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# Can We Naturalize the Perceptual Representation of Relational Colors?



**A talk by**

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**Monday, 13 March 2023**  
**From 12:00 till 14:00**  
**Room 343, Diller Bldg (74)**

Semantic naturalization frameworks, frameworks for grounding mental content in posits amenable to the physical sciences, constitute extremely powerful, popular, unifying paradigms in the philosophies of mind and cognitive science. In this talk, I argue that no naturalization framework accommodates the perceptual representation of the colors as they are conceived on relationalism, as triadic relations between objects, viewing circumstances, and highly specified states of subjects' viewing systems (Cohen, 2004, 2009). Specifically, I argue 1.a) the neural vehicles of perceptual representations do not causally covary with relations that they themselves partly constitute, and 1.b) it is deeply unnatural to think of those vehicles as carrying information about themselves; and 2) the prospects of finding a similarity space of the relational colors, one which might bear an exploitable structural resemblance with a similarity space of the vehicles of color content, are not good: if the constituent structure of relational colors is an appropriate basis off of which to read the diversity of relational colors, then relational colors differ in far more ways than do the vehicles of color content. The poor fit of relationalism with semantic naturalization frameworks is a serious cost of the view in light of the frameworks' status in the philosophies of mind and cognitive science.

If there is time, I hope to sketch how the problem for relationalism runs deeper still. If the relationalist wants to avoid committing to the unexplainability of relational color content, the familiar avenues for non-reductively explaining it look to be unavailable to her too.

