

## Anticipation and Illusion

Naïve Realism is a prominent contemporary Anglophone theory of perception according to which perceptual experience consists in a direct, non-representational relation to aspects of the mind-independent world (Campbell, 2002; Martin, 2002; Brewer, 2011; Soteriou, 2013; Allen, 2016; 2019; Kim, 2022; 2024). While this view is often thought to best capture what a perceptual experience is like from a first-person perspective, critics have long objected that it cannot adequately explain perceptual error, including hallucination and illusion. Much of the recent literature has focused primarily on hallucination and on whether naïve realism can accommodate it via a disjunctivist strategy (Martin, 2004; Fish, 2009; Soteriou, 2016). By contrast, the problem of illusion has received comparatively little sustained attention. Yet illusions are distinctive: unlike hallucinations, where there is no appropriate object of perception, they are typically understood as genuine cases of perceptual experience in which mind-independent entities are present, even though those objects appear other than they really are. The central challenge for the naïve realist, therefore, is to explain how illusions can be both genuinely world-involving and non-veridical or erroneous (Millar, 2015).

This paper develops and defends a unified account of illusion – the anticipatory view – which integrates core commitments of naïve realism with ideas from the Phenomenological tradition, especially Husserl’s notions of horizon and fulfilment (Husserl, 1907/1997; 1913/2012; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012; Madary, 2012; Textor, 2018). On this view, perceptual experience is essentially structured by a horizon of implicit anticipations concerning how an object would or might appear under different conditions and from different standpoints, together with the ways in which those anticipations are fulfilled or disappointed. In veridical perception, anticipations are continually fulfilled through ongoing acquaintance with aspects of the mind-independent world, thereby grounding the subject’s perceptual confidence and familiarity. Illusion arises when this harmony breaks – at least temporarily – because the object’s current perspective-dependent appearance, with which one is directly acquainted, conflicts with prior or ongoing anticipations about its other possible appearances. Some anticipations are thereby annulled as invalid, and the object is experienced as having ‘mere appearance’ rather than as being as it really is.

The anticipatory view contrasts with two standard naïve realist treatments of illusion. First, some naïve realists adopt a *doxastic* strategy, holding that illusion occurs when one perceives an object while failing to perceive certain of its properties and subsequently form a false judgment that the object instantiates a property it in fact lacks (Fish, 2009). For example, in viewing a round coin through a distorting lens, one might be said not to perceive its roundness but to experience it as elliptical, and then to judge – erroneously – that the perceived object is elliptical. Second, others appeal to the notion of *looks* or *appearances* (as aspects of mind-independent objects), suggesting that the perceived object instantiates a look that is characteristic of a kind to which it does not belong (Brewer, 2011; Genone, 2014). Thus, when a white wall is viewed under red lighting, the wall has a look characteristic of red things. The experience is illusory not because one experiences the wall *as* red, but because one is acquainted with a look typical of red objects that the white wall happens to instantiate in those conditions.

Millar (2015) argues that both strategies are inadequate. The judgment-based approach fails because it locates error at the level of judgment or belief rather than in perceptual experience itself, thereby stripping illusion of its distinctive ‘perceptual’ phenomenology. The look-based approach fails because perceiving a look characteristic of F-objects while perceiving a non-F object is not sufficient for experiencing the object *as* F. A coin viewed from an oblique angle may possess looks typical of ellipses, but that does not entail that it is seen as being elliptical. According to Millar, once this insufficiency is acknowledged, the look-based view collapses into the judgment-based view and inherits its problems.

The anticipatory view avoids these difficulties. Unlike doxastic accounts, it explains the erroneous character of illusion at the level of perceptual experience itself, rather than relegating error to post-perceptual judgment. Unlike standard look-based views, it construes looks or appearances not merely as situation-dependent features of objects or environments, but as perspective-dependent properties embedded within a dynamic structure of anticipation and fulfilment. This provides richer phenomenological grounds to accommodate a wide range of illusory cases,

including those in which both environmental and subjective factors contribute to phenomenology. Some illusions may stem primarily from features of the environment that plausibly mislead, while others may depend more heavily on the functioning (or malfunctioning) of the subject's perceptual system. Moreover, the anticipatory framework promises a unified treatment of related phenomena such as perceptual indeterminacy and amodal completion, all within a broadly naïve realist framework.