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Experiential Content and Naïve Realism: A Reconciliation

Heather Logue¹

I'm currently having an experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana on my desk. As a result, I come to believe that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped banana before me. The proposition that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped banana is the *content* of my belief. Does my *experience* have content too? An affirmative answer to this question opens a rather large can of worms. To identify just a few: is the content of an experience a proposition, like the content of a belief? If so, which proposition is it, exactly (e.g., the proposition that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped thing before me)? And what's the nature of this proposition (e.g., is it Fregean)?

These questions have been subjects of debate for quite some time, and these debates were enabled by the practically universal assumption that experiences have content. Recently, however, this assumption has come under fire (see, e.g., 2004: 44-58, Brewer 2006, and Johnston 2006)—mainly from those who are attracted to a view called *Naïve Realism*. A rough statement of the view is that certain experiences (namely, those in which one perceives one's environment as it is) *fundamentally* consist in perceiving things in one's environment. In other words, their most basic psychological nature is given in the description just used to pick them out. For example, Naïve Realism holds that my experience of the banana on my desk fundamentally consists in my perceiving the banana.

Naïve Realists tend to hold that their view is incompatible with the claim that experiences have content. I think this is incorrect. My view on this matter isn't novel; some have argued that there is a relatively weak interpretation of the claim that experience has content that Naïve Realists can and should accept (see Siegel 2010 and Schellenberg 2011). But I differ with previous "compatibilists" on two issues. First, *pace* Siegel and Schellenberg, I think there is an argument for the claim that experience has content in the weak sense that is more effective than the ones hitherto offered. Second, *pace* Siegel, I think that Naïve Realism is compatible with much *stronger* interpretations of the claim that experience has content.

In the first section of this paper, after briefly arguing for the assumption that experiential content is propositional, I'll distinguish three interpretations of the claim that experience has content (the *Mild*, *Medium*, and *Spicy* Content Views). In the second section, I'll flesh out Naïve Realism in greater detail, and I'll reconstruct what I take to be the main argument for its incompatibility with the Content Views. The third section will be devoted to evaluation of existing arguments for the Mild Content View (the arguments from *accuracy* and *appearing*), and the development of what I take to be a stronger argument (the argument from *belief generation*). In the final section, I'll identify a flaw in the argument for the incompatibility of Naïve Realism with the Content Views, which opens the door to a reconciliation.

¹ Thanks to Adam Pautz, as well as audiences at York, Edinburgh, and Nottingham for helpful questions and comments.

1. What does it mean to say that experience has content?

Before we attempt to reconcile experiential content with Naïve Realism, we must first clarify what it means to say that perceptual experience has content in the first place. In my view, part of what it means is that there is a *proposition* associated with the experience—i.e., that the content of an experience is a proposition. This is a controversial claim, as some philosophers who maintain that experience has content claim that it's *non-propositional*.

If the content of a perceptual experience isn't a proposition, then what is it? One possibility is that it's an object of some sort (e.g., a banana, or a sense-datum), or a state of affairs (e.g., a banana's being yellow, or a sense-datum's being yellow'). But this can't be what is meant—after all, *everybody* thinks that experiences that involve perceiving things have content in this sense, and practically *no one* (besides sense-datum theorists) thinks that hallucinations have content in this sense. So this understanding of non-propositional content is one part trivially true and one part plausibly false.

Another candidate put forward for non-propositional experiential content is *the way the subject perceptually represents her environment as being* (see Crane 2009: 456). However, on a relatively uncontroversial understanding of what a proposition is, it's just *a way the world might be*—e.g., the sort of thing that can be true or false, expressed by a sentence, and (most importantly for our purposes) perceptually represented by a subject. One way the world might be is for it to be the case that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped thing before me. That there is a yellow, crescent-shaped thing before me is a proposition, and something I can perceptually represent. So we don't really have a candidate for *non-propositional* perceptual content after all.

Why the insistence to the contrary? Plausibly, one idea in the background is that since experience is very different from belief, the content of experience (whatever it is) must be rather different from the content of belief. But of course, this idea can be accommodated without denying that experiences have propositional content (e.g., by claiming that experiential contents are typically much more specific or finely-grained than the contents of beliefs).² Another possibility is that the advocates of non-propositional perceptual content have a particularly demanding conception of what a proposition is in mind (as suggested in Byrne 2001: 201)—e.g., that they are composed of Fregean senses. However, it is important to distinguish two questions:

- (1) Do experiences have propositional content?
- (2) If experiences have propositional content, what is the metaphysical structure of those propositions (e.g., Fregean, Russellian...)?

We must be careful not to simply *assume* an answer to (2) that supports a negative answer to (1). One can show that experiences don't have propositional content on the basis of a particular answer to (2) only if one has an argument for

² Thanks to Matt Nudds for pressing me to mention this potential motivation for denying experiential content.

giving that answer *rather than another*—otherwise, it's epistemically possible that experiences have propositional content given a *different* theory of the metaphysical structure of the relevant propositions.

Yet another potential source of resistance to identifying the *way the subject of an experience represents her environment as being* with a *proposition* is the idea that an experiencing subject represents *things in the world*, not propositions (cf. Crane 2009: 464-5). For example, one might insist that in having an experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana on my desk, I'm perceptually representing *a banana* (as well as its color, shape, and location), *not* a proposition. However, this is a false contrast. It's not clear that there's any daylight between, say, representing *something as being* yellow, crescent-shaped, and to my left, on the one hand, and representing the proposition *that something is* yellow, crescent-shaped, and to my left, on the other. Given that a proposition is basically a way for the world to be, representing things in the world as being certain ways is tantamount to representing a proposition.

I don't take this brief case for skepticism about non-propositional experiential content to be decisive, but unfortunately I don't have the space to elaborate and defend it. In any case, if you think there *is* such a thing as non-propositional experiential content, then you should think of my aim as being to establish that Naïve Realism is compatible with *propositional* experiential content.

Supposing that the content of experience is a proposition, which proposition is the content of a given experience—say, my experience as of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana? As I see it, to say that an experience has content is to say at least the following:

for any perceptual experience *E*,

- (i) there is a proposition associated with *E*, and
- (ii) this proposition *captures the way things perceptually appear to the subject* in virtue of having *E*.

For example, the content of my experience is (something along the lines of) the proposition that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped thing before me. These two claims, (i) and (ii), are the bare minimum that one is committed to when one says that experience has content. Let us call these two claims the *Mild Content View*.³

³ The Mild Content View adopts what Adam Pautz calls the *appears-looks conception* of experiential content, and he argues that this conception trivializes the debate over whether experience has content, as well as other related debates (2009: 485-6). I won't go into Pautz's arguments here; the crucial point is that (as he recognizes) one could try to avoid them by insisting on a distinction between *perceptual* and *epistemic* appearances (more on this distinction in section 3). He seems to think that this insistence must amount to holding that locutions of the form 'it appears to S that *p*' *always* pick out epistemic appearances, while perceptual appearances are *only* picked out by locutions of the form 'o appears F to S'. If this is right, then the appears-looks conception would still trivialize the relevant debates (e.g., hallucinations would trivially lack

Note that the Mild Content View is silent on whether experience is a propositional *attitude*—one could hold that there is a proposition associated with an experience, but deny that the experience consists in the subject *perceptually representing* it. On this sort of position, although the proposition figures in the characterization of the experience from the *theorist's* point of view, the *subject* of the experience doesn't bear any distinctively experiential psychological relation to it. Alternatively, one could endorse the following claim:

- (iii) perceptual experience consists in the subject perceptually representing her environment as being a certain way.

Let us call claims (i) - (iii) the *Medium Content View*.

Note that the Medium Content View is silent on whether perceptual experience *fundamentally* consists in the subject perceptually representing her environment as being a certain way—one could hold that experience is a propositional attitude, but not *fundamentally* so. To say that perceptual experience fundamentally consists in personal-level psychological feature *x* is to say that it has some or all of its other personal-level psychological features ultimately in virtue of *x*. So, for example, one might hold that my experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana involves my perceptually representing my environment as containing a yellow, crescent-shaped thing, but that this fact isn't the *ultimate* personal-level psychological explanation of the why this experience naturally generates the belief that there's a yellow, crescent-shaped thing before me, or the phenomenal character associated with this experience, or any of the other psychological features we're trying to give an account of when we're giving a philosophical theory of perceptual experience. Alternatively, one could endorse the following claim:

- (iv) perceptual experience *fundamentally* consists in the subject perceptually representing her environment as being a certain way.

(iv) entails that at least some psychological feature of perceptual experience (e.g., its phenomenal character, or some aspect of its epistemological role) is ultimately grounded in the subject perceptually representing her environment as being a certain way. This view composed of claims (i) – (iv) is known as *Intentionalism* about perceptual experience, but for consistency's sake, let's call it the *Spicy Content View*.⁴

perceptual content). However, one could hold that locutions of the form 'it appears to S that *p*' are *potentially ambiguous*, sometimes picking out epistemic appearances and sometimes picking out perceptual appearances. If that's right, then the debate is not trivial—as I will argue in section 3, it boils down to a debate over whether there is a kind of perceptual appearance that 'it appears to S that *p*' is used to pick out. (Thanks to Adam Pautz for pressing me to clarify this point.)

⁴ Here's how the taxonomy of views I've just offered relates to some of the others in the literature: Susanna Siegel (2010) distinguishes between the Content View and the Strong Content View; the latter is more-or-less my Spicy Content View, and the former is essentially my Mild Content View. (Siegel doesn't single out

If perceptual experience has content in any of these three senses, there are a number of matters arising. To name just a few: first, as I hinted in the discussion of the notion of non-propositional experiential content, we must determine the *nature* of the propositions that can be experiential contents—e.g., whether they are Fregean-style propositions composed of senses, Russellian-style ordered pairs of objects and relations, or perhaps coarse-grained sets of possible worlds.⁵ Second, we must determine the relationship between the content of an experience and its phenomenal character. Does the phenomenal character of an experience supervene on its content? And does the content of an experience supervene on its phenomenology?⁶ Third, we must determine which sorts of properties can figure in experiential contents. For example, do visual experiences have contents that take a stand only on the presence of properties like color, shape, and location, or can they take a stand on the presence of so-called “high-level” properties, such as natural kind properties (e.g., being a banana)?⁷ I’m not going to delve into any of these thorny issues here, since doing so isn’t required in order to establish the main theses of this paper; namely, that experience has content in the weak sense, and that all three Content Views are compatible with Naïve Realism.

what I’ve called ‘the Medium Content View’.) Pautz (2009) distinguishes between appears-looks, accuracy, and identity conceptions of experiential contents; the first is more-or-less my Mild Content View, and the last is basically my Spicy Content View. The accuracy conception is an alternative—and in my view, inferior—way of formulating a Mild Content View. (I won’t defend this claim here, although the reader might be able to discern my reservations about the accuracy conception on the basis of the discussion of the argument from accuracy in section 3.) Finally, Susanna Schellenberg (2011: 15-6) distinguishes between *the association thesis* and *the representation thesis*. The former is basically my Mild Content View, while my Medium and Spicy Content Views are different ways of spelling out Schellenberg’s representation thesis (both of which are different from Schellenberg’s preferred way of spelling it out, which construes representation in terms of employing concepts—my Medium and Spicy Content Views make no such commitment). Schellenberg also identifies a view she calls *the awareness thesis*: basically, a view on which the content of experience is a Russellian proposition, and the subject is aware of it in the sense that she literally perceives its constituents (presumably, this is the only way to make sense of the idea that one could *literally perceive* the propositional content of an experience). Since I will remain neutral in this paper on the nature of the propositions that are potential contents of experience, this view is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁵ See, e.g., Tye 2000 (Russellian content), Burge 1991 (Fregean content), Stalnaker 1984 (possible worlds content), and Chalmers 2006 (a pluralistic view).

⁶ For negative answers to these questions, see (e.g.) Block 1990 and 1996; for affirmative answers, see (e.g.) Tye 2000.

⁷ For a case for the claim that natural kind properties (and other high-level properties) can figure in the content of experience, see Siegel 2006; for objections, see (e.g.) Price 2009 and Logue 2013b.

2. Naïve Realism and the Content Views

According to Naïve Realism, some perceptual experiences fundamentally consist in the subject perceiving entities in her environment.⁸ For example, according to the Naïve Realist, the experience I'm having of the banana on my desk fundamentally consists in my perceiving the banana. On this view, the ultimate psychological explanation of at least some of the features of my experience is in terms of my bearing the perceptual relation to the banana. Note that Naïve Realism is structurally similar to a version of the sense-datum theory: both views hold that at least some perceptual experiences fundamentally consist in the subject bearing the perceptual relation to something. They just give a different account of what that something is. According to the sense-datum theory, it's a mind-dependent, immaterial sense-datum; while according to the Naïve Realist, it's a mind-independent, material object in the subject's environment.

Another difference between Naïve Realism and the version of the sense-datum theory just sketched is that the latter is a theory about *all* perceptual experiences. By contrast, Naïve Realism is a claim about only *some* perceptual experiences. Which ones? Well, it's certainly not a claim about *hallucinatory* experiences. By definition, such experiences don't involve the subject perceiving things in her environment; *a fortiori*, they can't fundamentally consist in the subject perceiving things in her environment.

What about the experiences that do involve the subject perceiving things in her environment? This class of experiences divides into two types: veridical experiences and illusions. Veridical experiences are those in which the subject perceives a thing *o*, and it appears to have a property *F* in virtue of the subject perceiving *o*'s *F*-ness. For example, when I'm having a veridical experience of the banana on my desk, it looks yellow to me in virtue of my perceiving the banana's yellowness.⁹ By contrast, illusions are experiences in which the subject perceives a thing *o*, and it appears to have a property *F* even though the subject *doesn't*

⁸ This characterization of Naïve Realism is superficially different from some others found in the literature (e.g., Fish 2009). See Logue 2013a for discussion of how the characterization in the main text captures the content of other typical formulations of the view.

⁹ One might suggest that the very notion of a *veridical* experience smuggles in an affirmative answer to the question of whether experience has content, and so isn't a notion I'm entitled to in this dialectical context. The line of thought is this: A veridical experience is one in which things in the subject's environment appear to her to be a certain way, and they are that way (as the subject *perceives* the properties that appear to her to be instantiated by things in her environment). But, given what I've said in the previous section, doesn't the claim that things appear to her to be a certain way amount to saying that her experience has content (the proposition that specifies how the things appear to her to be)? In a word, no. As I'll argue in the following section, the talk of appearance that figures in the characterization of veridical experience can be understood in a distinctively *perceptual* sense or in an *epistemic* sense. Only the former entails a commitment to experiential content, so one who denies experiential content can make sense of the notion of veridical experience in terms of the latter.

perceive *o*'s *F*-ness. For example, consider an illusion in which a green banana looks yellow as a result of unusual lighting conditions. The subject of this illusion sees the banana, and it looks yellow to her, but not in virtue of perceiving the banana's yellowness—indeed, the banana *isn't* yellow, so it doesn't instantiate any yellowness for her to perceive.

All Naïve Realists take their theory to apply to veridical experiences. However, they divide when it comes to illusions. Some Naïve Realists restrict their theory to veridical experience (e.g., Martin 2006). Others think that the theory can be extended to illusions: one way to do this (very roughly) is to claim that illusion fundamentally consists in the subject perceiving things and some of their properties, and that something's illusorily appearing *F* consists in perceiving a property *distinct* from *F*-ness that the thing *does* instantiate.¹⁰ The details of such an account of illusion are beyond the scope of this paper. For simplicity's sake, I will restrict my focus to Naïve Realism about veridical experience.

Why might a Naïve Realist be hostile to the claim that experience has content? Naïve Realism holds that veridical experience fundamentally consists in the subject perceiving things in her environment; but on the face of it, this is perfectly compatible with it having content *as well*. Just because Naïve Realists don't typically characterize veridical experiences as having experiential content, it doesn't follow that they couldn't. Why would the Naïve Realist insist that veridical experience consists in *nothing more than* the subject perceiving things in her environment? I suspect that much of the Naïve Realist resistance to experiential content is rooted in an argument of M.G.F. Martin's regarding a distinct but related issue—namely, what a Naïve Realist should say about hallucinations. Let's sketch this argument, and explore its implications for the question of whether experience has content.

In his paper "The Limits of Self-Awareness" (2004), Martin argues that certain accounts of hallucination don't go well with Naïve Realism—in particular, what he calls *positive* accounts. A *positive* account of hallucination is one that characterizes it in terms that are *independent* of veridical experience. One example is the claim that hallucination fundamentally consists in the subject perceptually representing her environment as being a certain way (i.e., the Spicy Content View restricted to hallucination). Note that this claim makes no reference at all to veridical experience. By contrast, a *negative* account of hallucination characterizes it in terms of a relation it bears to veridical experience. For example, Martin's preferred account of hallucination is that it fundamentally consists in nothing more than the subject being in a state she can't tell apart by reflection alone from a veridical experience of a certain kind (e.g., a veridical experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana). This account characterizes hallucination as simply seeming like something it's not—there's nothing to hallucination beyond this relation to veridical experience.

Martin's argument against combining Naïve Realism with a positive account of hallucination has two stages. First, he argues that any feature of a hallucination will be also had by veridical experience that has the same proximate cause (2004: 52-8). Second, he argues that such a commonality across

¹⁰ For views roughly along these lines, see Brewer 2008, Fish 2009, Antony 2011, and Kalderon 2011.

a veridical experience and a hallucination will render Naïve Realism largely explanatorily redundant (2004: 58-68).¹¹

I have discussed Martin's argument against positive accounts of hallucination at length elsewhere (Logue 2013a). However, a close cousin of the second part of his argument could be employed in the debate over whether experience has content, and so deserves investigation in this context. The argument is as follows:

1. Suppose (for the sake of reductio) that veridical experiences have contents (in the Mild sense that there are propositions that specify the way things perceptually appear to the subject).
2. Naïve Realism is not explanatorily redundant with respect to a veridical experience's epistemological, behavioral, and phenomenal features (a commitment of Naïve Realism).
3. The fact that a veridical experience has a given content is sufficient to explain its epistemological, behavioral, and phenomenal features.
4. If veridical experiences have contents, Naïve Realism is explanatorily redundant with respect to a veridical experience's epistemological, behavioral, and phenomenal features (from 3).
5. Naïve Realism is explanatorily redundant with respect to a veridical experience's epistemological, behavioral, and phenomenal features (from 1 and 4)
6. Contradiction (2 and 5); veridical experiences don't have contents.

Of course, one could just as well re-frame this argument as a reductio of Naïve Realism (by supposing premise 2 for the sake of reductio instead). But since our issue is whether Naïve Realism is compatible with the Mild Content View, I will grant premise 2 for the sake of argument. That leaves premises 3 and 4—what can be said for them?

Premise 3 says that the fact that a veridical experience has a certain content (e.g., that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped thing before me) is sufficient to explain the experience's *epistemological* features (e.g., its tendency to generate the belief that there's a yellow, crescent-shaped thing before me), its *behavioral* features (its tendency to cause me to reach for the banana if I want to eat one), and its *phenomenal* features (i.e., what it's like for me to see a yellow, crescent-shaped thing). This last plank of the premise is particularly controversial—it will be rejected by those who hold that the phenomenal character of an experience doesn't supervene on its content. A popular reason for this rejection is the combination of externalism about perceptual content with the alleged possibility of *spectrum inversion*. Given externalism about perceptual content, one's experience represents that something is yellow in virtue of being a type of experience that is typically caused by yellow things. Given the possibility of

¹¹ Strictly speaking, it's not *Naïve Realism* that's incompatible with a positive account of hallucination—in principle, one could endorse Naïve Realism along with a positive account of hallucination, and concede that Naïve Realism plays a very limited role in explaining the phenomena that philosophical theories of experience are supposed to explain (e.g., the epistemological and phenomenal aspects of experience). But it's not clear why anyone would want to do that.

spectrum inversion, what it is like for one subject to experience yellow things could be what it's like for another subject to experience purple things. Putting the two together, two subjects could have experiences with the content that there's something yellow before them (because they're having experiences of the sort typically caused by yellow things), but what it's like for the subjects to have the experiences differs (because they are spectrally inverted with respect to each other). If this is a genuine possibility, the phenomenal character of an experience doesn't supervene on its representational content, and an experience's content isn't sufficient to explain why it has the phenomenal character it does—something more has to be said. For example, one might think we have to appeal to intrinsically non-intentional qualia to fully capture experiential phenomenology (Block 1996).

However, Naïve Realists are no friends of this kind of qualia, at least when it comes to veridical experience. They typically hold that the phenomenal character of a veridical experience is determined by the way the subject's environment is—that its phenomenal character is “constituted by the actual layout of the [environment] itself: which particular objects are there, their intrinsic properties, such as color and shape, and how they are arranged in relation to one another and to [the subject]” (Campbell 2002: 116). In short, standard Naïve Realism simply leaves no room for phenomena like spectrum inversion that motivate the rejection of the claim that phenomenology supervenes on content.¹² Thus, most Naïve Realists would be hostile to a rejection of premise 3 on the grounds just outlined. Again, since our issue is whether Naïve Realism is compatible with the Mild Content View, I will set aside this kind of reason for rejecting premise 3, and assume along with most Naïve Realists that spectrum inversion isn't a genuine possibility.

One might worry that no Naïve Realist would endorse premise 3. For such an endorsement seems tantamount to admitting that there's *no motivation for Naïve Realism*—if experiential content really is sufficient to explain the epistemological, behavioral, and phenomenal features of experience, then we might as well all embrace the Spicy Content View and call it a day.¹³ However, this worry doesn't withstand scrutiny. First, not all motivations for Naïve Realism claim that it can explain a feature of veridical experience that the Spicy Content View cannot. For example, Martin argues that Naïve Realism is required to account for *sensory imagination*—he says that Naïve Realism and the Spicy Content View are on a par with respect to accounting for perceptual experience (2002: 402). Premise 3 is perfectly compatible with a motivation for Naïve Realism of this sort. Second, the Naïve Realists who *do* think that there's some feature of experience that only Naïve Realism can explain don't seem to have *realized* that a claim along the lines of premise 3 is incompatible with their motivations for Naïve Realism. For example, Bill Fish (2009) argues that only Naïve Realism can properly account for perceptual phenomenal character, but nevertheless wrongly takes his view to be subject to Martin's screening off argument. In short, some Naïve Realists *can and do* accept premise 3, and at least some of those who shouldn't don't seem to have *realized* that they shouldn't. So

¹² For a version of Naïve Realism that does leave room for such phenomena, see Logue 2012b.

¹³ Thanks to Dave Ward for raising this important issue.

the argument presented above is still a plausible reconstruction of the Naïve Realist argument against experiential content.

So much for premise 3 (for the time being). What about premise 4? This premise is a plausible consequence of premise 3. If the fact that a veridical experience has a given content is sufficient to explain its epistemological, behavioral, and phenomenal features, then Naïve Realism drops out as redundant with respect to accounting for veridical experience—if we can explain everything about the experience that a philosophical theory of perceptual experience is supposed to explain just by saying that it has a certain content, then the Naïve Realist claim that it *also* involves the obtaining of the perceptual relation between the subject and things in her environment needlessly complicates our account of veridical experience. Of course, it's open to the Naïve Realist to insist that we should jettison the notion of experiential content from our account instead.¹⁴ But the point is that *it's one or the other*—the marriage of experiential content and Naïve Realism appears to be an unhappy one, since each steals the other's explanatory thunder.

As I said before, I take it that something like the argument just presented underlies much of the Naïve Realist hostility to experiential content.¹⁵ And on the face of it, the argument is plausible—if you're persuaded by Martin's argument against positive disjunctivism (as many are), you're likely to be persuaded by this argument against experiential content. Nevertheless, I don't think that this argument is sound. But before criticizing it, let us turn our attention to arguments in favor of experiential content. We can fully appreciate the need for a reconciliation of Naïve Realism and the Mild Content View only once we recognize that simply denying the latter isn't a viable option.

3. Arguments for the Mild Content View

In this section, I will outline two arguments for the Mild Content View. I will argue that, although they are sound, they aren't likely to persuade Naïve Realists who are convinced that their view is incompatible with the Mild Content View.

¹⁴ This is a disanalogy with Martin's argument against positive disjunctivism. In that case, there is a reason to prefer explanations in terms of experiential content: such explanations can provide a unified account of the epistemological, behavioral, and phenomenal features *shared* by a veridical experience and a hallucination. By contrast, a Naïve Realist explanation doesn't apply in the case of hallucination. Given that we should give a unified explanation of a phenomenon whenever possible, once we let perceptual content into our account of perceptual experience, it affords the superior explanation of the relevant phenomena. (In order to protect the explanatory power of Naïve Realism, Martin eschews accounting for hallucination in terms of any positive experiential features like perceptual content—see his 2004: 71-2.)

¹⁵ This isn't the only source of resistance—e.g., some have expressed doubts about whether we can non-arbitrarily pin down the content of an experience (see Travis 2004 and Brewer 2006). Since my main aim is to reconcile the Content Views with Naïve Realism, rather than to defend the latter from objections, I'll set these doubts aside.

So I will offer a different argument for the Mild Content View that I take to be more dialectically effective.

One argument for the Mild Content View is *the argument from accuracy* (Siegel 2010: 337-43, 2011: 33-42). It runs as follows:

1. Intuitively, experiences are assessable for accuracy (e.g., an experience as of a yellow crescent-shaped thing had in the presence of yellow crescent-shaped thing is accurate, whereas such an experience had in the absence of any yellow crescent-shaped thing whatsoever is inaccurate).
2. Hence, there are conditions under which an experience is accurate (e.g., an experience as of a yellow crescent-shaped thing is accurate only if there is a yellow crescent-shaped thing before one).
3. The conditions under which an experience is accurate specify a proposition (e.g., that there is a yellow crescent-shaped thing before one).
4. The proposition specified by an experience's accuracy conditions captures the way things perceptually appear to the subject in virtue of having the experience.
5. Hence, for any given experience *E*, there is a proposition associated with *E* that captures the way things perceptually appear to the subject in virtue of having *E* (i.e., the Mild Content View).

Siegel doesn't rest her case for the Mild Content View on the argument from accuracy, as she's skeptical of premise 4. She notes that there's no guarantee that an experience's accuracy conditions are *conveyed* to the subject, i.e., that the accuracy conditions capture how things perceptually appear to her. As Siegel points out, not *all* of the conditions under which an experience is accurate specify how things perceptually appear to the subject. For example, take the trivial accuracy condition of *the experience's being accurate*—that one's experience is accurate isn't among the ways things can perceptually appear to be (Siegel 2010: 344). Nevertheless, given the claim that things perceptually appear to the subject of an experience to be a certain way, and that the experience has accuracy conditions, it's natural to identify the way things perceptually appear to the subject with at least some *subset* of its accuracy conditions. That is, once we've recognized that experiences have accuracy conditions, the burden is on the opponent of the Mild Content View to explain why the way things perceptually appear to the subject *isn't* identical to a proposition specified by some subset of those conditions.¹⁶

Once the premises are tweaked so that the content of experience is specified by a subset of an experience's accuracy conditions, I believe the resulting argument is sound. But I *don't* think it's dialectically effective. Consider the situation from the perspective of a Naïve Realist who's convinced that her view is incompatible with the Mild Content View. The argument starts off with an appeal to an alleged intuition—viz., that experiences are assessable for accuracy. Our Naïve Realist thinks that endorsing this intuition is tantamount to giving up on her view, so she's well-advised to scrutinize this intuition carefully. And

¹⁶ I suspect Siegel would agree; it seems that her further argument from appearing (discussed below) is intended to provide a way of specifying *which* subset of an experience's accuracy conditions yields its content.

although I'm sympathetic to the intuition, it's not obvious that it's worth hanging onto at any cost. If I took myself to have excellent reasons for endorsing Naïve Realism, and excellent reasons to believe that Naïve Realism is incompatible with the Mild Content View, I'd be willing to argue in the opposite direction from the *falsity* of the Mild Content View to the falsity of the *intuition*. Philosophical reflection sometimes recommends forsaking intuitions in favor of an error theory, and for our Naïve Realist, this could be one of those cases. So, given the present state of the dialectic (in which Naïve Realism is often taken by its proponents to be incompatible with the Mild Content View), the argument from accuracy isn't persuasive.

The route to the Mild Content View that Siegel does endorse is the *argument from appearing* (Siegel 2010: 345-54, see also Schellenberg 2011: 718-20). The argument goes roughly as follows:

1. In having an experience, things perceptually appear to the subject to be some way (e.g., it perceptually appears to the subject of an experience of a yellow crescent-shaped banana that there is a yellow crescent-shaped thing before her).
2. The way things perceptually appear to a subject to be specifies a proposition (e.g., that there is a yellow crescent-shaped thing before one).
3. Hence, for any given experience *E*, there is a proposition associated with *E* that captures the way things perceptually appear to the subject in virtue of having *E* (i.e., the Mild Content View).¹⁷

In short, things perceptually appear to the subject of an experience to be some way, and the proposition that things are that way is the content of the experience (in the Mild sense). *Prima facie*, this argument is much more promising than the argument from accuracy. First, there's no room to argue that the proposition specified doesn't capture the way things perceptually appear to the subject, since that's what specifies the proposition in the first place. Second, the starting point is much more difficult to reject—one might be willing to reject the intuition that experiences have accuracy conditions, but how can one deny that things perceptually appear to be some way to one when one has an experience? Isn't that a conceptual truth if there ever was one?

Just as with the argument from accuracy, I think that the argument from appearing is sound—it's just not dialectically effective. Again, let's think of the situation from the perspective of a Naïve Realist who takes her view to be incompatible with the Mild Content View. If she's right, the argument from appearing entails the falsity of her view, so she's well-advised to scrutinize its starting point. And (as Siegel recognizes) there is some wiggle room here. The Naïve Realist might *agree* that things appear to be some way to one when one has an experience, but only in a sense of 'appear' that doesn't entail the truth of premise 1.

It's uncontroversial that things appear to the subject of an experience to be some way in the sense that, in normal circumstances, the experience generates the *belief* that things are that way. For example, when I have an

¹⁷ Siegel and Schellenberg present much more detailed variants of this argument, but the details wouldn't affect the point I want to make here.

experience of a yellow crescent-shaped banana on my desk, there appears to me to be a yellow crescent-shaped thing before me in the sense that I will form the belief that there is a yellow crescent-shaped thing before me—at least as long as I'm rational, and I don't suspect that my experience has been generated in a non-standard way (such as being the result of a hallucinogen). Such an appearance is an *epistemic* one. Let's say that it epistemically appears to a subject *S* that *p* just in case *S* is disposed to believe that *p* solely on the basis of evidence (e.g., perceptual evidence), given that *S* is rational and doesn't suspect that the evidence is misleading. For example, it epistemically appears to a subject of the Muller-Lyer illusion that the lines she's seeing are different lengths. Although a subject who's in the know isn't disposed to believe that the lines are different lengths, she *would* be disposed to believe this solely on the basis of her perceptual evidence if she didn't know that her experience was misleading.

Now, the fact that things *epistemically* appear to the subject of an experience to be some way doesn't obviously entail that there is some *other* sense in which things appear to the subject to be some way, associated with *experiences* instead of beliefs—i.e., a distinctively *perceptual* appearance (see, e.g., Travis 2004, Brewer 2008 for claims along these lines). This is particularly clear on Naïve Realism, on which veridical experience is fundamentally a relation to objects in one's environment, *unlike* belief, which is fundamentally a relation to a proposition. According to a Naïve Realist, the subject of a veridical experience perceives entities in her environment (e.g., a yellow crescent-shaped banana), and this disposes her to believe that her environment is a certain way (e.g., that there's a yellow crescent-shaped thing before her). And although there's an *epistemic* appearance, in that the subject is disposed to believe on the basis of perceptual evidence that there's a yellow crescent-shaped thing before her, the Naïve Realist might insist that that there's no distinctively *perceptual* appearance in addition—that there is a proposition that captures the way things *perceptually*, as opposed to *epistemically*, appear to the subject. In short, the idea is that things appear to be some way to the subject in virtue of having the experience, but the proposition that things are that way is the content of perceptually-based *belief*, *not* experience proper—veridical experience is a relation to concrete things in one's environment, *not* abstract propositional contents.

Given that the claim that *it perceptually appears to S that o is F* is equivalent to the claim that *o perceptually appears F to S*, to deny the former is to deny the latter.¹⁸ So the Naïve Realist maneuver sketched in the previous paragraph would be tantamount to denying that things *perceptually* appear to have properties—e.g., that the banana on my desk perceptually appears yellow. Furthermore, one might think that a necessary condition of *S* perceiving *o*'s *F*-ness is that *o* perceptually appears *F* to *S*—I wouldn't be perceiving the

¹⁸ One might think that *o* could perceptually appear *F* to *S* without it perceptually appearing to *S* that *o* is *F* on the grounds that only the latter requires that *S* has the concept of *F*-ness. However, its *perceptually* appearing to *S* that *o* is *F* requires that *S* has the concept of *F*-ness only if *having experiences* of *F*-ness requires that *S* has the concept of *F*-ness. And if *having experiences* of *F*-ness requires that *S* has the concept of *F*-ness, then so does *o*'s appearing *F* to *S*—which means that the claims don't come apart after all.

yellowness of the banana on my desk if it didn't look (i.e., visually appear) yellow to me. If that's right, the Naïve Realist maneuver just outlined entails that the subject of a veridical experience simply perceives things in her environment (e.g., bananas); strictly speaking, she doesn't perceive any the *properties* they instantiate (e.g., yellowness). The resulting view is what Siegel calls 'Radical Naïve Realism': veridical experience "...consists in a perceptual relation to a worldly item, and properties are not among the things the subject is perceptually related to" (2010: 358).¹⁹

Siegel argues that Radical Naïve Realism is implausible, mainly because our theory of veridical experience should reflect which properties of a perceived object make a difference to phenomenal character and which ones don't (2010: 359). For example, in having a veridical experience of the banana on my desk, the color of its rind contributes to the phenomenal character of my experience, but the color of the fruit within does not. Just saying that my experience fundamentally consists in my perceiving *the banana* doesn't capture this obvious phenomenological fact. It seems that we need to specify which of the banana's *properties* I perceive in order to fully account for the phenomenal character of my experience, contra Radical Naïve Realism.

While I'm sympathetic to this objection, I can (dimly!) see a way out for the Radical Naïve Realist. It's uncontroversial that, when I have a veridical experience of a banana, my visual system registers some of its features (e.g., the bright yellowness of its rind) but not others (e.g., the yellowish-whiteness of the fruit within). But it's not obvious that this uncontroversial fact amounts to *perception* of some of the banana's properties, or to the banana *perceptually appearing* to be a certain way to me. For example, one might think that there are subpersonal perceptual states that carry information about a perceived object's properties, but the personal-level upshot of such information processing is a *unified* experience of an object, as opposed to one that "carves it up" in terms of its properties (so to speak).²⁰

I'm not confident that this line of thought, when fully spelled out, will vindicate Radical Naïve Realism and the rejection of the argument from appearing it's supposed to enable—just as I'm not sure that the denial that experiences are assessable for accuracy is a defensible way out of the argument from accuracy. But one thing I am sure of is that this debate has gotten more complicated than it needs to be. The driving idea behind these arguments for experiential content is that there are distinctively perceptual appearances—that we're failing to capture *something* about veridical experience if we confine appearances to the post-perceptual doxastic domain. The path of least resistance would be an argument for distinctively perceptual appearances from a starting

¹⁹ Siegel formulates Radical Naïve Realism as a thesis about all non-hallucinatory experiences, not just veridical experiences. But since I'm concerned only with what the Naïve Realist says about the latter sort of experience here, I've weakened Radical Naïve Realism accordingly. Also, note that if the Naïve Realist gives up on the claim that we perceive properties, she'll have to draw the distinction between veridical and illusory experiences in a different way than I drew it above (a task I'll leave to the reader).

²⁰ I suspect that something like this line of thought is behind Brewer's Object View (see his 2008, especially pp. 171-2).

point that even the most radical Naïve Realist would have to accept. Fortunately, I think there is such an argument—let’s call it the *argument from belief generation*.

If there are distinctively perceptual appearances, then things perceptually appear to a subject of an experience to be a certain way (e.g., that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped thing before her), and the proposition that things are that way is at least necessary for the accuracy of the experience. In other words, if there are distinctively perceptual appearances, then premise 2 of the argument from accuracy and premise 1 of the argument from appearing are true. The argument for belief generation is essentially a case for the antecedent.

The argument begins with the truism that a given experience naturally gives rise to particular beliefs rather than others. For example, my experience of a yellow crescent-shaped banana naturally gives rise to the belief that there’s a yellow crescent-shaped thing before me, but not the belief that there is a purple, star-shaped thing before me. More precisely, a given experience *E* is associated with a particular *epistemic* appearance that *p*—the subject is disposed to believe that *p* solely on the basis of *E*, given that she is rational and doesn’t suspect that *E* is misleading. Since I am rational and have no suspicions that my experience of a yellow crescent-shaped banana is misleading, I am disposed to believe (and indeed *do* believe) that there is a yellow crescent-shaped thing before me solely on the basis of my experience.

At this point, one should wonder: what grounds the association between *E* (say, my experience of a yellow, crescent-shaped banana) and the epistemic appearance that *p* (say, that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped thing before me)? What does my *experience* have to do with *proposition* that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped thing before me? How do we get from the former to the latter? A plausible answer is that it *perceptually* appears to me that *p*—i.e., that the *epistemic* appearance associated with *E* is just the proposition specified by how things *perceptually* appear to me. And from here we can establish the Mild Content View. To summarize:

1. A given experience *E* is associated with a particular epistemic appearance that *p*.
2. The best explanation of (1) is that there is a proposition associated with *E* that captures the way things perceptually appear to the subject in virtue of having *E*.
3. Hence, for any given experience *E*, there is a proposition associated with *E* that captures the way things perceptually appear to the subject in virtue of having *E* (i.e., the Mild Content View).

I submit that this argument for the Mild Content View is more dialectically effective than the arguments from accuracy and appearing. For while the Naïve Realist might be willing to deny that experiences are assessable for accuracy, or that things perceptually appear to a subject to be a certain way, it would be sheer madness to deny that a given experience naturally gives rise to particular beliefs about one’s surroundings—e.g., to deny that a veridical experience of a yellow banana naturally gives rise to the belief that there is a yellow banana before one. (Indeed, recall that the Naïve Realist had to appeal to epistemic appearances

associated with experiences in order to render the denial of perceptual appearances even remotely plausible.)

So the argument's starting point is non-negotiable. But what about its second premise? There are two broad ways of resisting it: one could put forward an equally good alternative explanation of the association between experiences and epistemic appearances, or one could deny that this association requires *psychological* explanation. As for the first option: the task is to explain, e.g., why the experience I'm having now gives rise to the epistemic appearance that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped thing before me—in short, the relationship between this proposition and my perceptual experience. I have no idea what this relationship would be if not that of the former being the way things *perceptually appear* to me in virtue of having the latter. Any other candidate that comes to mind is more controversial—e.g., the proposition being the way I *perceptually represent* things as being in virtue of having the experience (as on the Medium Content View). So the proposed explanation seems to be the *least* we can get away with.

The more promising option is to challenge whether we even need a psychological explanation of the connection in the first place. One might think that it's just a brute psychological fact that the experience I'm having right now gives rise to the epistemic appearance that there's a yellow banana before me—we don't need to insert a *perceptual* appearance into the picture to explain what's going on here. An experience of a certain kind reliably produces a disposition to believe a particular proposition, and that's all there is to it.

First, note that this response to premise (2) commits us to a broadly reliabilist picture of how experiences justify beliefs. The connection between an experience and an epistemic appearance is primarily causal, and only rational in virtue of being a component of a reliable belief generating process. Many might find this too bitter a pill to swallow to avoid the Mild Content View; but I won't pursue this worry here. A more fundamental problem with this response is that it is in tension with the project of giving a philosophical theory of perceptual experience.

Presumably, in carrying out this project, our aim is to give an account of the metaphysical structure of perceptual experience that explains certain of its features—the features of most interest to philosophers being its epistemological role, its phenomenal character, and its role in facilitating action. Now, if we can fully explain these aspects of experience *without* an account of its metaphysical structure, then the whole point of this project goes out the window. It's a short step from the claim that we don't need an explanation of the epistemological role of perceptual experience in terms of its metaphysical structure to the claim that we don't need a philosophical theory of perceptual experience.²¹ And a

²¹ To be fair, one might hold that although we don't need an explanation of the epistemological role of perceptual experience in terms of its metaphysical structure, we *do* need such an explanation of its phenomenal character and/or its role in facilitating action. However, if one wants explanations of the latter in terms of the metaphysical structure of perceptual experience, why wouldn't one want analogous explanations of the former? The burden is on the proponent of such a view to explain why the epistemological role of experience differs from the other features in this respect.

consequence of this would be that the debate over whether experience has content is pointless. In short, one *can* avoid the Mild Content View by rejecting premise (2) on these grounds, but the victory would be hollow—it would come at the cost of devaluing the very debate one is engaged in.

Tim Crane suggests that “...it is a mistake to read back from the content of a perceptual judgement a hypothesis about the structure of experience on the basis of which it is made” (Crane 2009, p. 465). This is essentially what the argument from belief generation does—it moves from an epistemic appearance (a disposition to judge that *p* solely on the basis of experience) to the claim that the associated experience has content in the Mild sense (there is a proposition that captures how things perceptually appear to the subject). But far from being a mistake, I think this kind of approach is the way forward. For *how else* are we supposed to figure out what the structure of perceptual experience is, if not by looking to the roles experience plays for constraints on that structure? Otherwise, it’s just not clear what is at stake in arguments about the metaphysical structure of perceptual experience.

In summary, although the Naïve Realist has room to resist the arguments from accuracy and appearing for the Mild Content View, it’s hard to see how the Naïve Realist could escape the argument from belief generation with her credibility intact. So if Naïve Realism is incompatible with the Mild Content View, then so much the worse for Naïve Realism. Fortunately for the Naïve Realist, the antecedent is false—establishing this is the first task of the next section.

4. Reconciling Naïve Realism and the Content Views

The conclusion of the argument from belief generation is that the Mild Content View is true—that for any given experience *E*, there is a proposition associated with it that specifies how things perceptually appear to the subject in virtue of having *E*. In section 2, I outlined the following argument for the incompatibility of Naïve Realism with the Mild Content View:

1. Suppose (for the sake of reductio) that veridical experiences have contents (in the Mild sense that there are propositions that specify the way things perceptually appear to the subject).
2. Naïve Realism is not explanatorily redundant with respect to a veridical experience’s epistemological, behavioral, and phenomenal features (a commitment of Naïve Realism).
3. The fact that a veridical experience has a given content is sufficient to explain its epistemological, behavioral, and phenomenal features.
4. If veridical experiences have contents, Naïve Realism is explanatorily redundant with respect to a veridical experience’s epistemological, behavioral, and phenomenal features (from 3).
5. Naïve Realism is explanatorily redundant with respect to a veridical experience’s epistemological, behavioral, and phenomenal features (from 1 and 4)
6. Contradiction (2 and 5); veridical experiences don’t have contents.

If Naïve Realism is to be reconciled with the Mild Content View, this argument must be unsound. I submit that the culprit is premise 3.

To see this, consider the Mild Content View in isolation. All it says is that, for any given experience, there's a proposition associated with it that specifies how things perceptually appear to the subject in virtue of having it. But to say *only* that is to leave an important question unanswered: *what makes it the case that that* proposition specifies how things perceptually appear to the subject? For example, the proposition that there is a yellow crescent-shaped thing before me specifies how things perceptually appear to me right now. How did this proposition end up being cast in this role? Why does it perceptually appear to me that there is a yellow crescent-shaped thing before me, as opposed to a red, round thing? Since the Mild Content View doesn't yield an answer to such questions, the fact that a veridical experience has a given content in the Mild sense *isn't* sufficient on its own to explain its epistemological, behavioral, and phenomenal features. The Mild Content View has to be supplemented with further claims that will yield an answer.

And Naïve Realism can come to the rescue. As I previously characterized it, Naïve Realism is the view that veridical experience fundamentally consists in perception of things in one's environment. Some Naïve Realists (such as Johnston 2006 and Fish 2009) take this to amount to perception of *facts* or *truthmakers*. Roughly, these are entities constituted by things and their properties, entities of the form *o's being F* (e.g., this banana's being yellow, Mark's being to the left of Bill). As the second label suggests, such entities are what make propositions true. This banana's being yellow and before me makes it true *that* there is a yellow thing before me; Mark's being to the left of Bill makes it true *that* Mark is to the left of Bill.

Fleshing out Naïve Realism in terms of perception of truthmakers affords a handy explanation of why things perceptually appear to be the way they do in the case of veridical experience. We can say that the proposition associated with an experience that specifies how things perceptually appear to its subject is the one such that *the truthmakers perceived are necessary and sufficient for its truth*. For example, I perceive *this banana's being yellow, crescent-shaped, and to my left*, and this truthmaker is necessary and sufficient for the truth of the proposition that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped thing to my left. It perceptually appears to me that there is a yellow, crescent-shaped thing to my left because the truthmaker I perceive in the course of my current experience is necessary and sufficient for the truth of this proposition. In short, the proposal is that the truthmakers the subject perceives determine which proposition is the content of her experience (in the Mild sense).²²

²² The "necessary and sufficient" restriction is required to avoid unwelcome consequences like the following (respectively): that it perceptually appears to me that either there is a yellow, crescent-shaped thing to my left or $2 + 2 = 4$, and that it perceptually appears to me that *Heather's* banana is yellow.

This way of specifying the content of veridical experience has a controversial consequence. The truthmaker *this banana's being yellow and before me* is necessary and sufficient for the truth of the proposition that there is a *banana* before me. And, as I briefly mentioned at the end of section 1, it's controversial whether the content of experience takes a stand on matters like

So we should reject premise (3) of the argument for the incompatibility of Naïve Realism and the Mild Content View. The latter is insufficient to account for the epistemological, behavioral, and phenomenal features of a veridical experience, because it is silent on the facts in virtue of which things perceptually appear to a veridically perceiving subject as they do. Furthermore, Naïve Realism has a story to tell here—the Naïve Realist can offer an account of the content of a veridical experience in terms of the truthmakers the subject perceives in the course of having it.

One can use broadly the same kind of reasoning to reconcile Naïve Realism with the *Medium* Content View. Recall that the Medium Content View is the Mild Content View plus the claim that perceptual experience consists in the subject perceptually representing her environment as being a certain way. On this view, perceptual representation isn't what experience *fundamentally* consists in—this is what differentiates the Medium and the *Spicy* Content Views. Since the Medium Content View is silent on what experience fundamentally consists in, it cannot provide an *exhaustive* personal-level psychological explanation of the epistemological, behavioral, and phenomenological features of an experience. We're left without an account of what experience fundamentally consists in, if not perceptual representation.

As in the previous case, Naïve Realism can be wheeled in at this point. Notice that Naïve Realism and the Medium Content View aren't competitors: the former is an account of the fundamental nature of veridical experience, while the latter is not. Hence, it's possible (at least in principle) to combine them. For example, we can say that the subject of a veridical experience perceptually represents her environment as being a certain way *in virtue of* perceiving things in her environment—e.g., that I perceptually represent the proposition that there is a yellow thing before me in virtue of perceiving the banana's being yellow. The idea is that in some sense (which I won't attempt to spell out here) the subject perceiving things in her environment is more basic than the representational state; *something* about the latter is explained in terms of the former (see Logue 2013a). Alternatively, we can say that the representational state is a *constituent* of the subject perceiving things in her environment—e.g., that my perceptually representing the proposition that there is a yellow thing before me is a constituent of my perceiving the banana's being yellow. The idea here is that the representational state is *but one part of* what veridical experience fundamentally consists in (see Logue 2012a).²³

whether there are *bananas* before one. But there is a formulation that is neutral on this issue, namely: the content of a veridical experience is a proposition *concerning which perceptible properties are instantiated in the subject's environment*, which is such that the perceived truthmakers are necessary and sufficient for its truth. If it turns out that the property of being a banana isn't a perceptible property, then this formulation excludes it from the content of experience.

²³ Of course, a proponent of the Naïve Realism/Medium Content View package would have to tell a different story about what non-veridical experiences fundamentally consist in. I'll set this issue aside since veridical experience is the main focus of this paper, but see Logue 2012a for a suggestion.

What about Naïve Realism and the *Spicy* Content View? Surely, one might think, the claim that veridical experience *fundamentally* consists in the subject perceptually representing her environment as being a certain way renders Naïve Realism explanatorily redundant. When it comes to veridical experience, Naïve Realism and the *Spicy* Content View seem to be competitors—how could veridical experience fundamentally consist in perceptual representation *and* perceiving things in one’s environment?

As it happens, this rhetorical question has an answer. Recall that a philosophical theory of perceptual experience has *several* explanatory tasks: in particular, it’s supposed to explain the epistemological, behavioral, and phenomenological aspects of experience. Thus, it’s in principle possible to *divide the labor* across Naïve Realism and the *Spicy* Content View: say, the latter explains the epistemological role of experience while the former yields an account of the phenomenal character of experience and the role it plays in facilitating action.²⁴ The upshot is that Naïve Realism and the *Spicy* Content View need not be in competition with each other. The fundamental structure of veridical experience *could* be a composite of a propositional attitude and a perceptual relation, and it *could* be that this is the best way to explain everything that needs explaining.²⁵

Note that I’ve merely offered a *template* for reconciliation of Naïve Realism with the stronger Content Views. I’ve said nothing about the benefits we would get (if any) from combining Naïve Realism with either of them. My aim in this paper is simply to show that Naïve Realism is in principle compatible with these views. Whether either of these combinations is *well-motivated* is a question that must be left to another paper.

5. Conclusion

Naïve Realists have continued to resist the claim that experience has content, despite compelling arguments in its favor (the arguments from accuracy and appearing). I have proposed a two-prong strategy for talking the Naïve Realist down from the ledge. First, I offered an argument for the Mild Content View that even the most radical Naïve Realist wouldn’t reject. Second, I reconstructed what seems to be the primary argument for the incompatibility of Naïve Realism and experiential content, and identified a flaw in it. In particular, *regardless* of which of the Content Views a Naïve Realist adopts, a story about why a crucial premise in the incompatibility argument is false is at least in principle available to her. Hence, Naïve Realism can be reconciled with experiential content after all.

²⁴ One could strengthen the *Spicy* Content View into the claim that perceptual experience *fundamentally* consists in the subject perceptually representing her environment as being a certain way, and *nothing else*. Of course, this type of content view is incompatible with Naïve Realism, but in an uninteresting way (*viz.*, by definition). Thanks to an anonymous referee for pointing out the need to mention this.

²⁵ I take it that the account of experience defended in Schellenberg 2011 is one version of this view.

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