

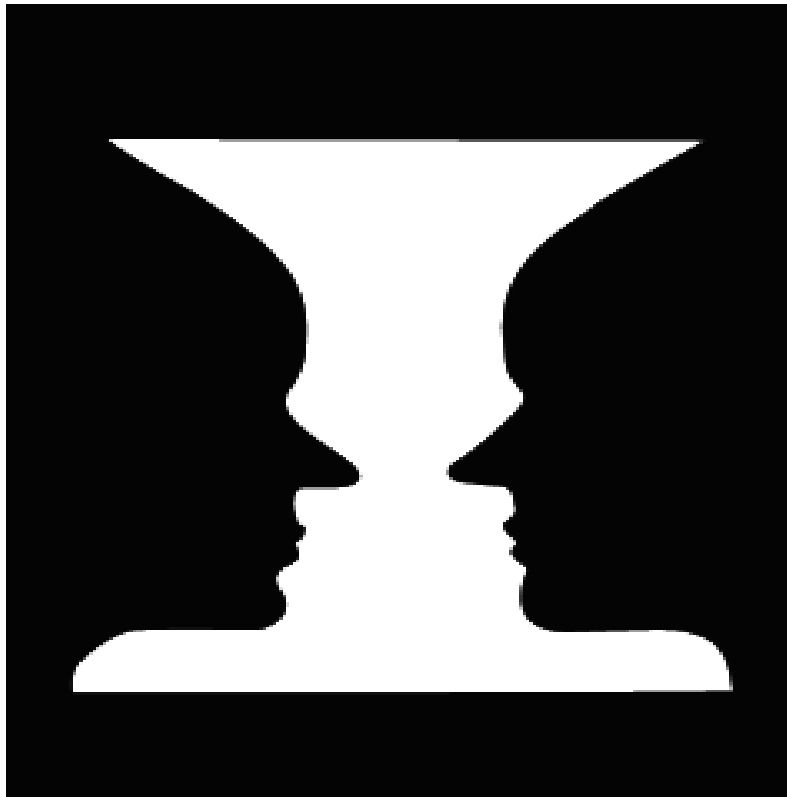
Perceptual Intentionality: Phenomenology, Representation and Knowledge

*Workshop at NTNU, Trondheim, Thursday-Saturday 4th-6th April
2013, Dragvoll gård (Thursday and Friday) and Suhmhuset
(Saturday)*

*Preworkshop event: Vitenskapsteoretisk forum, Wednesday 3^d
April, Café Ni Muser*

Guest speakers:

Tom Stoneham (York)
Fiona Macpherson (Glasgow)
Mike Martin (UCL/Berkeley)
Walter Hopp (Boston)



The workshop opens the project '*Representationalism or Anti-representationalism? Perspectives on intentionality from philosophy and cognitive science*', funded by The Norwegian Research Council, see <http://www.ntnu.no/filosofi/rar>. See below for programme and abstracts. All are welcome to attend!

Perceptual intentionality: Phenomenology, Representation and Knowledge

Thursday 4th - Saturday 6th April 2013, NTNU Trondheim (Dragvoll campus & Suhmhuset)

Pre-workshop event, Wednesday 3rd April:

Forum for Theory of Science, Café Ni Muser, 1815-2000

Tom Stoneham (York): 'Berkeley on sensory content and seeing distance'

Thursday (Låven, Dragvoll gård, DL31):

0915-1045 Fiona Macpherson (Glasgow): TBA

1045-1115 Coffee

1115-1215 Sebastian Watzl (CSMN, Oslo): 'How Attention Structures Consciousness'

(Morning chair: Jonathan Knowles)

1215-1315 Lunch

1315-1415 Jonathan Knowles (NTNU): 'Anti-representationalism about thought and perception'

1415-1500 Ronny Myhre (NTNU) 'The Neurodynamics of Visual Experience'

(Early afternoon chair: Anders Nes)

1500-1515 Coffee

1515-1615 Gunnar Karlsen (Bergen) 'Factorising experience'

1615-1715 Carsten Hansen (Oslo): TBA

(Late afternoon chair: Mette Hansen)

Friday (Låven, Dragvoll gård, DL31)

0915-1015 Mette Hansen (Bergen): 'Is Experience of Kinds a Kind of Experience?'

1015-1045 Coffee

1045-1215 Mike Martin (University College London): 'Measured sensation'

(Morning chair: Jussi Haukioja)

1215-1315 Lunch

1315-1415 Anders Nes (CSMN, Oslo) & Tom Stoneham (York) 'Persistence Perception and Perceptual Relationism'

1415-1500 Jørgen Dyrstad (Oslo): 'Appearances and Perceptual Content'
(*Early afternoon chair: Ståle Gundersen*)

1500-1515 Coffee

1515-1615 James McGuirk (Bodø): 'Expertise and pre-reflective engagement'
(*Chair: Anita Leirfall*)

1615-1715 Business meeting

Saturday: (Vitenskapsmuseet, Suhmhuset)

0915-1045 Walter Hopp (Boston) 'Perceptual Experience and the Foundations of
Knowledge'

1045-1115 Coffee

1115-1215 Simon Høffding (Centre for Subjectivity Research, Copenhagen) 'Between
representational and anti-representational: The immersed musician'
(*Morning chair: Thomas Raleigh*)

1215- Lunch/departure

ABSTRACTS

Tom Stoneham: 'Berkeley on sensory content and seeing distance'

It is a commonplace in philosophy of certain periods that we 'strictly' or truly only see in two dimensions, which is not to deny that there is a loose or 'vulgar' way of talking according to which we see in three dimensions. This raises three questions:

1. How can we distinguish what we strictly see from loose talk about vision?
2. Given this distinction, why think that distance or depth is not strictly seen?
3. What is the relation between what is strictly seen and what is loosely claimed to be seen?

This paper gives a new account of Berkeley's answers to these questions in the works on vision. This is not merely of antiquarian interest, for it presents us with a very different way of thinking about the structure of visual experience and the distinction between sensory and representational content which has relevance to contemporary debates. In particular, it gives us a sense in which the representational content of visual experience is learned.

Fiona Macpherson: TBA

Sebastian Watzl: 'How Attention Structures Consciousness'

How does attention contribute to the character of conscious experiencing? In the *first part* of this talk, I argue that its contribution cannot be exhaustively captured by what I call *the appearance view* of phenomenal character. According to this view the phenomenal character of experience is exhausted by the way the world or an aspect of the world appears to the subject (I take as roughly equivalent the idea that phenomenal character entirely consists in what is present(ed) to the subject in experience or in what the subject is directly aware of). In my *counterpart argument* against the appearance view I argue that attention scenarios have counterparts that replicate the same appearances without attention. While attention, for example, increases apparent contrast or spatial resolution, it is possible to have experiences with the same high apparent contrast or spatial resolution in scenarios without attention. Yet, these counterparts are phenomenally distinct from the attention scenarios, as evidenced by the subject's ability to notice whether her attention has been engaged or not. In the *second part* of the talk, I provide an account of what the appearance view misses. While the appearance view might be correct as an account of *phenomenal qualities*, it overlooks that these qualities occur in a *phenomenal structure* that gives shape to the perceptual experiences that are the focus of the appearance view. The prioritizing of perceptual information known to occur in sub-personal information processing has an analogue at the level of conscious experience: some parts of a subject's total experience are more central in that total experience than others. The structural ordering of experiential parts is a holistic feature of the subject's experience that cannot be reduced to the phenomenal qualities that characterize each part separately. I compare this structuralist position with a view on which attention modulates experiential attitudes and argue for its superiority along several dimensions.

Jonathan Knowles ‘Anti-representationalism about thought and perception’

My aim in this paper is to explore relationships between anti-representationalism about thought (ART) and anti-representationalist positions in cognitive science and, in particular, the philosophy of perception and perceptual experience. I begin by outlining and motivating ART, stressing its anti-epistemological remit. I argue, contrary to Rorty’s insistence, that there are potential ramifications for ART in what cognitive science takes as its primary explanatory model, and in what we should say about the nature of perceptual experience. The main part of the paper concerns different theories of perceptual experience and their relation to ART. I focus, on the one hand, on contemporary versions of naïve realism and, on the other, Alva Noë’s enactivist theory, arguing both that the latter avoids pitfalls that face the former, and that it is robust to independent criticism when interpreted as a contribution to enactivist, anti-representationalist cognitive science more generally – in which role it can moreover be seen as consistent with the anti-epistemological framework of ART.

Ronny Myhre: ‘The Neurodynamics of Visual Experience’

According to the computational theory of vision, the purpose of the visual system is to enable an animal to form a relatively stable mental representation of the visual world. Vision is held to be the end product of a series of increasingly sophisticated filters in the brain that detect and analyze information ‘given’ (as input) to the system. The challenge of understanding vision, accordingly, is to understand the neural mechanisms responsible for transforming the 2D image on the retina to the 3D representation of the visual world in the higher areas of the visual brain. In this article I will discuss some problems with this theory. After briefly discussing the relatively well-known reverse-optics problem the computational theory faces, I will turn to some related problems this theory engenders as a result of the inherent assumptions about the *elementary* nature of the visual system made by this theory. Drawing on research in comparative genomics and evolutionary developmental biology (evo-devo) on the evolutionary emergence of the relatively simple visual systems found in the earliest bilaterian animals I will present evidence to the effect that the very idea that the visual system serves the function of enabling the animal to form a visual mental representation of the visual world is deeply misguided. The upshot is that the elementary structure and dynamics of the nervous system should not be understood as a complex input-output machine but as a dynamical network enabling the ability to pick up relevant information from the environment for the purpose of coordinating the animal’s movement in real time and real space. Although there are representational features in the visual nervous system, it is wrong to think of these as underpinning a *mental* representation of the visual world. I end the article with a discussion of some interesting experimental evidence for the existence of two visual pathways in the visual brain that underpins two different kinds of vision. This *neural* distinction might be grounded in different neural mechanisms for two different kinds of visual experience – phenomenal consciousness (rich and affective but short in temporal duration) and perception (detailed and focused but longer temporal duration). This distinction is not insignificant since it is highly plausible that the earliest evolutionary visual systems primarily supported affective and sensory (i.e. subjective) processes, not cognitive ones.

Gunnar Karlsen: ‘Factorising experience’

The senses interact in perception as the two eyes collaborate in vision, Merleau-Ponty writes. This phenomenological observation, that the senses appear in some way to be intimately connected, is currently given wide attention in philosophy of perception. I will briefly present Merleau-Ponty’s view as one that holds that one cannot separate ordinary human experiences from one another on basis of their phenomenal character; the experiences are phenomenally unified. This view will then be compared to recent alternative views on unifying experience (Tye, Bayne) and discussed against the question if one can factorise one’s overall experience into the various sense-modalities that contributes to it in a way that also takes care of the sense-specific experience’s phenomenal character.

Carsten Hansen: TBA

Mette Hansen: ‘Is Experience of Kinds a Kind of Experience?’

Mike Martin: ‘Measured sensation’

Some philosophers (for example, Block 2010) have argued that experimental work on visual attention offers examples of variation in the character of sensation or perception that create problems for ‘direct realist’ and pure intentionalist theories of visual perception. In this paper I claim that the fundamental argumentative concern of Block and others in this philosophical literature relies on no special feature of attentional processing. Instead it raises a more general question of how we are to understand what it is to have conscious sensation of environmental features. And, more specifically, how we are to understand the classification of a given sensation as, say, one of a spatial contrast grating of 28%, or a sensation as one of periwinkle. Block, and other contributors to this debate, assume that sense experience is diaphanous, in a sense to be traced back to Moore 1903: that there are sensible qualities such that (for a given modality) there is only one way of experiencing such qualities. Like Moore, Block offers no argument in favour of the doctrine. I claim that rejecting the doctrine gives us a better understanding of how we type sensations, and the extent to which we can type them.

Anders Nes & Tom Stoneham: ‘Persistence Perception and Perceptual Relationism’

Our perception of persisting things is often, but not always, a perception of them as persisting; often, but not always, when a plane flies through a smallish cloud, we perceive the exiting plane as the same as that occluded moments before. Persistence perception raises a challenge for currently influential "relationist", or "act-object", views of experience (a challenge independent of more familiar worries over hallucination, illusion and secondary qualities). Relationist views, on currently influential versions, e.g. Campbell's (2002) and Brewer's (2011), propose to account for the nature of perceptual experience in terms of the experiencer perceiving objective, everyday items. Yet contrasts in persistence perception can be found where the contrasting experiences

involve seeing just the same physical objects throughout; the contrast seems to consist in the putatively intentional matter of what is seen as the same as what. The presentation seeks to explain the nature of the challenge in somewhat greater detail, and critically examine some notable options for a relationist response to it.

Jørgen Dyrstad: ‘Appearances and Perceptual Content’

The standard view in the philosophy of perception – the *Content View* (CV), stating that perceiving is fundamentally a matter of representing one’s environment – has often simply been taken for granted. Recently, however, CV has been challenged, and some positive arguments have been offered. One line of argument aims to establish that (as a recent writer has put it) “the mere fact that the world seems a certain way when one perceives entails that the perception has content”. I consider some such arguments – in particular how they attempt to meet a challenge by Charles Travis. The challenge is to present a notion of “seems” that is both sufficiently belief-independent and capable of determining perceptual content. I argue that the arguments fail their task: First, appeals to Chisholm’s “non-comparative” notion miss the force of the challenge. Second, the fact that (belief-independent) representation can affect how things seem doesn’t establish CV. All views can account for this, and in fact reflection on the relevant cases suggests that it is better explained by other views.

James McGuirk: Expertise and pre-reflective engagement

While it has become a commonplace in treatments of the phenomenon of expert performance, to describe such performance in terms of pre-reflective engagement, recent work on this topic has argued the need for a more nuanced account of expertise ([Colombetti, 2011](#); [Legrand, 2007a, 2007b](#); [Montero, 2010](#)) by suggesting that significant distinctions can be made in terms of awareness, attentional directness and so on to the extent that the somewhat monolithic Dreyfus-inspired ([Dreyfus, 1992, 2007](#)) account of expertise as ‘mindless, absorbed coping’ needs to be revised.

My intention in this paper, however, is to raise the question of the suitability of the very terminological distinction between reflective and pre-reflective engagement in the light of these researches. I will argue that what is generally meant by reflective awareness is much too limited in scope to be an interesting counterpoint to pre-reflective awareness such that the latter designation becomes too broad and unwieldy. The complexity of phenomena of expert performance is such that the ‘catch all’ term pre-reflective engagement has become a strait-jacket that obscures as much as it illuminates inasmuch as it has come to refer to a whole range of distinct kinds of expert engagement.

Colombetti, G. (2011). Varieties of Pre-Reflective Self-Awareness: Foreground and Background Bodily Feelings in Emotion Experience. *Inquiry*, 54(3), 293-313.

Dreyfus, H. L. (1992). *What computers still can't do: a critique of artificial reason*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Dreyfus, H. L. (2007). The return of the myth of the mental. *Inquiry*, 50(4), 352-365.

Legrand, D. (2007a). Pre-reflective self-as-subject from experiential and empirical perspectives. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 16(3), 583-599.

Legrand, D. (2007b). Pre-Reflective Self-Consciousness: On Being Bodily in the World. *Janus Head*, 9(2), 493-519.

Walter Hopp: ‘Perceptual Experience and the Foundations of Knowledge’

I will argue that epistemically basic cases of empirical knowledge exist, and that our evidence for the propositions we thereby know are neither our own mental states nor propositions, but the worldly facts that make the propositions known true.

Simon Høffding: ‘Between representational and anti-representational: The immersed musician’

A fruitful angle from which to re-conceptualize the debate between representationalist and anti-representationalist understandings of perception, is that of skilled coping. In this paper, I use interviews with expert musicians to ground a phenomenology of perception from the perspective of immersion.

While Dreyfus and McDowell take seemingly incompatible stands on the absence or presence of conceptual, reflective and representational knowledge in skilled coping, I endeavor to present an understanding of such coping in which Dreyfus and McDowell can be said to speak to different gradations of the same phenomenon understood as a continuum.

Some musicians do take specific reflective intentional objects while playing, such as an imagined self-representation of how they might appear to an audience, as well as perceptual objects such as the instrument, other musicians, or the concert-hall. In average coping, however, the instrument turns into an aspect of the phenomenal body and the increased attention to motoric effort seems to blur the specificity of various intentional objects, perceptual as well as conceptual. Musicians report an enhanced and widened sense of vision, but fail in describing any specific visual objects. Finally, some musicians occasionally experiences what I label “absolute immersion”, often expressed as “losing oneself”. Here, they maintain, there is complete absence of consciousness and selfhood. All sense of reflection and representation has vanished and is replaced by a different kind of consciousness very difficult to pin down.

Such descriptions indicate that our blunt distinction between representationalist and anti-representationalist is not phenomenologically well founded. Contrary to Dreyfus’ claims (as also pointed out by Montero and Sutton), some musicians can represent various intentional objects without impeding non-representational coping. Two theoretically incompatible form of mentality, then, are given in a single and undivided experience.