

Naïve Realism and Diaphaneity

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Abstract

Naïve Realists think that the ordinary mind-independent objects that we perceive are constitutive of the character of experience. Some understand this in terms of the idea that experience is *diaphanous*: that the conscious character of a perceptual experience is *entirely constituted* by its objects. My main goal here is to argue that Naïve Realists should reject this, but I'll also highlight some suggestions as to how Naïve Realism might be developed in a non-diaphanous direction.

I.

Introduction Naïve Realists think that the ordinary mind-independent objects that we perceive are constitutive of the character of experience. Some understand this in terms of the idea that experience is *diaphanous*: that the conscious character of a perceptual experience is *entirely constituted* by its objects. My main goal here is to argue that Naïve Realists should reject this, but I'll also highlight some suggestions as to how Naïve Realism might be developed in a non-diaphanous direction.

In §(I) I spell out Naïve Realism. In §(II) I spell out Diaphaneity. In §(IV) I look to what commentators on Naïve Realism say and what Naïve Realists themselves say. When it comes to what Naïve Realists say, it is difficult to find Naïve Realists who commit to Diaphaneity. But in §(V) I argue that there is a Diaphaneity-involving version of Naïve Realism which deserves to be taken seriously, and which may even be the view intended by one recent Naïve Realist. This sets the stage for the critical discussion in §(VI) where I argue against Diaphaneity and hence any Diaphaneity-involving version of Naïve Realism.

II.

Naïve Realism Some of our sensory experiences are of ordinary mind-independent objects. And some of these experiences occur in cases of genuine perception of the world. For instance, when I *see* an apple in the fruit bowl on the table I have a sensory experience of various ordinary mind-independent objects (where 'objects of experience' is understood in the broad sense to include perceptible entities of various different ontological kinds): an apple, a table, a bowl, the shape of the apple, the colours the apple displays, and so on.

Naïve Realism is a theory about the nature and conscious character of such experiences – *perceptual experiences*. It involves two key components.¹ First, that perceptual experiences have a relational nature such that, in a perceptual experience, a perceiving subject stands in a perceptual relation to mind-independent objects.² The second component goes beyond this in that it specifically concerns the *conscious character* of experience. According to this component, the mind-independent objects involved in a perceptual experience are constitutive of the experience's conscious character.

¹ My understanding of the view draws on Martin (1997), Campbell (2002), Fish (2009), Brewer (2011), Logue (2012), and Soteriou (2013).

² I drop the qualification 'ordinary' for the sake of brevity.

On the first component, Naïve Realists take perceptual experiences to involve a *perceptual relation* in which perceiving subjects stand to mind-independent objects. They usually understand the perceptual relation to be a primitive, unanalysable and non-representational psychological relation. That's how I'll understand it here, and I'll follow some Naïve Realists in talking of it as a relation of conscious acquaintance.

What of the second component? In seeing the apple I have a perceptual experience, and there is something it is like for me to undergo this experience: my experience has a certain conscious character. To faithfully articulate and describe this character, I must mention the mind-independent objects that I visually experience (Strawson 1979, pp. 93-94): I describe the character of my experience in terms of the presentation of an apple in such-and-such a location (in the bowl, on the table, in front of me), displaying various shades of colour (reds and greens), and which is of such-and-such a size and shape.

One thing that this brings out, as Martin (1998) puts it, is that 'our awareness of what an experience is like is inextricably bound up with knowledge of what is presented to one in having such experience' (p. 173). The Naïve Realist makes sense of this by supposing that the objects we are consciously acquainted with in perceptual experience are *constitutive* of conscious character. And so the aspects of the mind-independent world that we are acquainted with in perceptual experience constitutively 'shape the contours of the subject's conscious experience' (Martin 2004, p. 64). Perceptual experiences have the characters they have because of, or in virtue of, the nature and character of the mind-independent objects they involve.

It is this second component of Naïve Realism that I want to discuss here. I'll call it the *Character Component*. I want to consider the prospects for understanding this component of Naïve Realism in terms of the idea that experience is *diaphanous*.

III.

Diaphaneity Sense-datum theorists too think of experience as relational, but they think of the objects we are acquainted with not as including ordinary mind-independent objects, but rather as sense-data – usually either conceived of as mind-dependent objects, or as peculiar, non-ordinary non-physical, yet mind-independent objects. They too hold that an experience's objects are constitutive of its conscious character. But in this aspect of their view at least some sense-datum theorists seem to commit themselves to an assumption that Martin labels 'Diaphaneity'. He explains it in attributing it to G.E. Moore as follows:

So, although Moore thinks it important that we recognize that consciousness takes the form of a relation to something (and hence can be distinguished in the experiential circumstances), it is also important to emphasize that nothing is added by it. With that commitment in place, *the character of acts of sensory awareness is taken always to derive from the objects of awareness* [my emphasis]. If two acts of consciousness differ in their character, then Moore will assume, they must differ in some respect in their objects, in what he later comes to call the sense-data, or the sensible qualities which those data exhibit... With this assumption of *diaphaneity* in play, Moore will simply assume that there could be nothing more to [the character of] an experience than what objects or qualities are given in it (2015, p. 175)

And to H.H. Price:

Note, incidentally, that Price commits himself to something much stronger³ in insisting on the diaphanous nature of experience: namely that sameness and difference of phenomenal properties just are sameness and difference in presented elements (1998, pp. 174-175).

³ Stronger, that is, than the claim that difference in the objects of perception is sufficient for difference in character.

Similarly, Van Cleve attributes to Moore what he calls ‘Radical Transparency’:

... experiences owe everything they are to their relation to their objects... On this point, Moore’s views are comparable to those of Sartre, who held that consciousness itself is virtually nothing, differentiated from one instance to another only by its objects (2015, p. 214).⁴

Let’s call the idea in play here *Strong Diaphaneity*:

Strong Diaphaneity

The conscious character of a perceptual experience is entirely constituted by its objects such that:

Strong Difference Claim: Necessarily, if any two experiences have different conscious characters, then this is constituted entirely by them having different objects (or differences in their objects).

Strong Sameness Claim: Necessarily, if any two experiences have the same conscious character, then this is constituted entirely by them having the same objects (or qualitative sameness in their objects).

And we can contrast this with the following weaker set of claims:

Weak Diaphaneity

The conscious character of a perceptual experience is such that

Weak Difference Claim: Necessarily, if any two experiences have different conscious characters, then they have different objects (or differences in their objects).

Weak Sameness Claim: Necessarily, if any two experiences have the same conscious character, then they have the same objects (or qualitative sameness in their objects).

The strong claims entail the weak claims but not vice versa. The weak claims entail merely that sameness and difference in conscious character necessarily co-varies with sameness and difference in experienced objects. But this doesn’t mean that sameness and difference in conscious character is entirely constituted by sameness and difference in experienced objects. (For more on this distinction see §(VI)).

As I read them, Martin and Van Cleve understand Diaphaneity (or ‘Radical Transparency’) in the strong sense. For Martin talks in terms of conscious character deriving from experience’s objects, and there being nothing more to conscious character than what derives from experience’s objects. And elsewhere he writes that ‘Moore’s commitment to the diaphaneity of sense experience means that there is no space for anything other than objects of awareness and their manifest qualities to contribute to the phenomenal being of one’s sense experience’ (2017, p. 257). And later Van Cleve talks of Radical Transparency in terms of ‘locating the character of experience entirely in the object of it’ (p. 200, fn 35, my emphasis).

Should we understand the Character Component of Naïve Realism in terms of Strong Diaphaneity?

⁴ I don’t think that sense-datum theorists necessarily have to commit to Diaphaneity. And I won’t consider here whether Moore and Price really are committed to Diaphaneity.

IV.

Naïve Realism and Diaphaneity? Various commentators present Naïve Realism as if it involves Strong Diaphaneity or some element of that. For instance:⁵

Naïve Realists and sense-datum theorists are two species of act-object theories, both locating the character of experience entirely in the object of it, but one taking the object to be a public physical object and the other taking it to be a mental (or at least not straightforwardly) physical object (Van Cleve 2015, p. 220, fn 35).

All changeable characteristics of such experience are allocated to the *objects* of such experience... (Smith 2002, p. 43).⁶

Relationalists [i.e. Naïve Realists] typically maintain that the reddish character of an experience of an apple is simply the redness of the apple itself, which is literally a constituent of the experience (Berger and Nanay 2016, p. 426).⁷

But what do Naïve Realists themselves say? First, here is Martin (1997, pp. 83-84)

According to naïve realism, the actual objects of perception, the external things such as trees, tables and rainbows, which one can perceive, and the properties which they can manifest to one when perceived, *partly* [my emphasis] constitute one's conscious experience, and hence determine the phenomenal character of one's experience.

The idea is that the conscious character of an experience is constituted *at least in part* by its mind-independent objects. This version of Naïve Realism is therefore consistent with the idea that there are aspects of conscious character that aren't constituted by (or entirely by) the experience's objects (see also Soteriou (2014, p. 65)).

Consider now the following from Logue (2012, p. 222)

The Berkeleian Naïve Realist holds that the *properties* the subject perceives *entirely* determine the phenomenal character of her experience. But it's also open to the Naïve Realist to claim that phenomenal character is determined by the *obtaining of the perceptual relation more broadly*. That is, Naïve Realism can appeal to *both* relata in accounting for the phenomenal character of veridical experience, as well as to facts about the relation itself.

Logue's message is similar: Naïve Realism need involve no commitment to Strong Diaphaneity.

What, though, of Campbell and Brewer? The notorious passage of Campbell's that leads commentators like Van Cleve to interpret his position in terms of 'Radical Transparency' is the following:

On a Relational View, the phenomenal character of your experience as you look around the room, is constituted by the actual layout of the room itself: which particular objects are there, their intrinsic properties such as colour and shape, and how they are arranged in relation to one and another and to you. On this Relational View, two ordinary observers standing in roughly the same place, looking at the same scene are bound to have experiences with the same

⁵ See also Foster (2000, p. 64).

⁶ Smith also notes how Naïve Realism might be developed differently, allowing the *clarity* of perception to contribute to its conscious character (p. 43).

⁷ Though this concerns just colour character, the authors present it in illustrating the Naïve Realist view of character.

phenomenal character. For the phenomenal character of the experiences is constituted by the layout and characteristics of the very same external objects (2002, p. 116).

And similarly Brewer (2011, p. 99) says:

The way things are for the subject in perception are certain of the ways that the objects of perception are from the subject's point of view.

These passages might lead us to think that Campbell and Brewer think that it is only perceived objects or scenes that are constitutive of conscious character.

Yet Campbell mentions the *position* of the perceiver, and Brewer the *point of view* of the perceiver. More generally, Campbell and Brewer emphasize the importance of a *range* of factors other than what is perceived when it comes to explaining conscious character. This comes out in the idea that each of them develop on which experience is a *three place* relation. As Campbell puts it:

We should think of consciousness of an object... as a three-place relation between a person, a standpoint, and an object. You always experience an object from a standpoint. And you can experience the same object from different standpoints... The notion of a standpoint must encompass more than merely the position of the observer... to describe the standpoint explicitly we have to say which sensory modality is involved; and that will determine further factors we have to fill in (2009, p. 657).

If third relatum factors are involved in the constitution of conscious character, then it is unclear how the character of experience can be *constituted entirely by* the mind-independent objects we are related to in experience.⁸

So, despite what the commentators say, it is difficult to find a commitment to Strong Diaphaneity in Naïve Realist work.⁹

But I'll now argue that there *is* a Strongly Diaphanous version of Naïve Realism which deserves to be taken seriously; and it turns out to be a version of Three Place Naïve Realism. I'll discuss the point here just with reference to Brewer's view (2011; 2017). I'll spell out how Brewer's version of Naïve Realism seems to conform to Strong Diaphaneity after all. This will enable us to see what a plausible Strongly Diaphanous version of Naïve Realism looks like.

V.

Three Place Naïve Realism and Diaphaneity Consider the following cases mentioned by Brewer:

... I may view a coin head on and then from a wide angle and have significantly different experiences as a result; experiences of its head side are different from those of its tail side; I may view the coin on the day it is minted and then again a few years later when it is tarnished and battered; I may view it in bright light and in dim light; I may see it and then feel it, again with quite different experiences as a result (2011, p. 95).

As Brewer presents them, these are cases of experiences with different conscious characters, yet identical physical objects. On the face of it, then, they challenge both the Strong and Weak Difference Claims. Let's call them *Challenge Cases*.¹⁰

⁸ Campbell also notes that relation of experience may be subject to adverbial modification (see Campbell and Cassam (2014, p. 28). This is arguably a further move away from Strong Diaphaneity.

⁹ See also Fish (2009) who doesn't seem to commit to anything more than *Weak* Diaphaneity (p. 17, p. 57).

¹⁰ There's much anti-diaphaneity discussion in the literature. For instance, the seminal work of Peacocke (1983) and Block (2003), and the penetrating discussions of Crowther (2010) and Eilan (2013).

Brewer argues that Challenge Cases pose no problem for his brand of Naïve Realism, because:

perceptual experience is a matter of a person's conscious acquaintance with various mind-independent physical objects *from a given spatiotemporal point of view, in a particular sense modality, and in certain specific circumstances of perception (such as lighting conditions in the case of vision)*. These factors effectively conjoin to constitute a third relatum of the relation of conscious acquaintance that holds between perceivers and the mind-independent physical direct objects of their perceptual experience. Thus, the experiential variations noted above, and any others along similar lines, may all perfectly adequately be accounted for by variations within this third relatum. For example, head-on v. wide-angle experiences, and those of the head side v. the tail side involve different spatial points of view. Experiences of the newly minted v. tarnished and battered coin involve different temporal points of view. Seeing v. feeling it clearly involve different sense modalities; and bright light v. dim light viewings involve different circumstances of perception. Still these are all cases of conscious acquaintance with the very same mind-independent physical coin—with variations in the third term of the perceptual relation (p. 96).

The claim is that we can account for the phenomenological variation involved in Challenge Cases in terms of variation in the third relatum. But how exactly does this work? One way to answer this is by supposing that third relatum factors have a *character shaping role*: determinations of such factors are themselves constitutive of character such that there can be aspects of character not constituted (entirely) by any presented object. Given this, experiences can vary in character (merely) with variation in the third relatum.

It might be tempting to read Brewer in this way. But he doesn't *directly* address the question of *how exactly* third relatum factors play a role in accounting for phenomenological variation in each of the Challenge Cases. What we need to do to fully understand Brewer's response to Challenge Cases, then, is to look at how he spells out the role of third relatum factors in experience, and then directly apply it to each of the Challenge Cases. But, as I'll now argue, once we do that, a different picture emerges that seems to be consistent with Strong Diaphaneity.¹¹

Focusing on vision, part of Brewer's view is that the physical objects¹² we are acquainted with in perception are constitutive of conscious character: 'the direct objects of perception provide the most basic categorization of an experience of acquaintance with those objects as the specific modification of consciousness that it is' (2011, p. 95). And, importantly, the ways those physical objects are is relevant to how they shape the character of experience. In particular, how those physical objects *look* is relevant to how they shape character, where how a physical object looks is understood as among the ways it objectively *is*. Given this, Brewer can endorse the following pattern of explanation: the apple I see looks green to me. Why does my experience have this character? Because I am acquainted with an apple which in the circumstances and from the point of view in question *itself looks green*. And thus we can make sense of Brewer's slogan that 'the ways that things look to a person in perception are in the first instance the looks of the very mind-independent things that she is consciously acquainted with from the point of view and in the circumstances in question' (2017, p. 216).

I want to frame this by saying that on Brewer's view some of the ways a perceived physical object is are *character shaping*. This doesn't mean that those ways or properties are themselves objects of acquaintance. What it means is that some of them are constitutively relevant to how the perceived physical object shapes character: for they are part of what makes it the case that the physical object constitutes the specific modification of consciousness it constitutes. So the apple's *green look* is

¹¹ My discussion here is indebted to that of French and Phillips (MS).

¹² When I talk specifically of *physical* objects, following Brewer I mean this in the narrow sense to refer to objects like apples, chairs, coins etc and not entities of other ontological kinds like the apple's greenness.

character shaping in the aforementioned case, as it is constitutively relevant to how the apple shapes character, but the apple's historical origin or precise weight are not.

I've spoken of Brewer's appeal to objective looks, and how they are character shaping. But what is Brewer's account of such looks? Brewer develops an account on which looks bottom out in visually relevant similarities to paradigms (2011, p. 99). The basic idea is that when a physical object looks *F*, it is in virtue of its visually relevant similarities to a paradigm *F* (pp. 101-108). The point I want to focus on is that, on Brewer's view, whether a physical object *Q* has visually relevant similarities to a paradigm *F* is not simply a matter of how *Q* is in itself, but also a matter of how *Q* is in relation to the sorts of things that go into the third relatum.

To illustrate, consider the following case that Brewer discusses. *S* sees a white piece of chalk, but because of red illumination the chalk looks pink to *S*. In line with the above, Brewer spells this out partly in terms of the idea that the piece of chalk itself has a pink look. It has this pink look, not in itself, but only *relative to the circumstances in question* – the peculiar illumination. Relative to the circumstances in question, it bears a visually relevant similarity to a paradigm pink piece of chalk, where 'their visually relevant similarity consists in the similarity of the light reflected from both' (p. 106).

Thus on Brewer's account, which looks a physical object *has* is determined in part by the sorts of factors that go into the third relatum.¹³ So, third relatum factors, for Brewer, play a *determinative* role: they are part of what determines the looks that physical objects have.¹⁴ But they also play a *selective* role. Consider again the above case involving the white piece of chalk. Relative to the lighting conditions, the piece of chalk actually has a certain property: a pink look, a relational looks property. The lighting conditions are part of what determines that the object is a certain way. But – and here is the point about the selective role – given that the chalk is *perceived* in those conditions, the pink look is selected to shape the character of the experience. Third relatum factors such as lighting conditions, then, have a *determining-and-selecting role*.

This is how Brewer spells out the role of third relatum factors, so it is fair to assume that this is how he conceives of their explanatory function in Challenge Cases. So let's apply the idea. First, let's distinguish the cases he highlights:

(Case 1) Viewing a coin head on and then from a wide angle

(Case 2) Viewing the head side of a coin and then the tail side

(Case 3) Viewing a newly minted coin and then the same coin tarnished years later

(Case 4) Viewing a coin in bright light and in dim light

(Case 5) Seeing a coin and feeling a coin

None of the pairs here differ in which *physical object* they involve: each experience involves acquaintance with the very same coin. Yet the experiences in each pair do differ in third relatum factors. It might seem obvious, then, that the phenomenological difference within each case cannot be located on the object side of the relatum, but must be located merely on the third relatum side. But all that really follows here is that we cannot account for the phenomenological difference within any of these cases in terms of a difference between the relevant experiences in *which* physical object they involve. Consistently with this, we might be able to locate the phenomenological difference within

¹³ This doesn't make the looks of objects *perception* dependent. The pink look of the white piece of chalk is determined by the relevant *circumstances* of perception, not the perception.

¹⁴ I previously referred to this as the '*additive function*' (2014, p. 400). The 'determinative' terminology comes from French and Phillips (MS).

each case wholly on the object side, in terms of a difference *in* the physical object, that is, in terms of a difference in the physical object's different character shaping *properties*.

This seems fairly obvious in Case (3): for the coin will be very different in its tarnished state compared to when it was newly minted. But about the other cases?

Take (Case 1), and the experiences it involves: *e1* and *e2*. In each experience a single coin is seen, yet it looks one way in *e1*, seen from head on, and it looks a different way in *e2*, seen from a wide angle. In Brewer's framework, this means that different looks are character shaping in each experience. We can make sense of this by assigning third-relatum factors a determining-and-selecting role. The third relatum factors (in this case, specifically spatial point of view) play a *determinative role* in the following way: the coin has a *head on look* relative to spatial point of view involved in *e1*, it has a *wide angle look* relative to the spatial point of view involved in *e2*. And the head on look is character shaping in *e1* but the wide angle look is character shaping in *e2*. This is because the third relatum factors play a *selective role*: because the coin is seen from head on in *e1* the head on look is selected, because it is seen from a wide angle in *e2* the wide angle look is selected.

Now it is not that the spatial point of view in either experience is itself constitutive of character. Nor is it that the difference in spatial point of view is constitutive of the difference in character. It is rather that the spatial point of view is relevant to selecting *which looks* are in play in each experience. It seems, then, that this account is perfectly consistent with Strong Diaphaneity. That is, the coin *insofar as it has a head on look* shapes the character of *e1*, and the same coin *insofar as it has a wide angle look* shapes the character in *e2*. The difference in character is entirely constituted by the difference in the object of perception. The third relatum factors determine and select, but don't themselves constitutively shape character.

A similar account can be given of (Case 2) where spatial point of view plays a pivotal role, and with (Case 4) but with respect to lighting conditions. For (Case 5) presumably the idea would be that in vision certain sorts of appearance properties are determined and selected, other sorts in tactile perception.

So, assigning third relatum factors a role in explaining the conscious character of experience does not entail that Strong (or even Weak) Diaphaneity fails. For one way to spell this explanatory role out is to assign third relatum factors a determining-and-selecting role. But this is consistent with Strong (and Weak) Diaphaneity. Three Place Naïve Realism is not *per se* a non-diaphanous view, as it might at first seem to be.

So we can distinguish between Non-Diaphanous Three Place Naïve Realism and Strongly Diaphanous Three Place Naïve Realism.¹⁵ Does Brewer's view fit either mould? He seems only to draw on the determining- and-selecting role for third relatum factors. But that doesn't mean that he can't also acknowledge that they sometimes play a character shaping role. And even if he were to deny such factors a character shaping role, that still wouldn't commit him to Strong Diaphaneity. For Strong Diaphaneity might still fail not along the third relatum dimension, but by (say) facts about the subject, and/or facts about the relation of acquaintance being constitutive of character in such a way that aspects of character are constituted not entirely by the experience's objects. That said, Brewer doesn't seem anywhere to develop Naïve Realism in a non-diaphanous direction. It seems reasonable enough, then, to understand Brewer's Three Place Naïve Realism as Strongly Diaphanous Three Place Naïve Realism.¹⁶

¹⁵ Not that these are the only options for a Three Place Naïve Realist.

¹⁶ It might seem as if Brewer countenances the idea that facts about the relation of acquaintance itself can make a difference to the character of perceptual experience, as he talks about the idea that acquaintance can be *degraded* (2011, pp. 116-117, 2017, pp. 224-225). But this is understood solely in terms of the objects of acquaintance: whether or not acquaintance is degraded is simply to do with which properties of the object are character shaping, more determinate ones in the non-degraded case, less determinate ones in the degraded case. And it might seem as if Brewer exploits facts about the subject of experience as constitutive of conscious character, in his discussion of attention and phenomenology in (2013). But Brewer

Setting aside the issue of whether it is Brewer's view, I think it is fair to say that Strongly Diaphanous Three Place Naïve Realism is a live option to be taken seriously. It gives us some explanatory purchase on the Character Component of Naïve Realism and it has resources to deal with some of what might lead one to worry about Strong Diaphaneity (Challenge Cases). But is it, ultimately, tenable?

VI.

Against Diaphaneity I now want to argue that both components of Strong Diaphaneity are false, and that one of the components of Weak Diaphaneity is false. Therefore, no Strongly Diaphanous version of Naïve Realism is ultimately tenable.

To argue for this, I will draw on Soteriou's discussion of his explicitly non-diaphanous version of Naïve Realism. According to Soteriou

the conscious character of a normal visual experience is not *solely* determined by the sorts of objects and events one is apparently aware of in having that experience. For it is also determined, in part, by the way in which one's visual awareness of those objects and events seems to be structured... (2013, pp. 117–118).

A central part of Soteriou's idea is that it is an aspect of the conscious character of an ordinary visual experience that it involves spatial limitations where this aspect of conscious character is not wholly constituted by any entity presented to one, but is rather a manifestation of one's own sensory limitations.¹⁷

Consider again the experience I have when I see the apple in the fruit bowl on the table. This experience involves, as part of its conscious character, a rich spatial structure. There seem to be two important aspects to this conscious character: a *worldly aspect* and a *limitation aspect*.

First, my experience involves a large cone of space which I am perceptually aware of, in which I see the apple as located and as spatially related to other things including subregions of the cone of space I am aware of. It seems as if we can specify this element of the spatial structure of my experience just in terms of what I perceive in the world: a space out there, and objects and features organized in this space.

But we can't fully capture the spatial structure of the conscious character of ordinary visual experience just in these terms. If I reflect upon the spatial structure of ordinary visual experience, it seems to involve limitations: I have a sense that I can see only what falls within a space of such-and-such a size and shape, and that the space I see is a subregion of a larger space, which I would see more of if only I were to alter my point of view. For instance, I have a sense that some way over to the left, for example, at the limit of the cone, there is a boundary I cannot now see beyond. But I have a sense of there being more to see, if I alter my point of view.¹⁸

Thus, to capture the spatial structure of the conscious character of ordinary visual experience it is not enough to appeal to the space and spatially organized aspects of the world that one sees, the *worldly*

argues that this is so only at certain non-basic levels of conscious character or phenomenology, to do with conceptual and other forms of *registration* of similarities between objects and paradigms (p. 423). But we can take Strong Diaphaneity to concern the basic level of sensory phenomenology that these non-basic levels presuppose.

¹⁷ Here my discussion draws not only on Soteriou, but also Martin (1992) and Richardson (2010).

¹⁸ Compare here Husserl's idea that perceptions have 'horizons made up of other possibilities of perception, as perceptions we *could* have, if we *actively directed* the course of perception otherwise: if, for example, we turned our eyes, that way instead of this, or if we were to step forward or to one side, and so forth' (Husserl 1931, p. 44). We might think, then, that the spatial limitation aspect of an ordinary visual experience is linked to what Husserl would call its *horizon*. Thanks to Marcus Giaquinto for drawing this to my attention.

aspect. We also need to appeal to the fact that one's visual experience manifestly involves spatial limitations: the *limitation aspect*.

But can't we account for this limitation aspect simply in terms of the presentation to the perceiver of spatially organized aspects of the world, and regions of space?

This doesn't seem plausible. As Soteriou suggests, we shouldn't think of 'the boundaries of the spatial sensory field of vision as boundaries of some thing one is sensing, like the frame of a painting, we should think of its boundaries in terms of one's sensory limitations' (2013, p. 118). I see the bowl with the apple in, on the table, in a certain part of the room. But this spatially structured *scene*, or the presentation of it in experience, doesn't set the limitation. And in seeing the scene I am visually aware of cone of *physical space* in which the objects and spaces that make up the scene are situated. But the chunk of physical space doesn't set the limitation. For *regardless* of my being presented with this scene and this chunk of space, my awareness would still be manifestly limited or spatially structured in the same way, confined to a region of space of such-and-such a size and extent. Instead, as Richardson puts it 'in vision having this feature, it seems to me as if *I*, am limited, sensorily' (2010, p. 239).

Thus the limitation aspect of the character of an ordinary visual experience is constituted by something other than any entity that the subject is acquainted with, it is manifestly a matter of the subject's sensory limitations. Therefore, Strong Diaphaneity fails. We can spell this out further in terms of the failure of both the Strong Difference Claim, and the Strong Sameness Claim.

First, consider Soteriou's discussion of the comparison between normal visual experiences and those had in bodily awareness. In

located bodily sensation, the boundaries of any spatial region you are aware of, within which things are experienced to be, *do* seem to you to be set by the limits of some *thing* you are sensing that moves around with you (i.e. your body), rather than by your sensory limitations (2013, p. 120).

When I feel tension in my arm, the space of my bodily awareness – the boundaries of the spatial region I am aware of, within which I perceive parts of my body and sensations in those bodily parts – seem to me to be set by the limits of the body I am aware of, not merely by my own sensory limitations. It doesn't strike me as if there is more to be felt, or other potential locations for sensations, beyond the region set by my body, if only I were to alter the perspective of my bodily awareness. Yet in looking at my arm it does seem to me as if there is more to be seen if only I alter my perspective (by turning my head, say). In the visual case, it is manifest that *my* limitations, and not any entity I perceive, set the spatial limits of my awareness. In the bodily case it is manifest that these limits are fixed, at least in part, by the body I perceive.

We have a challenge here to the Strong Difference Claim and not the Weak Difference Claim. The visual and bodily experiences *do* differ in terms of what I perceive. For instance, in the bodily experience I don't perceive the colours I perceive when I see my arm. But the point is that whatever differences there are between these experiences in the objects that I perceive, the difference between them in conscious character is not *entirely constituted* by such differences. For the difference in the limitation aspects of character cannot be accounted for entirely in terms of a difference in the objects perceived.

We can also construct cases in which the Strong Difference Claim fails even just with respect to visual experience. As Soteriou notes 'changes in the boundaries of this spatial sensory field (e.g. when you close one eye) do not seem to you to amount to changes in the boundaries of some thing that you are visually aware of—some thing that you are visually aware of as changing size and shape' (118). So, compare two visual experiences: in the first I am looking at the apple in the fruit bowl with both eyes open (*E1*), the second is as before yet I close one eye (*E2*). These experiences differ in character

in that *E2* is manifestly more limited than *E1*. But this difference in the way in which the experiences are spatially limited cannot be fully accounted for just in terms of a difference in what I am visually aware of, it derives, instead, from a manifest difference in my own sensory limitations.¹⁹

Again, we have a challenge here to the Strong Difference Claim and not the Weak Difference Claim. The visual experiences *do* differ in terms of what I perceive. When I close one eye I am aware of *less of* the scene before me. But the point is that whatever differences there are between these experiences in *what* I am aware of, the difference between them in conscious character is not *entirely constituted* by such differences. For the difference in the limitation aspects of character cannot be accounted for entirely in terms of a difference in the objects perceived.

E1 and *E2* involve aspects of conscious character which are manifestly to do with my own sensory limitations. This is why these aspects cannot be accounted for simply in terms of any object of experience. This also means that it won't help to invoke any third relatum factors in merely a selecting or merely a determining-and-selecting role to account for the difference between them. For though this will help us to explain which aspects of the world are character shaping in which experience, it simply won't speak to the way in which my own sensory limitations are character shaping.

So much for the Strong Difference Claim, what about the Strong Sameness Claim? We can now see that it won't follow from the fact that two experiences have the same conscious character that this sameness is constituted entirely by them having the same objects (or qualitative sameness in their objects). Consider two ordinary visual experiences of the apple in the fruit bowl, and suppose that they have exactly the same conscious character. The sameness in conscious character is not *entirely constituted* by them having the same objects (or qualitative sameness in their objects). Part of what accounts for why they have the same character is that they are visual experiences which involve the same limitation aspects, where these are aspects of experience constituted by something other than any object of experience.

This doesn't mean that the Weak Sameness Claim fails. All that the Weak Sameness Claim says is that if two experiences are the same in conscious character, then *they have* the same objects (or qualitative sameness in their object). This is not challenged by the above example. And the Weak Sameness Claim is not a claim that I will challenge here.

So far, then, drawing on Soteriou, I have argued that Strong Diaphaneity fails. I have also noted that the cases that challenge the Strong Difference Claim don't challenge the Weak Difference Claim. But I now want to suggest that we have the resources to challenge that claim too.

To develop this challenge we can consider Bálint's syndrome,²⁰ a severe visuospatial disorder defined in terms of three main deficits (Robertson 2004, p. 6): simultanagnosia, optic ataxia, and optic apraxia. Of particular relevance to us here is simultanagnosia, the inability to see more than one object simultaneously. Here is Robertson (2004) describing the condition as it is in one individual, RM: 'Single objects popped in and out of view in RM's everyday life... an object continued to be perceptually present for a while and then was replaced by another object or part of an object without warning' (p. 158).

Individuals with Bálint's syndrome are thus incapable of visual spatial perception of the rich variety described above. An individual with Bálint's syndrome cannot see multiple objects at a time, as in a large region of space, and as arranged in a spatial order. Rather, they see at most a single object at any given time.

¹⁹ Given, that is, that things are as they introspectively seem.

²⁰ See Bálint (1909), published in English translation in Bálint and Harvey (1995).

And it is not as if the single object they see is perceived as being in a larger space which is also perceived (just one devoid of other objects). Rather, the single object they see at a given time *dominates* their visual experience, including its spatial structure. Thus Bálint described the condition of his own patient as follows: '[H]is visual field was not of a fixed size but rather *had space for one image only*' (1909/1995, p. 269, emphasis added). And this is brought out further in Harvey and Milner's discussion of Bálint's patient: 'The patient's constricted field of visual attention was evidently bounded not in retinotopic co-ordinates, but rather by the contours of the object to which he was attending, whatever its size...' (1995, p. 263). And Robertson and colleagues too describe RM's experience of objects in similar terms: 'Subjectively experienced space seems to collapse down to the space within the currently attended object. The size of this space varies with the size of the object that defines it...' (1997, p. 313).

Consider now an individual with Bálint's syndrome looking at an apple. Given the above descriptions of the condition, presumably, in looking at the apple the individual with Bálint's syndrome doesn't have a sense of the space they see as a subregion of a larger space, and as delimited by their own sensory limitations such that there is more for them to see if they alter their point of view. The spatial structure of their experience comes instead from the apple that they experience. And, presumably, it's not just that the spatial boundaries of their experience happen to *coincide* with those of the apple. The spatial boundaries of their experience are what they are because the perceived apple's boundaries are what they are. The apple *dominates* the visual experience. If you pulled away the apple and put a banana in front of an individual with Bálint's syndrome, it's not that the existing boundaries would stay fixed but now they'd be seeing a banana within those limits. Rather, the banana would pop into view, and it would take over and dominate the visual experience, with new spatial boundaries set accordingly by its contours. And, though this is speculative, it is reasonable to suppose that the boundaries of their experience would seem to them to change accordingly.

I do not have Bálint's syndrome. So now compare the experience *I* have when I look at the very same apple. The limitation aspect of the conscious character of my experience is very different. It is manifestly set by my own sensory limitations. In looking at the apple, I have a sense of the space I see as a subregion of a larger space, and as delimited by my own sensory limitations such that I would see more were I to alter my point of view.

The spatial limits of my visual experience are not what they are because of any object I see. And so if you pulled away the apple and put a banana in front of me, the existing boundaries *would* stay fixed, but now I'd see a banana within those limits. It's not like the banana and its boundaries would come to dominate my experience. And the boundaries of my experience wouldn't seem to me to undergo any change.

It seems, then, as though the experience I have of the apple, and the experience the individual with Bálint's syndrome has, differ in the limitation aspects of their character, where this difference is not entirely constituted by any difference in their objects. This puts pressure on the Strong Difference Claim. But does it also put pressure on the Weak Difference Claim? As described, it is not just that these experiences differ in the limitation aspects of their character where this difference is not entirely constituted by a difference in their objects. But *they don't even differ in their objects*.

As it stands, though, this is too quick. For when *I* look at the apple surely I see more than just the apple – I see the space around it, other objects that it is spatially related to, and so on. And so there will be a difference in what is presented.

So let's modify the case in which I see the apple and develop a thought experiment. As discussed above, one way to narrow or limit the spatial boundaries of my visual experience is to close one eye. But now consider a *limiting device* which fits across the eyes. It is a device which, like the closing of an eye, can modify the spatial boundaries of one's visual experience. And it is connected to an app whereby the subject can finely control the way in which the spatial boundaries of their visual experience are narrowed or limited. One might use the device to make exactly the same change in

limitations that one would make by simply closing an eye. But various other configurations are possible too.

Suppose now, then, that I am looking at an apple and the device is off. I see a whole spatially structured scene, the apple being one among other objects that I see. But then I turn the device on and start experimenting with it. There are manifest gradual changes. At one point it is as if I have an eye closed. And then eventually it happens to narrow the spatial boundaries of my visual experience so as to coincide with those of just the apple. So I see nothing but the apple and some of its features. Call this the *Crucial Stage*.

Compare now my experience of the apple in the Crucial Stage and that of the individual with Bálint's syndrome. Our experiences don't differ in their objects. Yet they do differ in character. The limitation aspect to the character of the experience of the individual with Bálint's syndrome is as described above. But the limitation aspect of the character of my experience in the Crucial Stage is very different. And so it is not that the effect of the device is to induce something like Bálint's syndrome or simultanagnosia in me at the Crucial Stage. There are two main points of difference in the limitation aspects of the characters of these experiences to highlight.

First, even though in the Crucial Stage the spatial boundaries of my experience happen to be narrowed to the apple I see, I still have a sense of the space I see as a subregion of a larger space, and as delimited by my own sensory limitations, modified by the limiting device, such that there is more for me to see if I alter those limitations. Part of why this is so comes from the fact that before the Crucial Stage, I had regular spatial vision, and then experimented with the device and produced a manifest gradual limiting of the spatial boundaries of vision.

Here is a way to bring this last point out. Suppose I fell asleep at the kitchen table, and simply woke up looking at the apple with, unbeknownst to myself, the device on and set to the boundaries of the apple. It is not obvious that my experience would be one in which I have a sense of the apple-bounded space I see as a subregion of a larger space delimited by my device-modified sensory limitations such that there is more for me to see if I alter those limitations (at least, not immediately, before I start moving). But it is natural to suppose that my experience would be this way if in the run up to it I reveal to myself the workings of the device by experimenting with it. Suppose, then, that I first have an experience of the scene involving the fruit bowl on the table with unmodified spatial limitations, then I switch the device on and turn the dial so as it gradually becomes more limited, and then less limited as I turn the dial back. In this whole course of experience, the spatial boundaries will seem to me to come from my own device-modified sensory limitations such that (at various points) there is more for me to see if I alter those limitations. And so, because of this, when I put the device into the apple-bounded configuration I have a sense of the apple-bounded space I see as a subregion of a larger space delimited by my device-modified sensory limitations such that there is more for me to see if I alter those limitations.

Second, the spatial boundaries of my visual experience do happen to coincide with those of the apple, but they are not set by it as they are in the case of the individual with Bálint's syndrome, nor do they seem to be: my experience is in no way *dominated* by the apple, it doesn't have the boundaries it does because of the boundaries of the apple, nor does it seem to. Even in the Crucial Stage, if you pulled away the apple and put a banana in front of me, the existing boundaries *would* stay fixed, and manifestly so, but now I'd see a banana within those limits. It's not like the banana and its boundaries would come to dominate my experience. The spatial boundaries of my experience come, and seem to come, not from any entity I perceive, but rather from my own sensory limitations, albeit modified by the limiting device.

I've argued that my experience of the apple in the Crucial Stage and the corresponding experience of the individual with Bálint's syndrome don't differ in their objects, yet they do differ in character, contra the Weak Difference Claim. But here is a way of putting pressure on the claim that the

experiences don't differ in their objects.²¹ One might think that the effect of the limiting device is to just block parts of the scene before me, as with blinkers. But then one might worry that, unlike the individual with Bálint's syndrome, I'll be seeing aspects of the limiting device, and thus there will be a difference in what is perceived.

To respond to this, we can modify the thought experiment and suppose that the limiting device is a neurological implant which achieves its limiting effect without the use of screens or blinkers. Rather, it narrows the spatial boundaries of visual experience to the boundaries of the apple because it disables visual uptake of, and processing of information about anything beyond those boundaries. The device ensures that I have blindspots with respect to any portion of the scene before my eyes but for that delimited by the boundaries of the apple.

A further worry is the following.²² Given what I've said above, it seems that the scene which includes the fruit bowl on the table with the apple in is *in some sense* explanatorily relevant to the character of my experience in the Crucial Stage being as it is. For the character of my experience is such that I have a sense of there being more to be seen if only I alter my device-modified sensory limitations. And arguably, this is partly because of the stretch of experience prior to my experience in the Crucial Stage in which I saw the *apple situated in the fruit bowl*, and experimented with the limiting device whilst looking at this scene. But the scene which includes the fruit bowl etc plays no such role in the experience of the individual with Bálint's syndrome—it doesn't figure in any prior experiences which are explanatorily relevant to current experience of the apple had by the individual with Bálint's syndrome. But now one might think that we have a difference in the objects of experience after all.

In response, I need to clarify how I am understanding the Weak Difference Claim. I understand this claim as the claim that the character of an experience is determined by those objects that it is a *sensory perception of*. Now it might be that in *some sense* the scene involving the fruit bowl etc is an object of experience present to me when I experience the apple in the Crucial Stage: perhaps it is present to me through experiential memory and in some sense thereby involved in my experience of the apple, or perhaps it figures in my experience's 'horizon', in Husserl's terminology.²³ But my experience in the Crucial Stage, is not an *experience of it*, it is not a *sensory perception of it*.

So my point about the failure of the Weak Difference Claim should be understood as follows: my experience of the apple in the Crucial Stage and that of the individual with Bálint's syndrome differ in character but not in their *perceptually presented objects*, not in the objects that they are *sensory perceptions of*. Therefore, the Weak Difference Claim, suitably understood, fails.²⁴

VII.

Conclusion I've been focusing on the Character Component of Naïve Realism. I presented Strong Diaphaneity as one way to spell this out. But if what I've argued above is correct, then Strong Diaphaneity is false. Even Weak Diaphaneity is false, as the Weak Difference Claim is false. All that remains unchallenged is the Weak Sameness Claim.

Though this is a problem for Diaphaneity-involving versions of Naïve Realism, such as the version of Three Place Naïve Realism considered in §(V), it isn't a problem for Naïve Realism *per se*, or for the Character Component of Naïve Realism. In rejecting Strong and Weak Diaphaneity, we are not going back on the core Naïve Realist claim that aspects of the mind-independent world constitutively shape the character of perceptual experience. We are merely acknowledging that there can be more to the conscious character of an experience than what derives simply from its mind-independent objects.

²¹ Thanks to both Ian Phillips and Rory Madden for raising this worry.

²² Thanks to Guy Longworth here.

²³ See fn. 18 above.

²⁴ In light of this, though, we might wonder whether the way to develop and defend some form of the Weak Difference Claim is to lift the qualification I've highlighted. I leave investigation of that for another occasion.

And this is perfectly in line with the explicit commitments of some of the Naïve Realist work considered in §(IV).

But what, though, is a naive realist to say about those aspects of conscious character where there *is* more than what simply derives from the objects of experience?²⁵ Or where there is *nothing* about them that derives from the objects of experience? Call these *non-diaphanous* aspects of conscious character. Is the Naïve Realist bound to remain silent about those aspects? Or does the Naïve Realist have to hand over to some rival theory of experience to deal with those aspects?

No. There are various options for explaining these aspects of conscious character within a Naïve Realist framework. And the Naïve Realist may exploit different options for different aspects. As noted above, Logue emphasizes how a Naïve Realist can appeal to facts about the *subject* of the experience, and the *perceptual relation* in accounting for the character of an experience.²⁶ Soteriou also appeals to facts about the perceptual relation, since he argues that structural aspects of conscious character are due to the *manner* in which one is acquainted with the objects of experience (2013, pp. 122-123).²⁷ And as I noted above, the Naïve Realist might develop a version of Three Place Naïve Realism which assigns determinations of third relatum factors a *character shaping* role.²⁸

The upshots of this discussion then, are as follows. Naïve Realists have to reject Diaphaneity. And though Naïve Realists may therefore have to say more about non-diaphanous aspects of conscious character, they already have a range of options when it comes to accommodating them.²⁹

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²⁵ Which, for all I’ve said here, and for all the Character Component of Naïve Realism says, may be *all* aspects of conscious character.

²⁶ French and Phillips (MS) develop a version of naive realism that assigns explanatory weight to the relation of acquaintance in accounting for the character of illusions.

²⁷ Though it is not obvious why this is a better way of conceiving of things than instead conceiving of these aspects as deriving from the subject, or from third relatum factors.

²⁸ And these may not be the only options available to a Naïve Realist.

²⁹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at a workshop organized by Joel Smith on Matt Soteriou’s book *The Mind’s Construction*, at the University of Manchester in June 2016. Thanks to the audience on that occasion for helpful discussion. Thanks especially to Matt Soteriou to whom I owe a significant intellectual debt. Thanks also to Ian Phillips and Anil Gomes. Discussions and collaborations with Ian and Anil have significantly shaped my understanding of the issues discussed here. I am especially indebted to Ian, as a lot of the research for this paper has overlapped with the joint research we have done for French and Phillips (MS). And thanks to Mike Martin for various discussions that have informed and shaped my understanding of the issues discussed here. For comments on a previous draft many thanks to Anil Gomes, Alex Grzankowski, Guy Longworth, Clare Mac Cumhaill, Bence Nanay, Ian Phillips, and Paul Snowdon. Finally, my thanks to those present at the meeting of the Aristotelian Society for their questions and comments, especially Julian Bacharach, Kathrine Cuccuru, Jørgen Dyrstad, Marcus Giaquinto, Alex Grzankowski, Kirstine La Cour, Guy Longworth, and Rory Madden.

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