Varieties of Presence. By Alva Noë. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012. Pp. 176. Price $35.)

The received view is that intentionality is the property (or power) of mental states by which they are about or directed towards or represent their objects; all mental states have this property, but only some of those mental states enter into consciousness. Alva Noë's focus in *Varieties of Presence* is on intentionality, but only as it shows up in conscious experience. He elegantly sidesteps unconscious intentionality by making *presence* his main theme: intentional objects are made present to the conscious mind in various ways. His main 'actionist' thesis, repeated throughout the book, is that presence is something that we do, or achieve. Presence, according to him, is a matter of gaining access to intentional objects by using different kinds of skills. Noë's account of conscious intentionality as skilful access is a rejection of the received view of intentionality as a representational property of mental states.

The unifying idea of the book, that presence is an achievement, is best expressed in the second chapter. There Noë denies that 'there is *one* significant cognitive or semantic relation: reference or aboutness' (p. 38). Instead, he advocates a kind of pluralism about the intentional relationship, a pluralism in which perceptual-presence and thought-presence (and later, in ch. 5, pictorial-presence) are different 'styles' of achieving presence (pp. 44 and 45). Further, since presence depends on skills, and skilful activity can always be more or less successful, the achievement of presence is always 'fragile' (*ibid.*).

There are a number of attractive features of Noë's project. First, it builds on themes from Noë's earlier work (2004) in which he accounts for differences in phenomenal quality in terms of differences in skill-based access. Secondly, it purports to show an underlying similarity between Kripke/Putnam semantic externalism, on one hand, and sensorimotor (or enactive or actionist) approaches to perception, on the other; both are skill-based. Semantic externalism reveals a style of skilfully making objects present to thought, namely a style that depends on 'our ability to find our way along . . . a web of people, practices, [and] information repositories' (p. 37). Thirdly, it offers an account of conscious intentionality that does not rely on internal representations. Of course, this third feature will only appeal to those who think that internal representations are problematic (for some of his misgivings about internal representations, see pp. 30 and 31).

One general problem with Noë's presentation is that he focuses on examples of conscious intentionality that fit with his thesis, but does not address a range of possible counterexamples. He focuses on what we might call *active* intentionality, when the intentional object is something we deliberately seek out. For instance, he covers perceptual exploration, thinking deliberately about individual people, and aesthetic appreciation. For these kinds of active intentionality,

Noë indicates the skills that we use in order to gain access to those intentional objects. But now consider cases of *passive* intentionality, in which the intentional object is made present to mind without any deliberate skilful activity from the subject. One kind of passive intentionality would be bodily sensations, such as pain or proprioception. He excludes bodily sensations from his thesis as 'an animal inheritance' (p. 12). But there are other kinds of passive intentionality that pose problems for the thesis. Consider, for example, suddenly smelling something nasty or having an erotic dream. It would be bizarre to describe these passive intentional experiences as skilful achievements, and Noë has offered little reason to think otherwise—he does not address non-bodily cases of passive intentionality. Of course, one option would be to depart from our colloquial understanding of 'skill' and 'achievement' in order to accommodate these cases. The problem with this move is that it stretches the meaning of those terms to the point of trivializing the thesis.

As with much of Noë's previous work, a good bit of the book is devoted to a broad range of topics in the philosophy of perception (especially ch. 3). One main topic is Noë's defence of his earlier claim (2004) that perception is two-dimensional in the sense that we experience both the way things are, the full volume of a tomato, and the way things are from a particular perspective, the way the surface of the tomato appears from one's current point of view. He extends this idea in order to claim that perception does not involve representation of the world, but rather 'contact' with the world. When we see, according to Noë, we make contact with the visual world in a similar manner to the contact we make with objects when we touch or hold them with our hands, or to the contact that a batter in baseball makes with the pitched ball. By replacing internal representations with direct contact, he intends his position to be a version of disjunctivism about perception. Readers will notice that Noë's discussion of perception lacks the incorporation of empirical evidence that marks much of his earlier work on the topic. But it is this lack of attention to empirical results that leads to two possible objections to his view, an objection from perceptual psychology and an objection from neuroscience.

First, the objection from perceptual psychology takes issue with Noë's discussion of how things appear from one's particular perspective. His claim, with strong Gibsonian undertones, is that appearances are determined by facts about the environment along with 'geometrical facts about my spatial relation to [the object]' (p. 61). Noë is a realist about appearances: he maintains that appearances exist independently of perceivers. In a revealing footnote (61n8), he adds that geometry is not sufficient for the experience of perspectival appearances; he adds that one must also not be blind. This footnote is revealing because it is a stunning understatement. True, appearances are partly determined by environmental features and geometrical projection, but, importantly, appearances are also partly determined by the details of the perceptual

mechanisms at work within the particular organism doing the perceiving. Such details may include, for instance, hysteresis effects on binocular fusion (Fender and Julesz 1967), visual adaptation (Hurley 2002), and the neural dynamics of the ganglion cells on the retina (Desbordes and Rucci 2007). Noë is surely aware of the complexities of inner perceptual processing, but it remains an urgent task for the realist about appearances to address exactly why these inner processes are less important than geometrical projection properties.

Secondly, the objection from neuroscience takes issue with Noë's account of our perception of how things are apart from our particular perspective, the perspective-independent voluminous shape of the tomato, for example. Such properties are, according to him, 'present *as absent, but as available to perception through appropriate movement*' (p. 58). Let us accept, along with the Husserlian phenomenological tradition, that he is right with this claim. The trouble enters with his additional assertion that neuroscience can offer no help to explain the experience of properties in this way. He asserts that 'neurons speak only one language, that of the receptive field. And there is no way to say "presence in absence" in the receptive field idiom' (p. 16). The general problem with this claim is that it is too dogmatic for a young discipline such as neuroscience. More specifically, the problem is that there is evidence that neurons also exhibit what is known as 'extra-classical' receptive field effects: neural response *decreases* when the stimulus extends into the receptive fields of neighbouring neurons. Extra-classical effects have been modelled by using predictive coding principles (Rao and Ballard 1999). The basic idea is that the classical receptive field response should be understood as an error signal, as a deviation from what is predicted by the brain. If this idea is on the right track, then the brain could encode 'presence in absence' in the form of counterfactual sensorimotor predictions (Seth 2014). Neurons can, at least in theory, 'say "presence in absence"' (p. 16).

Here is why these two empirically-based objections are important. The central claim of Noë's disjunctivism is that experience is an episode of *contact* with the world, while his representationalist opponents maintain that experience is *about* the world (pp. 64 and 65). The objection from perceptual psychology suggests that perspectival appearances are much more than a matter of making contact with the geometrical properties of the visible world. Those appearances also depend strongly on what is going on inside the body. The objection from neuroscience indicates that our perception of perspective-independent properties could be enabled by counterfactual neural predictions about how those properties would appear from different perspectives. Those neural states can be reasonably described as being *about* the parts of the world that are not currently in view. In brief, the objection from perceptual psychology places pressure on Noë's positive claim that perception is contact with the

world, and the objection from neuroscience places pressure on his negative claim that perception is not about the world.

To end on a positive point, the objection from neuroscience could be used as a remedy for the general worry about passive intentionality expressed above. The remedy requires extending the action of Noë's actionism to include ongoing spontaneous cortical activity. If we allow for this inclusion, then even cases of passive intentionality are only superficially passive: they always occur within the context of the always-active brain. Presence is indeed something that we achieve, if 'we' includes the activity of our living embodied brains.

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Intentionality and the Myths of the Given. By CARL SACHS. (London: Pickering & Chatto (Publishers) Ltd, 2014. Pp. 208. Price £60.)

In his new book *Intentionality and the Myths of the Given*, Carl Sachs offers a new theory of intentionality, one that combines, in a novel and interesting way, ideas from both the so-called analytical and continental traditions. Sachs calls his theory of intentionality a 'bifurcated theory of intentionality' because he posits that there are two types of 'original intentionality': a discursive form of intentionality that applies to items that play a role in the game of giving and asking for reasons (thoughts, sentences, etc.), and a somatic form of intentionality that pertains to one's bodily sensory-motor engagement with the world. To articulate the first form of intentionality, Sachs examines the neo-pragmatic line of thought that runs from C. I. Lewis to Brandom and McDowell via Sellars, and to articulate the second form of intentionality Sachs calls on Merleau-Ponty