In a nutshell, Naïve Realism is a philosophical theory of veridical visual experience, which claims that:

the phenomenal character of your experience, as you look around the room, is constituted by the layout of the room 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 you (Campbell 2002: 116)

In order to be clear that we are all on the same page when it comes to this important, but easily misunderstood thesis, let me begin by clarifying some of the terminology that appears in this statement.

In the quote above, naïve realism is presented as a thesis about the constitution of an experience’s phenomenal character. This notion is widely used but, as we shall see, is not always used consistently, so I will take a moment to explain how I will use the term. As Millar puts it, the “phenomenal character of an experience of a certain type is made up of features in respect of which there is something which it is like to have an experience of that type” (1991: 496). These “features in respect of which there is something which it is like to have an experience” are what Chalmers calls

---

1 For the terminology of phenomenal and / or sensory and / or qualitative character, see Shoemaker 1994: 22; Tye 1995: xv; Siewert 1998: 65; Davies and Humphries 1993: 9; Byrne 2001: 200; Smith 2002: 40; Chalmers 2004: 154. Variants on this terminology include “subjective character” (Metzinger 1995: 9; Davies and Humphries *ibid.*), and “qualitative or sensational content” (Block 1990: 54)).
phenomenal properties, thus “two perceptual experiences share their phenomenal character if … the experiences instantiate the same phenomenal properties” (Chalmers 2006: ??). Or as Block has it, the “totality of the [phenomenal] properties of a state are “what it is like” to have it” (1995: 230).

In explicating the closely related notions of phenomenal character and phenomenal properties, Millar, Chalmers and Block all make use of Nagel’s (1974/1979) observation that there is *something it is like* for an organism to have conscious experience. As Chalmers further explains the idea: “We can say that a being is conscious if there is *something it is like* to be that being … Similarly, a mental state is conscious if there is something it is like to be in that mental state.” (1996: 4). To head off any potential misunderstandings, let me take a moment to briefly say something about the relationship between there being something it is like to be in a mental state and there being something it is like for the subject / organism (cf. Nagel 1974/1979: 167) to be in that mental state. The first thing to note is that, at any one time, a subject will be likely to be in a range of different mental states, many or all of which may contribute to the overall matter of what it is like for that subject at that time. So we should be careful not to confuse the question of what it is like to be in a particular mental state – the narrow contribution a particular mental state makes to the overall character of what it is like for the subject – with the more general question of what it is like for the subject.

---

2 It is worth noting that, sometimes, the terminology of phenomenal character appears to be used as equivalent to phenomenal property. Levine, for example, identifies the qualitative character of an experience with a quale (2002: 57; see also Woodruff-Smith 1986: 152; Lycan 2004: 98), but also talks about experiences having a “complex qualitative character” (2001: 6). Given this, I prefer to use the terminology of phenomenal properties to talk about particular aspects of what it is like for a subject, and phenomenal character to name the complex totality of what it is like.

3 I follow Block and Chalmers in using the terminology of mental states here purely for the sake of simplicity. I do not mean to be making any assumptions about which metaphysical category experiences fall into – in particular, whether they are rightly considered to be states or events.

4 Indeed, if Searle is right, the presence of a pre-existing conscious field of which these different states are modifications may also contribute to what it is like to be that subject (2005: 37).
is like for the subject of that mental state. Second, as I read it, if there is something it is like to be in a mental state, then there is thereby something it is like for the subject of that mental state – there is no philosophically significant difference between these two ways of putting the point. But this is not universally accepted.\(^5\) It has been suggested that, even if there is, in a sense, something it is like to have an experience, for there to be something it is like \textit{for the subject} to have that experience, the subject in question would need to be aware of its being that way for them, where “awareness of” is taken to involve some kind of higher-order perspective on that experience.\(^6\) In light of this, Lycan (1999: 128) complains that this terminology is infected with ambiguity, so let me take this opportunity to just stipulate that, even if there is an ambiguity here (although see Byrne 2004: §4.2 for an argument to the contrary), I will use the what it is like / something it is like terminology in the sense according to which there being something it is like at all simply entails that there is something it is like for the subject in question. On this usage, questions about whether there is something it is like to be in a given mental state or what it is like to be in that state concern the nature and properties of the state itself, not any higher-order perspective the subject may or may not have on that state.

A more potentially problematic feature of this vocabulary is that, in explicating the phenomenal character / phenomenal property terminology, Block and Chalmers hold that phenomenal properties are those properties of mental states that characterize aspects of what it is like for a subject to be in a particular mental state. As an example

\(^5\) A recent paper by Lormand ****; but Hellie ****

\(^6\) Thus, for example, we find Rosenthal claiming that “what it is like to be in pain, in the relevant sense of that idiom, is simply what it is like to be conscious of being in pain” (1990: 733), where one is conscious of something “if one is in a mental state whose contain pertains to that thing – a thought about the thing, or a sensation of it” (ibid: 737). If we read the claim in this way, then for there to be something it is like \textit{for the subject} to be in pain, the subject would not only have to be in pain – to be in a pain state – but would also have to have a higher-order thought about or perception of that pain.
of a phenomenal property, Levine offers the reddish character of an experience of a fire engine (2003: 57). Now Block, Chalmers and Levine all talk about phenomenal properties as those properties of mental states that characterize what it is like to be in them. Likewise, the phenomenal character of an experience is sometimes explicitly taken to be a property of the experience itself (e.g. Metzinger 1995: 9; Byrne 2001: 201, 2002). But when we look back at the quote from Campbell above, in which the naïve realist view is espoused, we find him stating that “the phenomenal character of your experience […] is constituted by the actual layout of the room itself; which particular objects are there, their intrinsic properties” and so on. But a phenomenal character that was constituted by external objects and their properties could not be a property of an experience. Yet this kind of view of phenomenal character is echoed in Martin’s claim that “to know what one’s experience is like is to know what properties, aspects or features are presented to one in having the experience” (1998: 174; see also Dretske 1993: 103). Altogether, this can seem to suggest, in contrast to Block, Levine and Chalmers, that “the features that define what it is like to have an experience are properties the objects we experience (not our experience of them) have” (Dretske 2003: 67; see also Tye 2000: 49; Lycan 2001: 32).

Other theorists have attacked the idea that the “what it is like” aspect of an experience is exhausted by a catalogue of the properties that are presented to the subject in having that experience. Thus Maund, upon noting that it “is sometimes assumed that to speak of the “what it is like” aspect of experiences is automatically to speak of the qualitative, intrinsic features of experiences”, suggests that this tendency is unfortunate, in part because it seems possible “that there could be intellectual experience, such as thoughts of certain kinds, without sensuous or qualitative character. It seems that they may have a feel to them, but a non-sensuous one.” (2003: 57; see also Strawson 1994: 6-7, McCulloch 2003: 10). In making this claim, Maund suggests that, whilst there is something it is like to have both experiences and thoughts, what it is like to have the two types of state may differ with the former, but not the latter, involving the sensuous presentation of properties or qualities. This distinction is also made by Crane, who uses “the word ‘qualitative’ … to describe those mental states whose conscious character is either sensory or like that of bodily sensations [which includes perception]. And … the word ‘phenomenal’ to describe those states … for which there is something it is like to be in them. Phenomenal character is thus the broader notion: conscious thoughts, perceptions, and other propositional attitudes, plus sensations and emotions, all have a phenomenal character.” (2001: 75-6). On Crane’s usage, some, but not all, phenomenal characters – those of bodily sensations and perceptual experiences – are also sensory, having to do with the way things feel or look or appear (compare Langsam 1997: 35 who, whilst also recognising a distinction between what it is like to have experiences and thoughts, uses the
There can therefore appear to be an ambiguity in the terminology, between phenomenal properties / phenomenal character understood as properties of experiences that characterize what it is like to have them and phenomenal properties / phenomenal character understood as properties (or in the case of phenomenal character, collections of properties) of objects that, through being presented, or apparently presented, to the subject, characterize what it is like to have the experience. This confusion is nicely illustrated in a 2002 symposium on Michael Tye’s book *Consciousness, Color and Content*, where Alex Byrne, commentating, suggests we should stipulate that “the phenomenal character of an experience e is a property, specifically a property of e: that property that types e according to what it’s like to undergo e.” (2002: 9) and Tye, replying, rejects this. “To be sure,” he says, “we talk of states having phenomenal character, but nothing in ordinary usage or thought commits us to the view that phenomenal characters are properties…. that isn’t commonsense. It’s philosophical dogma” (2002: 30)

Although there seems to be a significant dispute here, I think this is one of those lucky situations in which we can have it both ways (cf. Chalmers 2004: 156). To show how, let me stipulate that the original pair of terms – *Phenomenal Property / Phenomenal Character* – are to be understood as Byrne suggests: as properties of experiences that type experiences by what it is like to be in them. In order to capture Tye’s position, let me also introduce two more terms – *Presentational Property / Presentational Character* – which are to be understood as properties (or in the case of presentational character, arrays of properties), that are, or at least seem to be, term “phenomenal character” to name the narrower, sensory type of what it is like). In what follows, I will continue to use the terminology of phenomenal character in the narrow way, but this should not be taken to imply that I reject the possible utility of a broader notion.
presented to the subject of experience and thereby characterize what it is like to be in the experiential state. Importantly, unlike in the case of phenomenal properties, there is no restriction as to what the presentational properties / the properties that constitute presentational character are properties of. It is an open question whether they are properties of mind-independent material objects, properties of experiences, or maybe even properties of non-physical objects.

The important feature of this distinction is that it enables us to provide translations between the two notions. To see how, let us return to Dretske’s claim that what the subject is directly aware of in experience – what he called phenomenal character but what we are now calling the presentational character of the experience – is constituted by an array of mind independent properties (and possibly also objects). Against the background of the claim that it is such mind-independent features that characterize what it is like to have an experience, the question we need to ask is this: how do these external features come to characterize what it is like to have the experience? Dretske tells us that the “experienced qualities … are – all of them – properties the experience represents things as having” (2003: 67; see also Lycan 2001: 18-19). So on this view, these external features characterize what it is like to have the experience in virtue of the experience in question representing that those features are instantiated. This is the position known as representationalism or intentionalism. According to the representationalist thesis, then, for any given presentational character, the experience itself will have a corresponding property – the property of representing that the constituent elements of the presentational character are instantiated – that can then be identified with the phenomenal character. This is not

---

8 Martin (1998: 174) draws essentially the same distinction using slightly different terminology.
only a property of the experience in perfectly good standing, it is also (if the representationalist thesis is correct) that very property of the experience that types the experience by what it is like to have it. Moreover, what it is like to have an experience will supervene on this property in a way that is robustly explainable (what Horgan calls superdupervenience) – why is it like that to have the experience? Because the experience represents that such-and-such properties are instantiated.

So with the representationalist thesis filled out, translations can be set up between the notions of presentational and phenomenal character thus: for any presentational character – for any set of properties that the subject is aware of in experience – there will be a corresponding phenomenal character – the property of representing that that presentational character is instantiated – that types the experience by what it is like to have it. As Chalmers notes, however, once the distinction between presentational and phenomenal character has been made, we are no longer entitled to assume that the subject of experience is directly aware of phenomenal character (or, indeed, phenomenal properties) either in normal experience or in introspection. The representationalist will be at pains to deny that, when we introspect, we are aware of the property of representing that an external property is instantiated. Rather the claim will be that we are aware of the external property itself. So whilst we can insist, with Byrne, that phenomenal character is a property of experience by definition – the property of experience that types the experience by what it is like to have it – we must bear in mind that it is the presentational character that we are directly aware of.9

9 As I hope this shows, in making this distinction and allowing that phenomenal character is a property of experience, we are not saying anything that the representationalist need oppose (pace Tye 2002). Having said this, it is worth noting that Tye actually uses the notion of phenomenal character in a further sense in as much as he actually identifies phenomenal character with the (right kind of) representational content (1995: 137; 2000: 48; 2003a: 166). This qualifies as a distinct sense as it is neither a property of experience, nor something constituted by the external properties claimed to
If we think back to Campbell’s claim that the phenomenal character of a visual experience just is the scene perceived, we can see that the naïve realist is going to be broadly in agreement with Dretske when it comes to the constituents of presentational character: as Campbell says (translated into our terminology), the presentational character of a veridical visual experience will be constituted by mind-independent objects, their properties, the relations they stand in, and so on. However, the naïve realist will differ from the representationalist when it comes to the phenomenal character of such experiences. The naïve realist demurs at the representationalist account of phenomenal character because its claim that the “properties and situations one is aware of in having an experience … [are] properties things are represented as having [has the consequence that] the world needn’t contain them in order to be represented as containing them” (Dretske ibid: 71). So on the representationalist view, because the phenomenal character of an experience is its property of representing that a presentational character is instantiated, an experience could have the presentational character that it has – could present the subject with those worldly features – despite those features not actually being currently manifest in the subject’s immediate environment. As a result, given the overall nature of the representationalist view, the contours of the subject’s conscious experience will not be shaped by the actual layout of the world, but rather by the layout the world is represented to have. This is why Martin claims that the representationalist will therefore be led to “deny that [the characterizing what it is like to have the experience. However, if we identify the phenomenal character with the property of representing that content, the representationalist can still maintain that the “content of [visual] experiences … determines their phenomenal character” (Byrne 2001: 204).

10 As presentational character is not itself a property, there is nothing that need concern us in this claim.

11 Of course, in veridical cases, the representationalist could argue that we represent the world to be a certain way because the world is that way, and thereby that the way the world is does shape the contours of the subject’s conscious experience. But this is to read the metaphor of shaping in the causal way, which we have already discussed and rejected as inadequately strong.
external objects and their manifest qualities] are constituents of the experience, or that their actual natures determine the phenomenal character of experience” (1997: 84-5).

So although the naïve realist will agree with the representationalist that the constituents of presentational character are elements of the mind-independent environment, she cannot therefore endorse the representationalist’s view of phenomenal character. Given this, let us return to our question: according to the naïve realist, how do the external features that constitute the presentational character serve to characterize what it is like to have the experience?

The distinctive feature of naïve realism lies in the claim that, when we see the world, the subject is thereby acquainted with the elements of the presentational character – the mind-independent objects and their features – where “acquaintance” names an irreducible mental relation that the subject can only stand in to objects that exist and features that are instantiated in the part of the environment at which the subject is looking.12 Moreover, the naïve realist will also claim that it is the subject’s being acquainted with those particular elements of the environment that makes it the case that there is something it is like to have that experience. So for any given presentational character – the array of features that the subject is aware of in having that experience – the experience itself will have the property of acquainting the subject with that presentational character. Once again, this property is both a property of the experience and that very property of the experience which, if the naïve realist is correct, types the experience by what it is like to have it. Why is it like that to have

12 The terminology of acquaintance derives from Russell (1912/1967: 25), but the key relationship has gone under many different names in the literature. These include “taking in” (McDowell 1994: 25), “awareness or receptivity” (Smith 2002: 43), “presentation” (Martin 2004: 38), and “appearance” (Langsam 1997: 36). As far as I can see, nothing of significance hangs on the choice of terminology as, in each case, the relevant relationship is supposed to be irreducible. The differences in names seem merely to reflect different attempts to convey the immediacy of the relation as the naïve realist conceives of it.
that experience? Because in having the experience, the subject is acquainted with thus-and-such objects and their properties. This acquaintance property can therefore be identified with the experience’s phenomenal character.

So to sum up, the naïve realist claims, in accord with the representationalist, that when we see the world, the presentational character of the experience we have – the array of features that we are aware of and which characterize what it is like to have that experience – is constituted by features from the mind-independent world. Unlike the representationalist, however, the naïve realist does not claim that the experience represents that the elements of this presentational character are instantiated, but rather that, in having the experience, the subject is acquainted with the elements of the presentational character, where the holding of this relation requires that the elements that constitute the presentational character actually exist and/or are instantiated in the part of the environment at which the subject is looking. So according to the naïve realist, the phenomenal character – the property of the experience that types the experience by what it is like to have it – is the property of acquainting the subject with such-and-such a presentational character.

Let us take a moment to briefly recap where we have got to. I have suggested that the core feature of naïve realism is a claim about the phenomenal character of veridical visual experiences. However, in response to a certain ambiguity in the way the notion of phenomenal character is used, I distinguished between the following two notions.

*Phenomenal Character:* The property of an experience that types the experience by what it is like to have it.
Presentational Character: A collection of properties (and maybe even objects, relations etc.) that the subject is aware of in experience and thereby characterize what it is like to have that experience.

We then discussed the naïve realist’s claims about these features and concluded that, according to naïve realism, the presentational character of a veridical visual experience is constituted by elements of the material world around her, and the phenomenal character of this experience is its property of acquainting the subject with this presentational character. (Relatedly, we can also talk about an experience’s “phenomenal properties”: a particular phenomenal property is the property the experience has of acquainting the subject with an individual element of the presentational character, known in turn as a presentational property.) What it is like to have that particular experience supervenes upon its phenomenal character in a way that is robustly explainable – the experience is like it is because of the particular mind-independent features that the subject is acquainted with.

Now naïve realism has often been claimed to command a certain prima facie support as the theory that legitimates a certain pre-theoretical, “naïve” view of veridical visual experience. This is an essentially phenomenological motivation – it claims that the phenomenology of visual experience just strikes us as naïve realist in character and hence that the common man, with no philosophical training to lead him astray, would endorse just such a theory. However, as its opponents note, this is not the most stable of motivations. For one thing, in as much as the common man has a view of visual experience, will be discussed in detail in chapter two.
experience, it is likely to be a highly nebulous mix of phenomenological, epistemological and metaphysical considerations that is lacking in specificity, which would leave it open for other theories of perception to claim that they adequately legitimate the view. For another, even if did turn out that the common man were to have an adequately specific view of veridical experience that only naïve realism could legitimate, it is possible that he would also has views about other related situations – say, hallucination or the relationship between consciousness and the brain – that the naïve realist will end up claiming are false. So a further reason to be sceptical of the force of this motivation turns on the fact that, if a “naïve” view is to be taken as our touchstone of correctness, then error may well have to come into the picture somewhere, so why not in the theory of veridical experience? Finally, even if there were to be a reasonably specific view that only naïve realism could capture without locating error anywhere else, Hawthorne and Kovakovich argue that naïve views shouldn’t carry too much weight anyway. They say they are unable to “see much point in pursuing the philosophy of perception in a setting where it is assumed that [common sense] commitments will survive philosophical and scientific reflection. After all, we shouldn’t think that vulgar common sense has seen in advance how to handle various challenges to its commitments” (2006: 180). So to think the naïve realism can be adequately motivated purely by an appeal to common sense is itself a somewhat naïve position.\footnote{Thanks to one of OUP’s readers for this book for curing me of just such a case of naïveté! It should be noted, however, that some philosophers have attempted to develop a phenomenological motivation for Naïve Realism that it is not open to this kind of objection (e.g. Martin 2002; Hellie forthcoming)}

With this in mind, in the present paper I want to develop an alternative motivation for naïve realism that is closely related to this phenomenological motivation: that a naïve realist conception of phenomenal character / phenomenal properties can give us new
insights into some of the problems that beset the materialist about phenomenal consciousness. For example, one reason to be interested in the question of whether naïve realism is a defensible thesis turns on the fact that, if it is, problems such as Chalmers’s “Hard Problem” of consciousness (1995; 1997) look more tractable from within a materialist framework.

To explain how naïve realism can offer new insights into these areas, I will begin by outlining the hard problem and the closely related claim that there is an “explanatory gap” between the physical / functional facts and facts about phenomenal consciousness (Levine 1983; 2001). I will then go on to briefly consider extant responses to these issues in order to isolate just what criteria the proponent of the hard problem / explanatory gap contends that an adequate explanation ought to meet, before showing how naïve realism offers the kind of framework which provides reason for optimism that just such an explanation could be provided.

In introducing the hard problem, Chalmers contrasts it with what he calls the “easy” problems: “The easy problems of consciousness are those that seem directly susceptible to the standard methods of cognitive science … The hard problems are those that seem to resist those methods” (1997: 9). As examples of the easy problems he includes such things as our ability to discriminate and categorize environmental stimuli, to integrate information and to instigate behaviour. These questions, Chalmers suggests, all look tractable. However, even when all of these questions have been answered, there will be a further question left over:
Why is it that when our cognitive systems engage in visual … information-processing, we have visual … experience: the quality of deep blue …? (1997: 10-11).

Even when we have explained all the cognitive and behavioural functions in the vicinity of experience – perceptual discrimination, categorization, internal access, verbal report – there may still remain a further unanswered question: *Why is the performance of these functions accompanied by a conscious experience?*” (1997: 12)

The “hard problem” of consciousness – the question of why functional processing is accompanied by phenomenal consciousness – is closely related to Levine’s “explanatory gap”. Consider the following:

[W]e have no idea, I contend, how a physical object could constitute a subject of experience, enjoying, not merely instantiating, states with all sorts of qualitative character (Levine 2001: 76).

Let’s call the physical story for seeing red “R” and the physical story for seeing green “G”. … When we consider the qualitative character of our visual experiences when looking at ripe McIntosh apples, as opposed to looking at ripe cucumbers, the difference is not explained by appeal to G and R. For R doesn’t really explain why I have the one kind of qualitative experience – the kind I have when looking at ripe McIntosh apples – and not the other (Levine 1983: 358)
For present purposes, it will be instructive to break these issues down into two questions and translate them into the terminology that we have been using. The first question, what we might call the Something It’s Like question, asks why physical / functional processing is accompanied by phenomenal character at all? The second, What It’s Like question then asks why physical / functional processing of a certain kind is accompanied by the particular phenomenal character it is? Although these questions are closely related, they are independent. In particular, as we shall see, an answer to the first question will not necessarily provide an adequate answer to the second question. As things stand, our present lack of answers to either of these questions is, at the same time, the lack of an answer to the hard problem and the source of the explanatory gap.

In his discussions of the hard problem, Chalmers suggests that there are two routes that the materialist might take. The first, type-A materialism, is to deny “that there is any phenomenon that needs explaining, over and above the various functions” (1997: 380). In our terms, the type-A materialist denies that experiences have phenomenal character.\textsuperscript{15} However, in as much as the notion of phenomenal character was introduced in order to account for the special “what it is like” aspects of our experiences, simply to deny that there are such properties can seem to ignore those crucial aspects of consciousness. So those who were inclined to think there was something in the hard problem in the first place are going to find that, with no further explanation, this just doesn’t scratch the itch: “prima facie, there is good reason to

\textsuperscript{15} For this reason, the type-A materialist is sometimes characterized as being an eliminativist about consciousness, but is more accurately seen to be an eliminativist about a particular conception of consciousness – a conception of consciousness as involving special phenomenal characters over and above the physical processing.
believe that the question of explaining experience is distinct from the questions about explaining the various functions. Such *prima facie* intuitions can be overturned, but to do so requires very solid and substantial argument” (Chalmers 1997: 383).

This suggests that, to satisfy the intuitions that underlie the hard problem, the materialist would need to offer an account of phenomenal character, or at least to explain how the subjective aspects of experience can be accommodated in a theory which does not make use of such a notion, rather than to simply deny its existence. This is the approach taken by Chalmers’ second kind of materialist, the type-B materialist, who “accepts that there is a phenomenon that needs to be accounted for, conceptually distinct from the performance of functions, but holds that the phenomenon can still be explained within a materialist framework” (1997: 387). So the type-B materialist accepts that there is such a property as phenomenal character, but holds that this property is a materialistically acceptable property. For example, the Type-B Materialist might insist that phenomenal characters are identical to certain types of physical / functional properties, or at least supervene on these properties with logical necessity.

How does this strategy respond to our two target questions? Well the Type-B Materialist can offer answers to these questions, but the answers will not be terribly satisfying: physical / functional processing has to be accompanied by phenomenal character because phenomenal character *just is* a physical functional property and physical / functional processing of a certain kind has to be accompanied by the phenomenal character it is because that phenomenal character is identical with (one of) the physical / functional properties that is instantiated by that processing. Yet this
strategy is unlikely to preach to the unconverted. As Chalmers notes, in all other contexts, the postulation of an identity claim requires “an actual or possible explanation of how it is that two phenomena are identical”, but in this case, the Type-B Materialist “posits an identity in place of an explanation” (1997: ??).

What would constitute the kind of explanation that the proponent of the hard problem / explanatory gap is looking for? Chalmers and Levine suggest we need an explanation that makes it “intelligible” (Levine 1983: 358) or “transparent” (Chalmers 2006: 11**) why the truths about phenomenal properties obtain, given that the physical / functional truths obtain. The standard view here is that a priori deducibility of the mental truths from the set of physical truths for one who has the mental concepts is what is required.16 This is where the identity proposal fails – it doesn’t do anything whatsoever to make it intelligible how two such intuitively dissimilar properties should actually turn out to be identical. As Block wonders, “how could one property be both subjective and objective?” (2002: 392).

Having said this, there has been a thread in the pro-functionalist literature which has attempted to offer just this kind of transparent explanation of why the physical / functional truths entail the phenomenal truths. For example, over thirty years ago, Shoemaker (1975) argued that if we can have knowledge of the phenomenal character of an experience, as he thinks we surely can, then that phenomenal character must have causal consequences. He thereby concluded that a creature whose states lacked phenomenal character could not be functionally identical to one of us. If this were so, then all the functional truths about us would in fact entail that we were phenomenally

16 See, e.g. Chalmers (1996); Chalmers and Jackson (2001). This claim has been disputed (e.g. Block and Stalnaker (1999)), but I need not take a stance on this debate as I think the naïve realist can show how the existence of phenomenal properties are indeed a priori deductible.
conscious. Although Block (1980) pointed out some serious flaws in Shoemaker’s original argument, Michael Tye (2006) has recently defended a version of this contention by asking us to imagine that we perform an “exchanger operation” on him and his putatively non-conscious yet functionally identical twin, NN. This operation has the consequence that Tye loses all his phenomenal states other than his phenomenal memories and has them replaced by NN’s ersatz phenomenal states. Correspondingly, NN loses his ersatz phenomenal states and has them replaced by Tye’s true phenomenal states. As Tye and NN are, *ex hypothesi*, functional duplicates, an exchange of functionally equivalent states ought to leave them functional duplicates still. But as Tye points out, whilst it is reasonable to suppose that he will mourn the loss of his phenomenal states for merely ersatz ones, it is implausible to suppose that NN would mourn the loss of his ersatz phenomenal states given that he has acquired real conscious states! If this is coherent, it suggests that the presence or absence of phenomenal consciousness does indeed have functional consequences as Shoemaker originally suggested, and hence that the functional truths will entail the presence of phenomenal consciousness.

In addition to this kind of contention, which argues that functional duplicates of conscious subjects will necessarily themselves be conscious subjects, Andy Clark (2000) and Robert Kirk (2005) focus on specific functional capacities which, they argue, imply the presence of phenomenal consciousness. Clark contends that if a system has the capacity to know, non-inferentially, that it *sees* the difference between, say, a red cup and a green cup, rather than hearing or feeling the difference, that this

---

17 Block countered this with the claim that, even if, in us, phenomenal character is necessary for an experience to have the causal consequences it does, it is possible that something else may have those causal consequences in a different system (1980). Shoemaker replies in his (1981), but my purpose here is not to address these issues in detail, merely to show the presence of this line of thought.
entails that there will be something it is like for the system. Likewise Kirk suggests that if changes in a system’s environment are forced upon the system in such a way that it is enabled to respond instantly and appropriately to those changes – i.e. respond without having to act (e.g. guess or probe) to discover what has changed regardless of whether or not these changes are related to its current plans and goals – then there must be something it is like to be that system.

So these theorists all offer an answer to the *Something It’s Like* question. That asks why the right kinds of physical / functional processing are accompanied by phenomenal character at all. The Shoemaker / Tye approach argues that it is inconceivable that it should fail to be; the Clark / Kirk approach that certain kinds of physical / functional processing require that be the case. Yet whatever the strength of these considerations, we should note that none of them offer any kind of answer whatsoever to the *What It’s Like* question, which asked why physical / functional processing of a certain kind is accompanied by the particular phenomenal character that it is. Shoemaker continues to insist that transposed qualia are possible (1975: ??); Tye accepts that his argument “does not fully close the explanatory gap – in particular, it does not explain why, once a particular functional organization is in place, an experience is like that and not like anything else” (2007: 164) and Clark, when faced with the *What It’s Like* question, suggests “we must be humble. The argument … shows only (at best) that … it must look like something when, for example, we judge that one cup is red and the other green. Why then … does it look *like this?* Our story doesn’t say” (2000: 36).
But this concession leaves the functionalist in a very strange position. To see why, consider the Kripkean metaphor about what God must do in order to create the world and consciousness. An anti-functionalist would say that, once God has created all the physical / functional facts, he still has work to do to add consciousness to the world. The functionalist cannot accept this – if these arguments succeed, the functionalist must hold that in setting down all the physical / functional facts God has thereby given the world phenomenal consciousness. But what of the specific kinds of phenomenal consciousness? Whatever answer the functionalist provides here will yield a decidedly odd restriction on God’s powers. If God is left with a choice as to what it is like for a subject to see a red cup, then as he cannot choose not to make it like something for the subject, God would therefore be compelled to make an additional choice about what kind of phenomenal consciousness to provide. But then if, in fixing the physical / functional facts, God also thereby fixes the facts about what it is like, but there would still seem to be a question of why God couldn’t have set things up differently – why couldn’t God have made what it is like to see green the same as what it is (now) like to see red? This is just to say that the functionalist has not answered the What It’s Like question.

I think this leaves the debate in a strange and unstable position. Without an adequate answer to the What It’s Like question, we seem to be faced with a fundamental clash of intuitions. On the one hand, there is the pro-functionalist intuition that certain kinds of functional processing do seem to require that their subject be in states with phenomenal character; on the other, the thought that the very aspects of experience that phenomenal character is in the picture to capture – “the “what” it’s like for me:
reddish or greenish, painful or pleasurable” (Levine 2001: 7) – has not been adequately accounted for. As Van Gulick puts the point:

No matter how much structural organization we can find in the phenomenal realm and explain neurophysiologically, [a critic] will insist that the distinct redness of phenomenal red will not have been captured or explained by our theory (Van Gulick 1993: 145).

So even if the functionalist arguments are correct, and that phenomenal character is identical with, or at least entailed by, certain kinds of physical / functional property, it is no more easy to see how the reddishness and greenishness that need to be accounted for get a foothold. For these reasons, the explanatory gap remains unbridged.18

It is at this point that I think naïve realism can offer new insights into these issues by allowing us to break the issues down and answer the Something It’s Like and What It’s Like questions in turn rather than together. Take the What It’s Like question first –

18 In the face of this criticism some materialists have attempted to accept that the explanatory gap has not been bridged, but to explain why the existence of an explanatory gap is nevertheless consistent with (and even predictable from) materialism. This strategy has an important role for special viewpoint-relative phenomenal concepts (e.g. Loar 1997; Perry 2001; Papineau 2002). In order to keep the focus tightly on motivating naïve realism, I won’t go further into these important discussions here. But let me be clear that this is not because I think phenomenal concepts are otiose – indeed, I think an adequate theory of phenomenal concepts will be a critical part of a materialist theory of consciousness, particularly when it comes to explaining what changes when Mary leaves the black-and-white room (Jackson: 1982) – but rather because I want to argue that naïve realism offers an alternative way of thinking about these issues that might make available the kind of resolution that could actually answer the hard problem and bridge the explanatory gap. Of course, at this stage, it is too early to suggest that naïve realism provides a solution to these problems. For one thing, as it is being developed here, naïve realism is solely a thesis about visual consciousness and these problems are aimed at consciousness in all its forms. For another, it is the naïve realist account of veridical experience that offers the new insights; so until accounts of hallucination and illusion have been presented, the responses to the explanatory gap / hard problem will seem to be unable to adequately account for all cases of visual experience. Nevertheless, the possibilities afforded by naïve realism do make the question of whether or not naïve realism is defensible a matter of significant philosophical interest.
the key to the naïve realist explanation of what it is like to have an experience turns on the claim that, on this picture, phenomenal characters are *relational* properties – relations between subjects and real-world instances of properties. This enables the Naïve Realist to account for what Levine calls the “greenishness” of a green experience because the phenomenal character of a green experience involves a *relation* between the subject and an instance of greenness. So the “what” it’s like for the subject is a matter of which property the subject is acquainted with: the greenishness of a green experience just is the real-world instance of greenness that the subject is acquainted with. To paraphrase Chalmers’ account of what experience would be like on Eden, the phenomenal greenness of our experience derives entirely from the presentation of greenness in the world.\(^{19}\)

If the phenomenal greenness of our experience is a matter of our being acquainted with an instance of greenness in the world, then a plausible explanation of why phenomenal characters are entailed by physical / functional properties would require us to show how the right kinds of physical / functional processing might suffice to acquaint us with worldly properties. This is where the kind of functionalist response to the absent qualia argument we have been considering comes into its own. Instead of taking these considerations to show that, if the right kinds of functional processing are taking place, then the system must be in states with phenomenal properties, and wondering why *those particular* phenomenal properties, we can instead see these

\(^{19}\)In his 2002 Whitehead lectures, Shoemaker suggests that moves of this kind attempt to solve the “explanatory gap problem by kicking the phenomenal character *downstairs*, into the external world.” But, he suggests, this is just to trade a subjective explanatory gap for an objective explanatory gap: “How can color as we perceive it be a micro-physically realized property?” There are of course many theories of colour on the table – I will discuss this in more detail in chapter five – but for now it will suffice to note that, on my view, the naïve realist will be a colour realist, identifying greenness with a certain kind of physical property and holding that it is that acquaintance with that property that accounts for what it is like to have a green experience.
considerations as showing that, if the right kinds of functional processing are taking place, then the system must be one which is acquainted with aspects of its environment. So for a state of the subject’s to acquaint the subject with a property in its environment – which of course is just to say, for that state to have a phenomenal character – the right kinds of functional processing must be taking place. But of course, what it is like to be in this state is not delivered by the functional processing, but rather by the property that the subject is thereby acquainted with. So the functionalist component of the account needs only to explain what it is to be so related, not what it is like to be so related – the aspects of the world account for that. The reason that it is like that to see green is because it is real-world greenness that the system’s functional processing serves to acquaint it with – we no longer need to see the functionalist programme as unrealistically attempting to conjure greenishness out of function. This also explains why God had no more work to do once he had fixed all the physical and functional facts. Because in fixing these facts he both made it the case that certain creatures in the world would be acquainted with elements of their environment and fixed the nature of the properties that they are acquainted with.

With this in mind, consider Ned Block’s classic absent qualia objection to functionalism (1978/1980: 276-7), wherein the entire population of China is connected to an artificial body in such a way that the Chinese nation performs functional processing for the artificial body that is equivalent to, say, the functional processing your brain provides for your body. If we continue to look at the problem as one of whether the goings-on in the entire Chinese nation (the artificial subject’s “brain”) might somehow generate qualitative greenness, then the appearance of subjectivity out of functional processing will not cease to look extraordinary. But if
we look at the problem as rather one of asking whether the activity of the Chinese nation could suffice to acquaint the artificial creature with an instance of greenness in its environment, then it looks far more plausible to offer a positive answer to this question. After all, if the naïve realist proposal is correct, the functional processing going on in your brain suffices to acquaint you with the greenness in your environment; if the Chinese nation really could replicate this processing, then why should this fail to acquaint the artificial subject with the greenness in its environment?

What is more, this way of approaching the issues offers to provide the kind of intelligible, transparent explanation of why the truths about phenomenal properties obtain, given that the physical / functional truths— that the proponents of the hard problem / explanatory gap require. On this way of understanding phenomenal character, someone who knew all the physical facts and who had the relevant mental concepts (acquaintance, color properties, etc.) could deduce the mental facts a priori—they could deduce that a subject’s functional states were doing the kind of integrated processing required to acquaint the subject with particular worldly properties, which is just to say that they could deduce what phenomenal properties the subject’s states had.

I have presented this new view of phenomenal properties as a motivation for naïve realism, but one might wonder whether it is unique to the naïve realist, or whether the representationalist could motivate their position in an analogous way. Such a contention might proceed along the following lines. If acquaintance with the worldly property of greenness suffices for the subjective phenomenality of an experience of greenness, as the naïve realist will suggest it does, then wouldn’t representing that a
property of that kind is instantiated also suffice? So long as our experience tells us that we are presented with this worldly property, shouldn’t that explain the subjectivity of our experiences just as well as our actually being acquainted with it? And if the answer to these questions is yes, and a suitably transparent functional analysis of the representation relation (an explanation, in functional terms, of what it is for a state to represent a particular worldly property) can be provided – and the literature contains examples of just such analyses of the representation relation – then this motivation would look to be available to the representationalist just in case it is available to the naïve realist.

This is an intriguing suggestion, but I suggest that an attempt by the representationalist to account for subjectivity in this way will fail to adequately accommodate the subjectivity intuitions that motivate the hard problem / explanatory gap in the first place. However the considerations I will raise here cannot be considered demonstrative: the first turns on the fact that many contemporary versions of representationalism incorporate a critical functional role element in distinguishing between states that do and do not have phenomenal character, and it is possible that a purer version of representationalism could be developed that did not share this feature; the second turns on the details of the particular analyses of the representation relation that have appealed to by representationalists in elucidating what it is for a mental state to represent a worldly property. But once again, it is possible that an analysis of the representational relation could be developed that didn’t suffer from the difficulty I will raise. However, taken together I suggest that they will make a strong *prima facie* case that only the naïve realist conception of phenomenal character as
relational offers the kinds of new perspectives on old problems that have been outlined above.

As just noted, the first concern stems from the extent to which current representationalist theories utilize a functional role criterion in distinguishing between states which have phenomenal character and those which do not. Uriah Kriegel highlights this in an article discussing Michael Tye’s particular brand of representationalism (2002). Kriegel points out that, on Tye’s PANIC view, what makes the difference between a state that has phenomenal character and one that does not is not a matter of their representational contents, but rather a difference in their functional roles (the poise criterion). As Tye explains, to be phenomenally conscious, a particular content must stand “ready and available to make a direct impact on beliefs and/or desires… It follows that systems that altogether lack the capacity for beliefs and desires cannot undergo phenomenally conscious states” (Tye 1995: 143-4).20 This has the consequence that a particular representational content, corresponding, say, with the experience of phenomenal greenness, could occur in the absence of any subjective awareness of phenomenal greenness on the part of the subject. So therefore on such an account, simply representing the property of greenness cannot suffice for subjectivity. If the representationalist is to piggy-back on the motivation outlined above for naïve realism, some additional explanatory story would be required.

20 See also Lycan: “the mind has no special properties that are not exhausted by its representational properties, along with or in combination with the functional organization of its components” (1996: 11 my emphasis) and Dretske: “Experiences are those natural representations, that service the construction of representations, representations, that can be calibrated (by learning) to more effectively service an organism’s needs and desires. They are the states whose functions it is to supply information to a cognitive system for calibration and use in the control and regulation of behavior” (1995: 19 my emphasis).
Of equal concern is the question of whether the representation relation, once given a functional analysis, will be strong enough to capture the intuitions that experience is subjective. As an example of this kind of worry, consider this passage from Barry Maund, again discussing Tye’s view:

To [feature in the representational] content [of a particular experience], a property must be causally related in the right kind of way to my experience, but given Tye’s account, to be aware of the property is simply for me to be in a certain state, which stands in a complex relation to instances of the property. It does not count as any normal kind of awareness. (2002: §1.6)

The concern is that, although the representationalist does bring the worldly property of greenness into the picture, the way in which he does so cannot adequately explain how it makes us “aware” of greenness as Maund thinks it is normally understood (which, from his discussion, is clearly a matter of what we have been calling subjectivity). Developing this concern is difficult, because the details will differ according to which particular theory of content is yoked to the representationalist thesis. But to see where the problem lies, consider two prominent naturalistic analyses of the representation relation; the first holds that “content [should] be understood in terms of causal covariation under optimal conditions” where for evolved creatures, “optimal conditions are ones in which the sensory mechanisms are discharging their biological functions” (Tye 1995: 153; see also Dretske 1995: 15); the second turns on the idea that there is a lawlike relation between a particular mental state and a certain
kind of property (e.g. Fodor 1990). Whichever of these options we consider – whether we hold that a mental state represents whatever property (or properties) it lawfully covaries with, or that a mental state represents a property if it was selected by evolution for covarying with that property, Maund’s point is that in neither case does this seem enough to account for awareness of a property as we usually understand it.

To press this point, consider why we might think that, if a mental state is reliably caused by a property, say, then being in that state – whether or not a worldly instance of the property is there for the subject to see – would suffice to make it the case that the property is nonetheless presented to the subject. It seems to me that the only way in which we might think this would suffice would be if the subject’s having been in that state before had actually served to acquaint him with the property in question. If being in a state of that kind had actually acquainted the subject with greenness in the past, then maybe we could begin to understand how its representing greenness would suffice for the subjectivity of experience – perhaps it could inherit its subjectivity from this past encounter. Mere representation could, on such a view, carry an echo of the kind of subjectivity that is grounded in acquaintance. But if acquaintance never gets into the picture in the first place, then we are left wondering how being in a state of a kind that has stood in certain causal relations with a property (none of which have ever involved acquaintance with that property), or being in a state that evolution has selected to covary with a property (again, without acquaintance having ever entered the picture), could serve to bring that property within the scope of one’s subjectivity

21 This core claim needs a fair amount of supplementation before a plausible analysis of the representation relation has been provided. Fodor (1990) provides just such a supplementation.

22 Thompson (forthcoming) develops a similar objection on the grounds that an adequate account of the subjectivity of phenomenal experience – the redness of our experiences of red – requires “existent and actual properties”, which conflicts with features of the representationalist claim.
in a way that will satisfy Maund and the proponents of the hard problem / explanatory gap. It seems that only a relationship like acquaintance – the kind of relationship that the core of the naïve realist proposal – offers to be able to adequately bridge this gap.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{23} Of course, it remains to see what account the naïve realist can give of the apparent subjectivity of non-relational states such as hallucination, but that is the topic of the remainder of this book.