view, including a neat account of sameness and difference of phenomenal character, without bringing MOP's into the picture at all.

Why not go for this sort of view instead? Susanna gives two main arguments against it, both of which begin by asking what the Russellian should say about cases of hallucination, in which there would seem to be no object to occupy the relevant 'slot' in the Russellian proposition which is supposed to be the content of the experience. She then says, plausibly, that the Russellian is likely to say that in these cases there is simply a gap where, in the case of veridical or illusory experience, an object would be.

Her first argument against this sort of view is as follows:

> 'the content of hallucination has too little structure to account for hallucinations as of multiple objects. If I hallucinate a green dragon playing the piano, the content of my experience will contain multiple gaps and nothing that marks their difference other than being bound with distinct properties.'

Susanna is certainly correct that any acceptable account of hallucination must be able to handle this sort of case. Her worry, I take it, is that if the content of the experience is some gappy content like

< ___, green> & < ___, winged> & < ___, black> & < ___, piano-shaped>

then this will fail to capture fact that the green thing, rather than the black thing, is being represented as winged. And that seems right. But it would seem to be a natural move for the Russellian to respond by thinking of the form of the proposition as something more like

< ___, green & winged> & < ___, black & piano-shaped>

This might be desirable on independent grounds to represent the difference between seeing x as red while seeing it as square (as when you see x and its reflection in a mirror) and seeing x as both red and square.

The second worry that Susanna presses about the Russellian approach comes from possible cases of hallucination in which a subject seems to represent something as having a property which is uninstantiated. As Susanna correctly says, it is hard for the Russellian to deny that, in such cases, the uninstantiated property is a constituent of the content of the experience. But this, she thinks, is objectionable, on the grounds that it involves commitment to 'some kind of Platonic "two realms"-view on which there is more to reality than the concrete physical world.'

An initial, slightly tongue in cheek, response to this is that people who live in Fregean houses should not throw stones about multiple realms! But the more serious reply is that — at least if the 'function-argument' interpretation suggested above is correct — Susanna's theory comes with an ontology of its own, which includes not just objects, properties, and perceptual capacities, but also — and distinct from any of these — singular modes of presentation of objects and properties and functions from objects and properties to these modes of presentation. Without more said about the latter — and in particular about the reasons why the addition of MOP's and modes of presentation to our ontology is less costly than the addition of uninstantiated properties — the parsimony-based line of objection to Russellianism seems to me inconclusive.

2.2.2 A neglected alternative?

In closing, I want to consider another view, which Susanna does not consider. This is a view which joins Susanna and the sort of Russellian just described in accepting [A4], but rejects [AR2] rather than [AR3].

Why would someone do this? Two reasons. First, there seems to be a reasonably strong argument in favor of [AR3]; and second, the best argument for [AR2] seems to me to have a false premise.

First, the argument for [AR3]. It is plausible that phenomenal character supervenes on content: necessarily, any two experiences with the same content will have the same phenomenal character. But then, we might ask, why does this supervenience hold? Why is there this modal relationship between these two properties?

An appealingly simple answer in this, as in other examples of supervenience, is: they are identical. The property of having a certain phenomenal character is identical

to the property of having a certain content. But identity is symmetric. So if this is the correct explanation of the supervenience of phenomenal character on content, the supervenience must go in the other direction as well, and [AR3] is true. Let's call this sort of view 'Simple Identity.'

Susanna, I think, won't find Simple Identity especially attractive; in a footnote, she says that it is not just false, but a kind of category mistake:

> 'Strong representationalism is sometimes articulated as the view that phenomenal character is identical with representational content. Any such identity claim amounts to a category mistake. After all, phenomenal character is a property that captures what it is like to perceive one's environment, while representational content has semantic and perhaps linguistic properties.'

I actually agree with Susanna's doubts about the way in which this sort of identity thesis is sometimes articulated. But it need not be expressed in a way which involves any sort of category mistake.

Suppose first that phenomenal characters are properties of experiences.(My own view is that it is better to drop 'experience talk' and just talk about properties of subjects. But the reasons for that are mainly orthogonal to the discussion here, and so I set it aside.) And suppose that [AR1] is true, and experiences have contents. It follows that experiences have, for some representational relation R and content p, properties like

> the property of standing in R to p

The reasonable view in the vicinity is that phenomenal characters are identical to properties like this. The view is not that phenomenal characters have representational properties, but rather that they are identical to the property of standing in a certain representational relation to some content. And this is no category mistake – at least, not as far as I can see.

One who goes for Simple Identity and rejects [A4] is then (given some plausible assumptions) forced to reject [AR2]. And one might find this a bitter pill to swallow if one accepts a plausible principle about sameness and difference of phenomenal character which Susanna endorses. She says

> 'if e1 and e2 have the same phenomenal character, then the experiencing subject could not tell the difference between e1 and e2 even if her perceptual capacities were ideal and she attended to every detail perceived.'

A nearby principle might be stated as follows:

[Distinctness/Discriminability] Necessarily, for any experiences e1, e2 with distinct phenomenal characters, what its like to have e1 is discriminable from what its like to have e2

And, if this principle is true, then [AR2] is true.

But a plausible case can be made that this principle is false. One way to make the argument focuses examples of a phenomenal sorites, which we can think of as a series of experiences such that each experience in the series is indiscriminable from the next,

but the first is discriminable from the last. To have a toy example to discuss, we can imagine a series of experiences of a screen which is very slowly changing from red to orange; let the members of the series be experiences each lasting a tenth of a second. If the change is slow enough, it is plausible that each experience in the series is indiscriminable from the next.

But – as others have argued – if such a series is possible, it seems to follow that principles like [Distinctness/Discriminability] are false. For it follows from this principle that each experience in the series has the same phenomenal character as the next; and then it follows from the transitivity of identity that the first experience in the series has the same phenomenal character as the last, which is clearly false. And if this principle is false, there is no obvious reason why we should accept [AR2]. Why not think that cases of so-called 'matching' veridical and hallucinatory experiences are just another example of experiences with distinct, but indiscriminable, phenomenal characters?

Susanna's discussion of the identity conditions of phenomenal characters near the start of the paper suggest two lines of response to this argument. The first is that she might just stipulate that, by 'phenomenal character,' she means properties of experiences which are, when distinct, discriminable. This stipulation is perfectly fair. But then the moral of the example of the phenomenal sorites is that there are, in her sense, no such things as phenomenal characters.

A second line of response is suggested by the following passage:

> 'It is important to distinguish the case in which two experiences have the same phenomenal character from the case in which they are merely subjectively indistinguishable. We can all agree that we might have two consecutive experiences e1 and e2 that are so similar that they are subjectively indistinguishable. We may be unable to tell them apart because we fail to properly attend to the details presented to us. Alternately, we might attend to all the details presented to us, but nonetheless be unable to tell the two experiences apart because we lack the requisite perceptual capacities. Neither is a case in which e1 and e2 have the same phenomenal character. After all, in the first kind of case, we could notice the difference between e1 and e2 if we paid better attention; in the second kind of case, we could notice the difference between e1 and e2 if our perceptual capacities were better.'

One might, along these lines, say that consecutive members of a phenomenal sorites are like the second sort of example of experiences which are merely subjectively indistinguishable, but not genuinely indiscriminable. After all, if we had better perceptual capacities, wouldn't we be able to distinguish the two experiences?

But this does not strike me as persuasive. If we had better perceptual capacities, we would not be able to distinguish between the relevant experiences in the sorites series. Rather, if we had better perceptual capacities, we would have *different* experiences, with different contents and phenomenal characters. (This is, after all, how things usually go with improvements in perceptual capacities – compare to the experience of putting on glasses.) And perhaps we could distinguish between *those* two experiences. But that wouldn't seem to tell us anything at all about the relative phenomenal characters of the experiences of the subject in the original sorites series.

If [Distinctness/Discriminability] turns out to be false, for the reasons detailed in connection with the phenomenal sorites or for others, Simple Identity is a reasonable alternative to austere representationalism for the theorist who wants to defend the identity of representational and phenomenal properties. This is especially true if one shares Susanna's thought that there should be a very close relation between the features of experience which explain its object-directness and the features which explain its phenomenal character. According to Simple Identity, that relation is the closest of all: identity. For on that view, phenomenal characters just are object-involving representational properties.

. . .

[conclusion]