



Naïve realism and the phenomenology of perception and memory

William Fish

School of Humanities, Media and Creative Communication, Massey University, Sir Geoffrey Peren Building, 4442, Palmerston North, New Zealand.
*Author for correspondence. E-mail: W.J.Fish@massey.ac.nz

ABSTRACT. In this paper, I begin to explore what a naïve realist might say about the phenomenology of episodic memory. I start by arguing that, when it comes to accounting for the phenomenology of memory experiences, there are two primary options available to the naïve realist: to treat memory phenomenology along the same lines as perceptual phenomenology – as involving phenomenal character that is grounded in acquaintance with the external environment – or to treat memory as lacking such acquaintance-based phenomenal character, and then attempting to account for there being something it is like to remember as being somehow inherited from cases that *do* have phenomenal character. I then explore the prospects of providing an account of the phenomenology of episodic memory in both ways, before tentatively coming down in favour of the latter approach.

Keywords: naïve realism; phenomenology; acquaintance; episodic memory; imagination; mental time travel.

Realismo ingênuo e a fenomenologia da percepção e da memória

RESUMO. Neste artigo, começo a explorar o que um realista ingênuo pode dizer sobre a fenomenologia da memória episódica. Início argumentando que, no que concerne à explicação da fenomenologia das experiências mnêmicas, existem duas opções principais disponíveis para o realista ingênuo: tratar a fenomenologia da memória de modo similar à fenomenologia da percepção – como envolvendo caráter fenomênico que está baseado em ‘*acquaintance*’ com o ambiente externo – ou tratar a memória como não tendo caráter fenomênico baseado em ‘*acquaintance*’ e então tentar explicar como é ter a experiência do lembrar como sendo derivada de casos que ‘possuem’ caráter fenomênico. Exploro então as perspectivas de se oferecer uma explicação da fenomenologia da memória episódica dos dois modos, antes de favorecer, de modo provisório, a última abordagem.

Palavras-chave: realismo ingênuo; fenomenologia; acquaintance; memória episódica; imaginação; viagem no tempo mental.

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Introduction

Episodic memory is the form of memory by which we remember the events of our personal past (Tulving, 1983, 2002). When we recollect past events / experiences in this way, we undergo a phenomenally conscious experience. Given this, any candidate theory of consciousness needs to say something about episodic memory. In this paper, I therefore want to explore the prospects for extending a broadly naïve realist theory of phenomenology to incorporate a theory of the phenomenology of episodic memory. For reasons that will become clear, I do not here aim to explore a general naïve realist theory of memory; although I will occasionally speculate as to its possible shape, my primary goal is to explore the prospects for a naturalistically acceptable naïve realist theory of its phenomenal aspects.

The core idea of naïve realism as a theory of phenomenology is well captured by M.G.F. Martin’s claim that, when a subject successfully sees the world, the external objects and their properties “[...] shape the contours of the subject’s conscious experience” (Martin, 2004, p. 64). Although philosophers endorse naïve realism for a range of different reasons – from enabling us to think about mind-independent objects at all (e.g. Campbell, 2002) through to providing a way to respond to skepticism (e.g. Johnston, 2006) – most advocates also believe that it provides a natural and intuitively plausible account of visual perceptual phenomenology. On this view, the phenomenal character of a given veridical visual experience is constituted

by the tract of the environment the subject is acquainted with in having that experience or, if the notion of phenomenal character is defined as a property of the experience, the experience's property of acquainting the subject with that particular tract of their environment (Fish, 2021, p. 104).

Yet of course, veridical visual consciousness is only one particular way in which we are conscious, albeit one that plays an oversized role, both in our own lives as conscious beings and in the philosophy of perception and consciousness. Telling a plausible story about this particular case, then, is only a tiny part of a much larger project. In addition to this, we need to tell a story about what is going on in *non-veridical* cases of visual consciousness – to provide a theory of visual hallucination and illusion (which I attempt to provide in Fish, 2009) – as well as theories of the other forms of perceptual consciousness – (at least) hearing, smelling, touching and tasting. And if this can be done, then there is the array of forms of non-perceptual consciousness including, perhaps, moods and emotions, conscious thought, and memory and imagination.

In this paper, I want to begin to explore what the naïve realist might say about the phenomenology of memory. I will start by providing an overview of my previous work in which I attempt to provide a theory of visual perceptual consciousness that covers both veridical and nonveridical cases. This will illustrate what I believe to be the key naïve realist strategy for accounting for the phenomenology of conscious episodes: either as acquaintance with external particulars, or as somehow derivative on such acquaintance. I will then explore which of these strategies appears best placed to be extended to the case of conscious episodic memory, and sketch what this might look like in practice.

Naïve realism and the phenomenology of perception and hallucination

In Fish (2009) I presented a theory of veridical visual perception on which the phenomenal character of such an experience is identified with the experience's property of acquainting its subject with an array of worldly facts, where facts are understood as having the form *a's being F* – that is, object *a*'s instantiating property *F*. In this way, we can give a theoretical grounding to the intuitive idea that, when I see a red apple, it is the apple and its redness that shape the contours of my conscious experience. My experience is characterised by appleness and redness – all theories of perception would accept that – but on this view, we can allow that it is the mind independent apple itself and the very instance of redness that the apple possesses that characterise my experience. In this way, I claimed that naïve realism provides a theoretical structure that accurately captures our intuitive conception of what it is like to see the world – it is like being open to, or acquainted with, tracts of reality.

Alongside the claim that naïve realism captures an intuitive conception of what it is like to see the world, I also argue that it can provide a naturalistically acceptable response to the traditional problems of consciousness (Fish, 2009, p. 75-9). As the naïve realist holds that what it is like to have an experience is determined by the parts of the environment the subject is open to in experience, the explanandum for the naturalistic elements of the theory is halved. Most theories of consciousness have to explain not only why there is something it is like to be a certain kind of organism, but also why it is like *this* (characterised by redness) rather than like *that* (characterised by greenness). For the naïve realist, however, the latter explanandum has already been covered. It is like *this* – characterised by redness, not greenness – because *this* is what the world is like: because the world, or at least the apple in it, is characterised by redness not greenness. This leaves the question of why there is something it is like to be a certain kind of organism rather than nothing at all or, alternatively, why a certain kind of organism will be open to / acquainted with parts of its environment. In answer to this question, I suggest that there are certain functional capacities that, if possessed by an organism, simply entail that the organism must be aware of aspects of its environment. There is, of course, a great deal more work that is required to defend both this view of veridical visual perception and my claim for its naturalistic credentials, but for present purposes, I will take it for granted.

The primary challenge this kind of naïve realist view of visual perception is, of course, that there are visual experiences that cannot consist in acquaintance with mind-independent facts in the way it suggests. For example, if I was under the illusion that the red apple was green – such that greenness now characterised my experience – then a parallel treatment would suggest that I must therefore be acquainted with the fact of the apple's being green. Yet the apple is not green – it is red – which means that there is no fact of the apple's being green for me to be acquainted with. Or if I hallucinate a red apple, then as there is no apple, there is therefore no fact of the apple's being red for me to be acquainted with. Cases of illusion and hallucination, then, cannot be given a naïve realist treatment in this way.

To accommodate cases of this kind, I followed MGF Martin (2004) in endorsing an epistemic theory of hallucination (2004, p. 72). The distinctive feature of cases of hallucination on such a view is not that they have phenomenal character of a different metaphysical kind – say as involving acquaintance with something *else* (like a non-obtaining state of affairs, or a sense datum, or quale) or as *representing* that the world contains facts of the relevant kinds – but rather a phenomenal character of an *epistemic* kind. The phenomenal character of a hallucination of a red apple, on this view, is its property of *being indiscriminable from a veridical perception of a red apple*. Such a view does raise the question of *why* hallucinations are indistinguishable in this way, and in answer to this question, I argued that what makes a hallucination (of a certain kind) indiscriminable from a veridical perception (of that kind) is nothing about the hallucination itself, but rather the fact that – for whatever reason – the hallucination yields the same downstream effects as the veridical perception would have done. In cases of simple animals that do not have the cognitive capacities to form cognitive mental states, these effects would be purely behavioral. On such a view, to hallucinate a red apple would therefore be to engage in the kind of behavior that would normally be a response to the presence of a red apple when there is no such apple present.

As creatures increase in cognitive sophistication, however, they will not only have experiences of the world, they will also form beliefs *about* the world based on these experiences. When such a subject veridically sees a red apple then, they might be expected to form a belief that looks something like the following: I believe that <there is a red apple there / in front of me>. With yet further conceptual sophistication, a creature might also come to be able to form beliefs about *their own experiences*. In such a case, a suitably sophisticated creature seeing a red apple might not only form the belief that <there is a red apple there / in front of me> but also that <I see that <there is a red apple there / in front of me>>. In other words, the subject might not only form a belief about the world (that it contains a red apple) *but also that they are having a certain kind of experience*.

Given this, if a hallucination of a red apple yielded the same downstream effects as this veridical experience, this would mean that a suitably sophisticated hallucinating subject would also form beliefs of this kind. But so long as the hallucinating creature *believed that* they saw a red apple, then they need not be in a state with acquaintance-based phenomenal character (or indeed any phenomenal character, understood metaphysically) at all. If someone were to mistakenly believe that they were seeing a red apple, then what it is like for that subject would be: *just like seeing something*. To paraphrase Armstrong, the phenomenal character of the hallucinatory experience “[...] is simply a ghost generated by my belief that I am seeing something” (Armstrong, 1961, p. 84). In essence, this approach endorses what we might call an asymmetric explanation of (visual) phenomenology. The fundamental source or ground of phenomenology – of there being something it is like for a subject – lies in the subject’s successfully *seeing* the world. To put the same point in another way, the metaphysical ground of phenomenal character lies in subjects being acquainted with / open to aspects of their environment. Where we have experiences such as hallucinations that contribute to what it is like for a subject yet lack this kind of acquaintance-based phenomenal character, this approach resists the seductive impulse to provide an *alternative* (metaphysical) source of phenomenal character for such cases. Instead, it suggests that what it’s like to *hallucinate* derives from the fact that, from the subject’s perspective, *it is just like perceiving*. And if this is the case, then so long as there is something it is like to perceive (because the experience possesses acquaintance-based phenomenal character) then there will *of course* be something it is like to hallucinate. But the only reason there is something it is like to hallucinate is because there is already something it is like to perceive: the account of the phenomenology of hallucination is *inherited from or parasitic on* the account of the phenomenology of perception.

Before we move on to consider the case of episodic memory, it may be instructive to consider one final case: that of *resisted* hallucinations – hallucinations in which their subjects *know that* they are hallucinating, so do not form the requisite beliefs that they are seeing something. Above, I suggested that the reason that there is something it is like to hallucinate is grounded in the twin facts that there is something it is like to see, and that hallucinating subjects believe that they are seeing. Yet in cases of resisted hallucination, the second of these facts no longer obtains: the subjects of resisted hallucination do not believe that they are seeing as they believe that they are (or at least may be) hallucinating.

To accommodate cases such as this within a broad naïve realist framework, I argue that we could treat resisted hallucinations as involving a different first order attitude: even if we accept that the subject of a resisted hallucination (of a red apple) doesn’t believe that *they see* a red apple, there is something else that

they would be likely to believe that could potentially explain the case. To see this, imagine a veridical situation in which a subject had been given reason to doubt the veracity of their experiences – perhaps because they had been told (falsely) that they had ingested a hallucinogen. Now suppose such a subject sees a red apple. As this case is stipulated to be veridical, the subject would still be acquainted with the fact of the apple's being red, which would in turn ground there being something it is like for them to have this experience. Yet in an overall cognitive context in which they have reason to doubt their experiences, a cautious subject would be likely to hold back from believing that they *see* a red apple, and instead form more cautious beliefs, perhaps believing that *it is as if they see*, or that they *seem to see*, a red apple. This can then provide us with an alternative pair of facts: subjects of resisted hallucinations both believe that they *seem to see*, and (for the reasons just given) there is something it is like to *seem to see*. If a subject formed such a belief in a non-veridical case, then a parallel claim applies: what it would be like for that subject would be indistinguishable from the veridical case.

Naïve realism and the phenomenology of episodic memory

What these discussions suggest is that, when it comes to accounting for the phenomenology of novel cases, there are two primary options available to the naïve realist. The first is to attempt to accommodate the case within the core explanation of phenomenal character – that is, to treat the cases as involving acquaintance with something. The second is to treat them along the same lines as hallucinations: as cases that lack phenomenal character, but where an explanation of there being something it is like for the subject is somehow inherited from cases that *do* have phenomenal character. A direct parallel to the case of visual hallucination would suggest that this involves subjects mistakenly believing that they are in a state that *possesses* phenomenal character.

In the case of episodic memory, the first-order option would be to map the whole picture across, and think of the phenomenology of episodic memory as deriving from a relationship to / acquaintance with the remembered events. This kind of view is often associated with Russell, who describes “acquaintance by memory” as involving cases in which “[...] we are still immediately aware of what we remember” (Russell, 1912/1967, p. 26). However, other remarks of Russell's suggest that he didn't see acquaintance by memory as grounding the phenomenology of memory. At a later point, he states that “[...] memory of an object is apt to be accompanied by an image of the object [which] is in the present, whereas what is remembered is known to be in the past” (Russell, 1912/1967, p. 66). Claims such as this suggest that, for Russell, the phenomenology of episodic memory experiences was delivered by the (present) *image* as opposed to the (past) event with which we are acquainted. Nevertheless, an acquaintance-based picture of the phenomenology of memory is a possible approach in this space, and has been defended by Dorothea Debus, who argues that, when a subject episodically remembers “[...] a past object (or event), the past object (or event) is, *for the ... subject*, immediately available in consciousness” (Debus, 2008, p. 421).

However, there are a number of concerns with this approach. First of all, there is the question of the metaphysical nature of the events we would be acquainted with in memory. If we agree that the existence of a relation entails the existence of its relata, then it would follow that the remembered events must exist if we are to be related to them. This would appear to require the naïve realist to endorse an ontological view that allows past objects to exist or be real. Such views include eternalism, which claims that both “[...] past and future objects and times are just as real as currently existing ones” (Sider, 2001, p. 11), and the growing-block view, which holds that “[...] once a state of affairs is actual, it remains part of reality from that point on. So the past and the present are real, but the future is not” (Tooley, 1997, p. 33). On either of these views, the kinds of past events which we would be acquainted with in memory would be a part of reality, and hence potential objects of acquaintance. Moreover, there are reasons to think that a naïve realist needs to endorse a view of this kind *anyway*, in order to accommodate everyday cases in which we see objects (such as the sun and stars) that lie at such distances from us that their light takes a significant time to reach our eyes (Moran, 2019).

I shall not pursue this approach, however, as I believe there are two further problems with the view that, taken together, render it too problematic as an account of the phenomenology of episodic memory. The first, less significant, problem turns on the fact that there is a clear phenomenal difference between veridical visual perception and episodic visual memory. To the extent that, on this view, both would involve acquaintance with objects and events, this difference would need to be explained. To highlight the nature of this problem, consider M.G.F. Martin's example of Miriam the astronaut (2001, p. 267-8). In this example, Miriam says

goodbye to her partner, and then leaves on a journey into space. To enable her to re-experience this moment, NASA sets up a series of optical devices and image intensifiers such that, at any point on the journey, Miriam can look out of the window and into a reflector that will be showing her a reflection of the very event of her saying goodbye. Using this technology, NASA enables Miriam to be perceptually acquainted with a past event in the same kind of way that she – and the rest of us – can be perceptually acquainted with past events involving stars and the sun's surface. Yet of course, Miriam also has another way of recalling this event – through her episodic memory of the event. If an acquaintance-based account of the phenomenology of memory is correct, then both of these ways Miriam has of recalling the event involving being acquainted with it, yet they clearly differ in what it is like to recall this event. If the account of the phenomenology of memory were simply a matter of acquaintance with past events, then we would expect the phenomenology to be similar.

One way to resolve this problem could be to endorse a version of naïve realism that allows for there to be subjective contributions to the phenomenology of experience. For example, in laying out his relational view, John Campbell characterizes sensory experience as involving a “three-place relation” (2014, p. 27) that takes in not only the character of the scene and the point of view from which the scene is observed, but also the way the subject experiences this scene from this point of view. He goes on to characterise this in adverbial terms, suggesting that “[...] the qualitative character of your experience is constituted by the point of view from which you are observing the scene, *any relevant adverbial modification of the relation of experience*, and the relevant qualitative aspects of the external scene” (Campbell, 2014, p. 28, my emphasis). In earlier work, Campbell (2009, p. 657) also suggests that the particular sensory modality involved is a part of the way in which the subject experiences the scene. Taken together, this suggests that there can be different ‘ways’ of being acquainted with the same scene – that we can be acquainted visually, or aurally, or tactually, and so on – where each distinct way of being acquainted has a distinctive phenomenology. This opens the possibility that the naïve realist might also allow that we can be acquainted with a scene *mnemonically* (or perhaps visually-mnemonically etc.), and ground the distinctive phenomenology in this way.

I confess, I have concerns about this approach. Whilst it does qualify as a version of naïve realism inasmuch as it makes the perceived scene ineliminable in any account of perceptual phenomenology – after all, on such a view, there has to be *something* that is perceived in a certain way, and you can't talk about what it is like to have this experience without talking about that something – it does allow that there is something *else* that contributes to phenomenology. If we think, as I do, that grounding phenomenology in the world that we are open to in experience can contribute to solving the problems of consciousness in a naturalistically acceptable way, then any aspects of phenomenology that cannot be so grounded should be viewed with suspicion. Yet I cannot see how these aspects of phenomenology could be so grounded. However, I do not intend to pursue this line of argument here as I believe there is a further, more damaging problem for attempting to ground the phenomenology of episodic memory in acquaintance with past events.

This problem turns on the fact that a growing body of psychological evidence suggests that episodic memory does not, in fact, faithfully reproduce past events. This is not merely that people forget aspects of the events that happen to them, but that people can have “[...] positive, definitive memories of events ... that did not actually happen” (Brainerd & Reyna, 2005, p. 5). In many of these cases, the error concerns misremembering key *features* of an event – for instance, precisely who was present, the words they uttered, the clothes they wore, where they stood, etc. – such that, although the event (broadly understood) took place, the event *as remembered* did not. In their book on this phenomenon, Brainerd and Reyna call such cases *false memory*, to distinguish them from cases of memory *fallibility* that involve forgetting aspects of events rather than generating apparent memories of things that never happened, and note that this phenomenon is “[...] an enduring characteristic of normal, rather than pathological, remembering” (Brainerd & Reyna, 2005, p. 5; see also De Brigard, 2014). Taken together, these findings suggest that memories that are accurate to their source events are few and far between if they even exist at all. As Sant'Anna and Michaelian put it, all memories “[...] are to some extent *mismemories*” (Sant'Anna & Michaelian, 2019, p. 195, emphasis in the original).

This research intersects with a further body of research that suggests there are important similarities between episodic memory and various forms of imagination (Michaelian, 2016; Perrin & Michaelian, 2017). Examples include studies that have found that similar areas of the brain are involved in both cases of memory and future-directed imagination, that children develop the ability to both remember the past and imagine the future at around the same developmental stage, and that losses of the ability to remember tend to be accompanied by losses in the ability to imagine the future (Perrin & Michaelian, 2017, p. 229-30). These

findings all point towards both memory and imagination being aspects of a single mental capacity. Following Tulving, this capacity has become known as a capacity for ‘mental time travel’, and Tulving suggests that using the capacity of “[...] mental time travel [enables us to both] transport at will into the personal past, as well as into the future” (Tulving, 1993, p. 67).

Taken together, I suggest these findings deal a fatal blow to the view that the phenomenology of episodic memory is a matter of acquaintance with past events. Although it may be possible to reconcile the idea that memory can be a source of knowledge with these results (Matthen, 2010; Michaelian, 2011), I cannot see how a relational view of memory *phenomenology* could be recoverable. When we think about the phenomenology of memory, what it is like to remember is structured by what we remember in the same kind of way that what it like to see is structured by what we see: the phenomenology of remembering a black cat differs from the phenomenology of remembering a brown cow in a way that parallels the phenomenological differences in seeing the two animals. Acquaintance-based views of phenomenology ground these phenomenological differences in the differences in the animals themselves. Yet if I remember seeing a man wearing a gray shirt when in fact the shirt he was wearing was white, then there is nothing in the past event that could ground this gray phenomenology. When this is combined with the ubiquity of false memory, it suggests that in the majority of cases, the past events with which we are purported to be acquainted would in fact lack the features required to ground the phenomenology of the occurrent memory experience. The mental time travel research likewise suggests that there may be a common explanation of the phenomenology of memory and imagination and, to the extent that imagination involves imagining non-existent objects and events, this suggests that the objects and events required to ground an acquaintance-based view of the phenomenology of imagination also do not exist (Sant’Anna & Michaelian 2019, p. 192-3).

For these reasons, I suggest that a first-order acquaintance-based theory of the phenomenology of episodic memory – according to which the phenomenology of episodic memory derives from a relationship to / acquaintance with the remembered events – faces significant problems. What, then, are the prospects for the second approach? Recall that, on this approach, we would treat cases of episodic memory along the same broad lines as hallucinations – that is, as cases that lack acquaintance-based phenomenal character, but where an explanation of there being something it is like for the subject is somehow inherited from cases that *do* have phenomenal character. As noted above, the most direct parallel to the case of visual hallucination would be to hold that memory involves subjects mistakenly believing that they are in a state that *possesses* phenomenal character, where this state is a perceptual experience (of one modality or another). The immediate problem with this approach, however, is that it would treat cases of memory as identical to cases of hallucination, when there are not only phenomenological differences, but there is also the lack of the mistake about the kind of experience we are enjoying. When we remember a past event, we *don’t* believe that we are seeing it.

This suggests that, for this broad second-order approach to succeed, one of two options (or maybe both) would need to apply. The first option would be to retain the second-order attitude of belief, but to insert an alternative first-order state: so where in hallucination *I believe that <I see that <E>>*, in memory *I believe that <I ___ that <E>>* where this gap is filled by a first-order state distinct from the perceptual states. The advantage to this approach is that, by retaining belief as the relevant second-order attitude, it provides a straightforward explanation of how the second-order attitude might inherit any phenomenology possessed by the first-order state; the disadvantage is that, by introducing a new first-order experience, we would need to provide an explanation of how this first-order state possesses acquaintance-based phenomenology to be inherited in the first place. The second option would be to retain the first-order state of seeing, which has the advantage of its already having an acquaintance-based phenomenology, but to alter the second-order attitude: so where in hallucination *I believe that <I see that <E>>*, in memory *I ___ that <I see that <E>>*, where the gap is filled by an attitude other than belief. For this approach, the challenge switches: instead of needing an explanation of how the first-order state has phenomenology in the first place, now we would need an explanation of how this second-order attitude has the right kinds of features to inherit phenomenology from the first-order state.

When it comes to the first option, the most natural candidate would be to fill the gap with a first-order state like ‘remember’ or ‘recall’, but this would just land us in the problems we have already explored. For this approach to work, it would need to be the case that the first-order state of *remembering that E* possessed phenomenology, but as we have seen, attempts to ground such phenomenology in acquaintance face serious problems. Another candidate that might suggest itself would be a past-tense version of a perceptual verb,

such as ‘saw’, ‘heard’, ‘touched’ and so on. These candidates do give accurate and plausible accounts of what a subject would believe in a case of episodic memory – after all, if I am remembering seeing a certain event, then whilst I do not believe that I *see* this event, it would be true that I believe that I *saw* the event – but unfortunately this first-order state is not a state that possesses phenomenology. Setting aside liminal cases such as unconscious perception, it is true that, if I *see* something, then I am in a state that possesses phenomenal character. However, it’s being true that I *saw* something does not have any such consequences. Right now, there are numerous true statements of the form *I saw that E*, but none of these contribute to what it is like for me right now. To make this clear, note that these statements remain true even when I slip into a deep sleep, or am rendered unconscious. Merely believing that I saw an event thus cannot ground the phenomenology of episodic memory.

What, then, of the prospects for the second option, in which the second-order space is filled with an attitude other than belief? In this case, the most natural candidate would once again be an attitude such as ‘remember’ or ‘recall’, giving the following higher-order state: *I recall that <I see that <E>>*. Unfortunately, not only is this construction clumsy, when we look at discussions of memory we find that that-clause constructions are typically associated with *semantic* memory, as opposed to the kind of conscious, episodic memory that is our current topic of concern. For this reason, to clarify that we are dealing with episodic memory, we might prefer the more natural-sounding construction: *I recall <seeing that <E>>*. Regardless, the shape of the approach is intended to parallel the earlier treatment of hallucination: recalling <seeing that <E>> is a higher-order state that takes the first order state (seeing that <E>) as a content. As there is something it is like to be in the first-order state of seeing that <E>, then recalling being in such a state is in a position to inherit aspects of its phenomenology. However, this approach is as yet incomplete inasmuch as no explanation has been given of *why* being in the second-order state of *recalling* being in a state with phenomenology should somehow inherit phenomenology from the original first-order state.

To see how such an explanation might proceed, it is instructive to begin by noting the parallel between this approach and M.G.F. Martin’s *Dependency Thesis* for visual imagination. According to the dependency thesis, “[...] it is internal to the nature of imagery that there is an imagined sensory experience whenever one sensorily imagines an object” and hence that “[...] to imagine sensorily a ϕ is to imagine experiencing a ϕ ” (Martin, 2002, p. 404). Here, Martin explicitly endorses a second-order theory of imagination on which to imagine an object or an event is to imagine *experiencing* such an object or event. Moreover, he also suggests that the phenomenal similarities between seeing and visual imagination – as well as its status as being phenomenal in the first place – could be accounted for as *inherited* in the kind of way we have been describing: “[...] sensory imagining is experiential or phenomenal precisely because what is imagined [i.e. seeing] is experiential or phenomenal” (Martin, 2002, p. 406). This closely parallels the second-order view of memory we are exploring here, according to which to remember an object or event is to remember *experiencing* such an object or event, and the phenomenal features of such a memory experience are inherited from the experience remembered. When we consider this alongside the increasing prevalence of the ‘mental time travel’ movement discussed above – that memory and imagination are two facets of a general capacity for projecting our awareness outside of the immediate present – this suggests that the parallel here might be yet deeper.

To take stock of where we are before moving on, we are exploring the prospects of a second-order approach to the phenomenology of episodic visual memory, which involves our taking a certain higher-order attitude to the first-order content <I see that <E>> (or equivalent). We know that this higher-order attitude cannot be belief for two reasons: first, because it would fail to distinguish such cases from hallucinations and, second, because we remember a particular event, it’s just not the case that we believe that we see that event. This suggests that, if this approach is to be credible, we must find an appropriate alternative higher-order attitude, and – whatever this attitude may be – supplement it with an explanation of why we would expect being in this higher-order state to inherit aspects of the first-order state’s phenomenology. Finally, the suggestion currently on the table is that this approach could have significant overlap with an approach to visual *imagination*.

In their discussions of imagination, Greg Currie and Ian Ravenscroft explore the relationship between believing that somebody else believes something, and actually putting ourselves in their shoes – “[...] confronting the world as [they] confront... it” (Currie & Ravenscroft, 2002, p. 8). They note that, when we *imagine* believing something in this way, we put ourselves into a state that is importantly *like* believing in that this belief-in-imagination can interact with our *actual* beliefs to produce further beliefs-in-imagination that reflect what we *would* believe were we to *actually* believe what we merely imagine ourselves to believe. In this way, we can put ourselves in someone else’s shoes, and see how things would look *if* we occupied their

perspective and believed the things that they believe. Currie and Ravenscroft capture this by saying that such imaginations are ‘belief-like’ in that they “[...] mirror... the inferential role of the [relevant] belief” (Currie & Ravenscroft, 2002, p. 12). Elsewhere, they suggest that a “[...] good way to describe the relationship between a piece of imagining and its counterpart is to say that imagination *simulates* this other thing” (Currie & Ravenscroft, 2002, p. 49).

They thus introduce the notion of ‘belief-like imagining’. One way of looking at what they are doing here, is that they are introducing a new attitude – *belief-like imagines* – where the functional role of this attitude is derived from belief: “[...] imagining simulates the role of belief *in* inferential and other processes; its likeness to belief is, exactly, similarity of role in certain processes” (Currie & Ravenscroft, 2002, p. 49). Yet of course, the functional role of such imaginative episodes is not identical to that of belief proper. For example, if we belief-like-imagine something, we do not *behave* as though the merely imagined belief is actually true nor, when we mingle this state with other real beliefs to work out what would follow from this, this process doesn’t result in our *actually* forming new beliefs, just further beliefs-in-imagination. However, this is not to say that the role of belief-like-imaginings is *limited* to producing only additional belief-like-imaginings: one of the key things that Currie and Ravenscroft are at pains to capture in their theorising is the extent to which, “[...] when we read stories or watch movies and are imaginatively involved with their events, we often experience emotions that are both powerful and apparently continuous with those we experience in response to situations in real life” (Currie & Ravenscroft, 2002, p. 15). Consider O.K. Bouwsma’s (1950, p. 29-30) description of Cassie becoming engrossed in an unhappy story. It makes her sad – so sad that she even sobs – but it doesn’t have all the normal consequences of sadness: she can still eat popcorn and play with her cat. This case illustrates some of the similarities and differences between the functional roles of belief-like-imaginings and belief proper.

For our purposes, the key to this idea is that the functional role of belief-like-imaginings can be similar enough to that of belief proper that they can inherit some of the *experiential* consequences of the imagined scenario – consequences that are very similar to those that would have been yielded had we actually held the belief in question. This suggests a possibility: where the state of hallucination contains the higher-order attitude *belief*, the higher-order states in cases of imagination and memory could contain something like Currie and Ravenscroft’s *belief-like imagines* – an attitude that simulates aspects of the functional role of belief in such a way that they can inherit some of the experiential consequences of the imagined / remembered scenario. On such a view, when I imagine or remember event ‘E’, I would *belief-like-imagine that* <I see that <E>>. Then, when faced with the question of what is it like to be in this state, the answer would have two phases (paralleling the hallucination case): first, there is an acquaintance-based explanation of why there is something it is like to see that <E> in the first place; second, given the similarity in functional role between belief-like imaginings and beliefs, *belief-like-imagining that* I see that <E> will also be able to inherit aspects of the phenomenology of seeing that <E>, albeit not in such a way that allows us to confuse the latter for the former.

One concern about this approach could be that it collapses the distinction between two phenomenologically dissimilar experiences: remembering (or imagining) an object (or event) and remembering (or imagining) *seeing* an object (or event). In response to a parallel concern in the case of imagination, Martin argues as follows. As the Dependency Thesis claims that visualising an object involves imagining *seeing* that object, then any imaginative episode will involve a point of view that is both *in* the imagined scene, and *on* the imagined objects. However:

The point of view within the imagined scene is notoriously empty ... So, in using imagery within an imaginative project it is open to one to exploit the point of view within the visualising, either as one’s own, or as someone else’s, whose point of view one make-believable occupies. It is also possible simply to disregard the point of view, and focus on the objects within the scene imagined. The point of the Dependency Thesis is not to deny the possibility of such discarding of a point of view, but rather to point out that it does in fact need discarding (Martin, 2002, p. 411).

In essence, Martin suggests that the difference between imagining a tree and imagining seeing a tree is not located in the imaginative experience itself, but in the imaginative project we are engaging in. In addition, there is often a further difference between the two projects inasmuch as, when I imagine seeing a tree, I may actually imagine the event from a further point of view (i.e. a point of view that is not *mine* as I imagine seeing a tree), which is a point of view on a person identified as me who is looking at a tree. We could tell a similar story for the case of memory. On the account developed here, when I engage in the project of remembering my car keys, I have to belief-like-imagine *seeing* my car keys. Yet if I am primarily interested in the keys

themselves, I can ignore this perspective and focus on the keys themselves in a way that echoes visually exploring the object itself. On the other hand, if I cannot find my keys, but remember having seen them, my primary interest will be in where *I was* when I had the experience of seeing my car keys. In this case, I am much more interested in my point of view *on* the keys than I am the keys themselves. Yet as far as the experiences themselves go, they both involve belief-like-imagining seeing the keys.

As we have seen, this approach endorses the broad thrust of the mental time travel movement – that memory and imagination are aspects of a single mental capacity – and that the explanations of the phenomenology of both episodic visual memory and visual imagination are grounded in *belief-like-imagining* seeing something. Given this, we might wonder how such an approach might account for the intuitive distinction between conscious episodic memory and conscious sensory imagination. Unlike the previous concern, this isn't necessarily phenomenological – the worry is not that there is a phenomenological marker that can be used to distinguish memory from imagination on the basis of phenomenology alone that this fails to capture – but is more that we nonetheless find it natural to draw a distinction between these two mental states, and the present proposal has thus far said nothing about what this distinction might consist in. Although these questions are important, they do not raise problems that are unique to this view – the problem is faced by all those who endorse the view that memory is a form of mental time travel (see Sant'Anna, 2018 for discussion) – but I will briefly indicate how a naïve realist who endorses this approach to memory phenomenology might nevertheless ground a distinction between memory and imagination.

Given the relational nature of her view, a natural approach would be to endorse Debus's (2008) Relation and Constitution claims – thereby holding that episodic memory experiences, unlike imaginative experiences, are *relations* to past events which are *constituents* of those experiences (2008, p. 406) – whilst providing the alternative analysis of the phenomenal aspects of memory developed above in place of her Consciousness claim (as she notes is possible at 2008, p. 421). An alternative approach would be to ground the difference between remembering a certain event and imagining that event in terms of other higher-order beliefs and attitudes the subject has. If I am remembering seeing a past event, E, then, on this view, I have to belief-like-imagine that <I see that <E>> as it is occupying this imagined point of view on E that generates the experience's phenomenology. However, as we saw above, if I consciously *remember* E, then I am also likely to believe that <I saw that <E>>. My having this belief could be the result of engaging in a particular project – of intentionally *trying* to remember E – but it could also be the result of a subconscious source monitoring process (Johnson, 1997). Where episodes of imagination are concerned however – at least, episodes of imagination that are recognised as such – there would be no accompanying beliefs that things were, are, or will be the way they are imagined to be. Such a higher-order belief could therefore not only be a marker that distinguishes memory from imagination, but could also ground the factivity of remembering – conscious visual memory is factive because it involves the belief that I saw something, which is itself factive. (In this case of imagination, we might also wonder whether there is any additional state distinctive to cases of imagination that is not present in cases of memory. One possibility hereabouts would be to return to Currie and Ravenscroft's original idea, and suggest that imagining subjects will not only have higher-order states of the form *I belief-like-imagine that <I see that <E>>* to deliver the imaginative phenomenology, they will also have first-order belief-like-imaginative states to capture the functional role of imagination: thus a subject consciously / sensorily imagining event E will not only *belief-like-imagine that <I see that <E>>*, they will also *belief-like-imagine <E>* (or, strictly speaking, they will imagine that E is, was, will be, could be, or could have been true)). This then gives us the shape of a possible naïve realist account of memory, where the phenomenology of a memory episode is delivered by the subject's being in a higher-order state of the form: *I belief-like-imagine that <I see that <E>>*, while the factive aspect of that episode, as well as its status as a *memory* experience, is delivered by a parallel higher-order belief that <I saw that <E>>.

Given the naturalistic aspirations of this broad approach, one final task remains: given that the attitude *belief-like-imagines* is not already a familiar folk-psychological attitude, it might be instructive to briefly explore the prospects for a naturalistically acceptable account of how and why such an attitude might have developed. The broad outline of a possible answer to this question can be found in Rick Grush's *emulation* theory (2004). In developing this theory, Grush's primary concern is to explain how we produce appropriate real-time behavior: the model he proposes to account for this has three components: a controller that, on the basis of information about the system's goals and initial state, sends a control signal to both the system's 'plant' – its "[...] musculoskeletal system (MSS) and relevant proprioceptive / kinesthetic systems" (Grush, 2004, p. 378) – and "[...] a device that implements the same (or very close) input-output function as the plant"

(Grush, 2004, p. 379). This internal capacity to model bodily movements without performing them is called an *emulator*. According to Grush, this plant-plus-emulator system benefits creatures that act in the world by providing the capacity to model bodily movements at the same time as actually performing them, which provides feedback on the appropriateness of the movements far faster than could be achieved by waiting for visual / proprioceptive feedback from the actual movements themselves. Grush then argues that, once this emulator system is in place, it becomes possible to make use of it in an offline manner – to emulate / simulate bodily movement without moving at all (Grush, 2004, p. 384). This, Grush suggests, is how motor imagery appears on the scene. He then extends this treatment to visual imagery, suggesting that visual imagery is generated by the offline operation of emulators whose primary function is to predict how visual input will change as the creature moves around its environment.

In the present context, I don't want to nail my colors to this particular empirical mast, but I do think this at least provides a way of understanding *how* a state that has this kind of belief-like functional role might have developed in creatures like us. Suppose Grush is correct in the claim that a plant-plus-emulator system could have developed to provide efficient real-time guidance of action, and suppose also that such a system could – once developed – be run on its own, in an offline manner. For obvious reasons, it would be inappropriate for the outputs of the emulator alone to lead the creature to think that the merely emulated activities have actually taken place. If this were the case, then running the emulator alone would not have the same cognitive effects as running the plant, so the system would need some way of distinguishing what it is being told by the plant and what it is being told by the emulator. Yet what the emulator alone tells the system would have to be *similar* to what the system would be told by the plant in order for the feedback on the appropriateness of the movements to play the functional role it would need to play. Although the outputs of the emulator should not lead the system to form *beliefs*, they would need to be suitably *belief-like*. This, I suggest, provides an example of the kind of naturalistically acceptable account of where belief-like-imaginings might come from that is required by the broad approach.

In this way, I wonder if a theory that is constructed around the cornerstone of naïve realism about perception might be able to develop a plausible account of the phenomenology of episodic memory. On such an approach, when the entire system is running online – when it gets its primary inputs from sensory channels and supports visual perception of the environment – the visual system furnishes the subject with acquaintance with aspects of its environment, which accounts for why such experiences possess (acquaintance-based) phenomenology. These states of acquaintance with the environment also yield both beliefs about the layout of its environment and, in suitably sophisticated subjects, beliefs about its visual experiences *of* that environment – it believes that it sees the world. When the system is intentionally run offline, however – when its inputs are detached from the world – it produces outputs that are similarly detached. It does not produce phenomenally conscious visual experiences, understood relationally, as there are no suitable *relata* to provide the phenomenal character. However, it does produce *proxies* of the beliefs that would have been produced in a perceptual case, where these proxies have a watered-down functional role to ensure that they do not result in the subject's behaving as though they are true. That is to say, it produces higher-order *belief-like-imaginings* (instead of beliefs) that nonetheless have similar first-order contents to the beliefs that would have been produced in the perceptual case – higher-order states of the form: *I belief-like-imagine that <I see that <E>>*. Yet as belief-like-imaginings have functional roles that are *similar* to the functional roles of beliefs, this suffices for the higher-order state to inherit aspects of the phenomenology possessed by the nested first-order state in a way that parallels the treatment of hallucination.

Conclusion

In this way, I suggest the naïve realist can provide a suitably naturalistic account of the phenomenology of episodic memory. Given the challenges of attempting to provide an acquaintance-based theory of memory phenomenology, I have suggested that an alternative approach is available – an approach that treats episodic memory as a state that lacks acquaintance-based phenomenal character, yet which involves particular higher-order mental states that have first-order perceptual states as contents. Because of the particular nature of the higher-order attitude, this has the consequence that, despite lacking acquaintance-based phenomenal character, there will nonetheless be something it is like to be in one of these states, where *what it is like* is inherited from what it is like to be in the relevant first-order perceptual state.¹

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