Pretending to See

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There are three distinct projects—ontological, phenomenological, and conceptual—to pursue in the philosophy of perception. They are, however, rarely distinguished. Failure to distinguish them has resulted in their being pursued as one. Their completion then requires that they admit of the same solution, while accommodating the existence of misperception and the scientific facts concerning the perceptual process. The lesson to learn from misperceptions and those facts is, however, that no such common solution is possible, and that the projects must, and can, be pursued separately. Pursuit of the phenomenological and conceptual projects then requires a context in which discourse concerning objects of perception is permitted without ontological commitment to such objects. This is supplied by treating certain uses of perceptual locutions as within a context of pretense.

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1. Three Projects

There are three distinct projects in the philosophy of perception. They are, however, rarely distinguished. Failure to distinguish them has resulted in their being pursued as one; their completion then requires that they admit of the same solution. But they do not. Since they do not, traditional approaches cannot succeed. Once distinguished, we can pursue them separately with greater success.

There is, first, the *ontological* project. This is the attempt to accurately characterize the perceptual process, what it is, what it does, and how it works. There are two general approaches to this project that one might take, the traditional and the naturalistic. They differ in their willingness to incorporate scientific information, the latter being so willing and the former not. The reluctance of the former is due primarily to its emphasis on perception's epistemological role. Adherence to the

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strictures of traditional epistemology requires eschewing scientific doctrine, at least until its credentials are established within the epistemological arena. Since that establishment invokes perceptual experience, scientific information concerning perception cannot be employed. For the naturalist, however, such strictures are misguided, and while perception is obviously crucial in the pursuit of (naturalistic) epistemological inquiry, there is no priority between them; they are independent, albeit highly interrelated, projects. I will without further ado adopt the naturalistic approach.[1]

Second, there is the *phenomenological* project. This is the attempt to accurately characterize what perception seems to be from the point of view of the perceiver. By this I do not mean how things seem to the perceiver in virtue of her perceptual experience, although this is involved. I mean, rather, how the perceptual process itself presents itself to the perceiver. Perception seems to involve the perceiver in a certain relation with her environment. The aim of the phenomenological project is to accurately describe what that relation seems to be like from her point of view, no matter what relation is in fact involved.

Third, there is the *conceptual* project. This is the attempt to accurately analyze the concept of perception and related concepts (seeing, hearing, touching, recognizing, discerning, noticing, and so on). The target of such an analysis is the concept as wielded, not in specialized ways by the philosopher or psychologist, but by the member of the linguistic community at large. It need not be assumed that the target so represented stands in no need of subsequent refinement; but the ordinary use is the place to start.

It is an underlying assumption of much analytic philosophy that pursuit of the third project provides a way to pursue the other two. If the structure of our various perceptual concepts track what perception seems to be, and what it seems to be is what it is, then conceptual analysis provides a window on both the phenomenology and the realities of the perceptual process. But this assumption may well be false. Perhaps our concepts are shaped by pressures other than, or in addition to, conformity to the perceptual facts and phenomenology. Perhaps conceptual structure does track the facts about the perceptual process but misrepresents what perception seems to be. Or perhaps the reverse is true: concepts follows phenomenology but perception is not what it seems, so that conceptual analysis is a way to pursue the second project, but not the first.

This last possibility—that concepts track perceptual phenomenology but not the facts about perception—is, I think, correct. That it is so is the lesson to be learned from the existence of misperceptions[2] as well as from other broadly scientific facts concerning the perceptual process. Indirect realists have famously drawn other conclusions than this from those facts; more on that below. But notice now that if perception is not in fact as it seems to be, then a project of conceptual analysis that is answerable to both perceptual facts and phenomenology cannot be completed. So understood, the significance of illusions and hallucinations has long been identified but not properly interpreted. Theorists continue to attempt to enunciate an account of perception that fulfills all three projects simultaneously while absorbing

the impact of misperceptions and the scientific facts. But the lessons that misperceptions and those facts teach us are that no such common solution is possible, and that the projects must be pursued separately.

2. Transparency

When you visually examine an orange you hold in your hand, the orange seems to participate in your experience in a particularly intimate manner. There is no significant distinction to be drawn between the character of your experience and the character of that portion of the environment that is perceived; a report of the character of your visual experience is identical to a report of the character of (a portion of) your immediate environment. Or so it seems.[3]

This feature of perceptual phenomenology—often called the "transparency" of the relation that the perceiver seems to stand in to the perceived—is widely recognized. There are four characteristics of transparency, variously emphasized in the literature.

First, it is extensional: you cannot see an orange if there is no orange to see. It therefore follows from your seeing an orange that an orange exists. *De re* and demonstrative attitudes are thereby permitted: you think, of *that* orange that you see, that it has a bumpy surface. This is not merely the trivial point that, since 'see' is a success term and therefore only truly applies to veridical cases, it follows that you cannot see what does not exist. The point is rather that in *all* cases—including hallucinatory ones—perceptual experience *seems* to involve the perceiver in an extensional relation to objects, which, as with such relations generally, requires the existence of the object as relatum. (The significance of the fact that there is no such object in hallucinatory cases is explored below.)

Second, it is infallible, in the following sense. Define being "conceptually competent" as having a full grasp of the content and application of the concepts involved in a perceptual judgment. If you were to sincerely make a perceptual judgment that you (clearly) see an orange, then your being incorrect could only be due to conceptual incompetence.[4] As with extensionality, this seeming infallibility is an aspect of perceptual phenomenology and applies to all (including hallucinatory) cases, rather than a trivial consequence of 'see' as a success term.

Third, it is "outward-directed": it is the perceiver's physical environment that is presented to her in experience rather than any aspect of herself. A report of what she sees ('this orange', or 'that there is an orange in my hand') is as a result a judgment concerning a portion of the external environment, identified as that to which she stands in the seeing-relation.

Finally, the perceived object itself is a constitutive element in the perceptual experience. Whether or not the orange is somehow involved in the initiation of the causal process that terminates in the perception of it, it remains "there" at the end in the experience, as an indispensable element in the perceiving.

These are characteristics of the perceptual relation as it *seems* to us *qua* perceivers. It is quite another thing to suggest that how it thereby seems is in fact how it is.

The claim that the phenomenology is in fact accurate—in all perceptual transactions—is *naive* realism. If perceptual concepts follow perceptual phenomenology then conceptual analysis can reveal the true nature of the perceptual process only if naive realism is correct. The naiveté of naive realism is due to the naturalness of taking one's phenomenology—and so the transparency of perception—at face value.

3. The Shock of Illusion

Naive realism—the claim that perception is transparent in all cases—is, however, false. There are two ways to recognize that it is so. The first is due to the existence of misperceptions and ambiguous figures. For if perception were transparent then it would be infallible: a sincere, conceptually competent perceiver could not issue an incorrect judgment concerning her environment. But that is precisely what is possible in illusions and hallucinations: the judgment that the perceiver will make on the basis of the operation of her senses—one who is, of course, unaware of the fact that she is the victim of an illusion or hallucination—will deliver mistaken judgments concerning what is in front of her. The possibility of hallucination in particular[5] implies also that extensionality fails: it does not follow from the fact that she (seems to) see an orange that a (physical) orange exists; there may be no physical object at all that she sees. In at least misperceptions, therefore, perception is not transparent.[6] That is the fundamental lesson of the existence of illusions and hallucinations; and as anyone who has seen the reaction of subjects exposed to illusions for the first time knows, it can be quite a shock.

A similar shock, and corresponding lesson, results from the perception of ambiguous figures, such as the Necker cube, old/young woman, inverted staircase, vase/faces, and other such stock in the perceptual psychologist's trade. Such images are seen as one or the other of two (incompatible) objects, such that the subject (seems to) see one and then the other, in full awareness of the fact that nothing has physically changed in the environment in front of them.

Images that can have such an effect are indeed much older than the perceptual psychologist's ambiguous figures. Any realistic pictorial representation—e.g., an artist's realistic portrayal of a pastoral scene, or a flat piece of stage scenery painted to represent the interior walls of a room—similarly forces the perceiver to become aware of the fact that what is in front of her can be seen both as a flat colored surface and as a three-dimensional environment, without any corresponding physical change.

Perception cannot therefore be extensional. It cannot, for example, follow from the perception of a Necker cube in one of the two orientations that a physical cube in that orientation exists. For only one of the two orientations is physically possible at a time; but the perceiver knows that no physical change took place in front of her (e.g., no reorientation of a physical cube) as would account for her perceptual shift. Therefore at least one of the perceived cubes does not exist. For the same reason, ambiguous figures guarantee that perception cannot be infallible. In general,

such figures force upon the perceiver the recognition that what she sees is a function of more than merely what is in front of her—that it can indeed vary dramatically without the slightest change in her physical environment—in a manner incompatible with the transparency otherwise suggested to her by her perceptual phenomenology.

Naive realism therefore cannot be maintained. There are three desiderata that the remaining options attempt, to various extents and in various ways, to satisfy. First, one would like to respect the phenomenological continuity between veridical perceptions and misperceptions: whatever may actually be the case, the two are, or at least can be, phenomenologically indistinguishable,[7] and it is a virtue of a philosophy of perception to incorporate that fact as much as is possible. Call this the "continuity" desideratum. Second, one would like to respect the phenomenological transparency of perceptual experience, in both veridical perceptions and misperceptions, again as far as is possible. Call this the "transparency" desideratum. Third, one would like to respect the fact that in illusions and hallucinations the object as presented in experience cannot be identified with any physical object in the perceiver's environment. Call this the "nonidentity" desideratum.

4. First Option: Direct Realism

The first option—direct realism—is to claim that perception is transparent, but only in veridical perception. As is often emphasized, however, this requires a dramatically disparate treatment of the veridical and nonveridical cases. In misperceptions direct realists must deny the relation-to-an-object character of perceptual experience. In its stead they typically offer what amounts to an adverbialist account: however phenomenologically similar the two cases might be, in misperceptions there are no objects of which the perceiver is aware; there are only modifications of the perceiver.[8] One transparently perceives a small brown dog in veridical perception, for example, but only small-brown-dogishly in misperception.

Opponents have often tried to argue that this disparate treatment of phenomenologically identical veridical and hallucinatory cases is incoherent. I do not think that it is. But there is a price to pay nevertheless. The direct realist achieves the nonidentity desideratum, and she achieves the transparency desideratum in veridical perception simply by counting it correct in those cases. But she entirely fails to achieve that same desideratum in misperceptions. Most dramatically, she fails to achieve the continuity desideratum, since the analysis of veridical perceptions and misperceptions are entirely different notwithstanding their phenomenological similarity.

I suggested earlier that there are two ways in which the falsehood of naive realism can be recognized. We have to this point been exploring the first, the existence of misperception. The second, however, also counts decisively against direct as well as naive realism. This is to recognize the significance of the scientific facts concerning the perceptual process. Our perceptual experience, in veridical cases, is the product of a causal process in which various forms of energy emanating from or reflected by

objects are transmitted to our sensory receptors and transformed into electro-chemical impulses, leading ultimately to patterns of neural activation within the cortical regions of our brains. We still have a lot to learn about this process; but what we know now is enough to ensure that transparency in these (veridical) cases is false. In that description the orange's surface is no more than a causal antecedent in a process whose ultimate product is our perceptual experience; it is not an ineliminable ingredient in the perceiving.[9] This is dramatically borne out by the fact that you can now perceive a star many light-years distant that expired well before you were born.

A causal process can, moreover, be interrupted, intervened in, mimicked, etc., in such a way that a similar effect can have a very different cause than is usual, one that involves no such object as that with which the perceiver seems to stand in a transparent relation. Veridical perception is therefore neither infallible nor extensional, not because those characteristics are absent in misperceptions, but because the scientific facts pertaining to the perceptual process—facts that cases of misperception merely serve to highlight—ensure their absence even in veridical cases. So understood, it is the scientific facts concerning the perceptual process, not phenomenological continuity, that decisively refutes direct realism.

5. Second and Third Options: Adverbialism and Indirect Realism

The second remaining option is to apply adverbialism to both cases of veridical perception and misperception (see Chisholm, 1977; Tye, 1984, 1989). This satisfies the continuity desideratum, and faces no conflict with scientific information. It also satisfies the nonidentity desideratum: the issue simply does not arise, since no object-as-presented-to-the-perceiver is posited with which a physical object might or might not be identified. But transparency is denied across the board, and no other accommodation whatsoever is made in the analysis for this aspect of the phenomenology. Adverbialism therefore fails to achieve the transparency desideratum.

The final option is indirect realism (for recent examples, see the essays in Maund, 2003; Wright, 1993a). Perception, the indirect realist insists, is not adequately characterized merely as a property, act or state of the perceiver, but also essentially involves a transparent relation between the perceiver and an object or objects of perception.[10] This is typically referred to as the indirect realist's endorsement of the ''act-object'' analysis. But this characterization, while on the right track, allows even the adverbialist to counter that, in at least veridical perception, perception does involve an ''act''—the modifications of the perceiver—in response to an (external physical) object. Endorsement of the act-object analysis on the part of the indirect realist is in addition, I suggest, to the insistence that a transparent relation between perceiver and perceived, as suggested by the phenomenology, does exist.

The difference between the indirect and direct realist is that for the indirect realist the object or objects in question are *never* identical with, although they do represent, objects in the perceiver's physical environment, and that there is *always* an object or

objects to which the perceiver is transparently related, even in cases of misperception. I will refer to these entities as perceptual ''mediators'' because they are taken to mediate the relation between the perceiver and her physical environment. According to the indirect realist, therefore, perception essentially involves two relations: that between the perceiver and her perceptual mediators (variously characterized as 'direct awareness', 'acquaintance', and so on); and that between the mediators and the physical environment ('indirectly seen', 'inferred', 'caused', etc.).

This leaves open how perceptual mediators are to be characterized, excepting whatever characteristics are required in order to constitute representations, an issue which can itself be left open. It also leaves open the nature of the two relationships above between: (a) the perceiver and her perceptual mediators, except to identify it as transparent; and (b) the perceptual mediators and the perceiver's physical environment, except to identify it as representational.

Indirect realism, so characterized, appears to satisfy all three desiderata. It is explicitly designed to satisfy the transparency desideratum in all cases: perceptual phenomenology, in presenting us with objects to which we are transparently related, is in fact accurate across the board. It also satisfies the continuity desideratum, since veridical and misperception cases are analyzed similarly. And it satisfies the nonidentity desideratum: since the objects with which the perceiver stands in a transparent relation are never the physical objects but only mediating representations of them, the absence of a suitable physical object is not a problem.

That indirect realism appears to satisfy all three desiderata where the alternatives do not, is, I suggest, the most sympathetic way to understand (or reconstruct) the argument from illusion. This is not a logically conclusive, knock down version of the argument as some have suggested is available; fortunately not, because I doubt that such an argument can be successfully made out.[11] It does, however, emphasize what the indirect realist always intended to emphasize: her position seems to involve the least departure from what perception is pretheoretically like, while accommodating the existence of misperception and the scientific facts concerning the perceptual process.

6. The Price of Indirect Realism

The departure is, however, much greater than this argument would suggest. The problem that misperception raises is not just that it seems to the perceiver as though there is an object of some sort or other of which she is transparently aware when in fact there is no such object. It is that it seems to the perceiver as though there is, e.g., a barking terrier straining on its tether in its attempt to reach the perceiver mere inches away from its nose, when in fact there is no such dog (or tether or barking). But the indirect realist is not likely to suggest that the intermediary representing object, in either veridical perception or misperception, is itself a terrier straining to reach the perceiver mere inches from its nose.

   Of course a representation need not resemble the objects it (putatively) represents. (See Maund, 1993, for discussion of the notion of resemblance in indirect realism.) Text, for example, represents objects without resembling them. There is, therefore, no need to think of perceptual representations as "like" the objects they represent.

   But this misses the point. Whatever mediators the indirect realist will postulate as representations, they are bound to be very different from the objects which experience seems to transparently present to us. Little of the actual character of the objects apparently presented in misperception is typically ratified by the indirect realist beyond the bare fact of there being *an* object (at best—there is in fact no reason to think that the number of mediators will correspond to the number of apparently seen objects). Indeed, the relation between the objects of misperception and the objects in one's physical environment seems less like the relation between, say, George W. Bush and his name, and more akin to the relation that might hold between, say, two dogs: the dog of perception *does* seem to resemble the dog "out there" (if there is one) to a greater or lesser extent, in much the way that one dog might resemble another, to a greater or lesser extent.[12]

   So the indirect realist is in no position to chastise the direct realist or the adverbialist for failing to satisfy the transparency desideratum. The indirect realist is in fact caught in a dilemma. She hopes to achieve the transparency desideratum by straightforwardly endorsing it: there are indeed objects to which we stand in a transparent relation. It is just that they are not the physical objects that the naive realist suggests that they are. But were she to endorse the various characteristics that we seem, transparently, to discern in the object of which we are directly aware, she will end up with an absurd ontology of, for example, nonphysical barking terriers straining on tethers. Insofar, however, as she refuses to ascribe those characteristics in the interest of avoiding ontological absurdity, to that extent she fails to achieve the very transparency desideratum whose satisfaction is supposed to be the advantage of indirect realism over its competitors. Indirect realism then looks no more attractive in the face of misperceptions and the scientific facts than do the alternatives. The problem of illusion is everyone's problem.

7. Distinguishing Projects

The indirect realist and the adverbialist, in their different ways, both acknowledge the significance of the existence of misperceptions and the scientific facts concerning the perceptual process, namely, that perceiving is not transparent. The adverbialist takes that lesson to heart and steadfastly refuses to incorporate the "act-object" character of the phenomenology in any way into her account. The indirect realist, sympathetic to that character, tries to articulate an ontology that incorporates it in a manner consonant with those facts. But both views seem inadequate, the former in virtue of its blatant disregard for the phenomenology, and the latter in virtue of the unsightly ontological contortions that result.

But once we recognize the distinction between the ontological and phenomeno-logical (and conceptual) projects, we are in a position to acknowledge the virtues of both views while avoiding their vices. Phenomenologically, the correct view is (not indirect but) naive realism: perception presents itself as placing us in transparent relations with our surrounding physical environment. But ontologically, the correct view is adverbialism: there is in fact nothing more to the perceptual process than modifications of the perceiver in causal response to her external environment. Once the projects are distinguished, and it is recognized that correspondence between perceptual phenomenology and ontology is a contingent matter, and moreover that the facts indicate that they do not correspond, there is then no temptation to attempt either the divide-and-conquer strategy of the direct realist or the uncomfortable compromise of the indirect realist. Nor is there any need to suggest that adverbialism, in addition to being ontologically correct, is also an adequate basis for the characterization of either perceptual phenomenology or perceptual concepts.[13]

This does, however, leave it open how the relevant concepts are to be characterized if adverbialism—notwithstanding the conceptual/linguistic implications of its very name—is inadequate to the conceptual project. Moreover, if we can find no way to characterize perceptual phenomenology except by reference to transparently discerned objects in both veridical perception and misperception, then we will find ourselves invoking the very ontology that the indirect realist endorses, albeit for different reasons. The way out, paradoxically, is to recognize that our most fundamental perceptual concepts are those of the naive realist, but then to recognize that there is a way to wield them without incurring ontological commitment. The way in question is the invocation of the context of pretense.

8. Pretense

> To put the point summarily, whereas Ayer says we take a step beyond our sensible experience in making our perceptual judgements, I say rather that we take a step back (in general) from our perceptual judgements in framing accounts of our sensible experience; for we have (in general) to include a reference to the former in framing a veridical description of the latter. (Strawson, 1988, p. 97)

Strawson and others have noticed that, while the epistemological order might run from one's experience to the physical world that one experiences, the conceptual order is reversed. Even if my sole intention is to provide an "inward" characterization of the experiential aspects of my mental life, I find it irresistible to behave as though I am attempting to convey "outward" information about my physical environment. I might say when queried by a perceptual psychologist that "I see a rotating cube five feet in front of me" or even "There's a rotating cube just there" while pointing in some direction, with utter disregard as to whether there really is a suitable cube appropriately located, solely as a means to convey the character of my perceptual experience. How are we to understand this paradoxical

employment of outward-directed conceptual resources in the service of an inward characterization of our experiential life?

Imagine an idyllic prehistory in which illusion and hallucination are unknown and so in which perception is invariably veridical. The instruction to "describe what you see"—issued from tribal leader to lookout upon the hill—would, under such circumstances, be the demand that the lookout describe her surroundings. When the lookout responds "I see a herd of antelope gallop across the plain," what she says implies that a herd of antelope does so gallop and concerns only them. Leader and lookout would have no inclination to think of the objects seen as anything other than the antelopes themselves, or to think of the lookout as intending to report anything concerning her state of mind.

But a tribal member, returning from long travels to distant lands, attempts to describe his encounter with a mirror. Imagine his quandary. "I saw another man, impudently standing close and staring back at me; and yet, I did not see such a man, for there was no man there. He was just like me (but wearing his bracelet upon the wrong arm); and yet he was not like me, because he *was* not." The tribe scoffs; they tell him that he says one thing and then takes it back in the very next breath. But then, from the satchel slung across his back, he pulls out a small mirror given him to secure the honor of his words . . . .

How, with the conceptual resources available to them—concepts that presuppose the transparency of perception—could the tribe find a way to adapt to their loss of perceptual innocence? Although they had never encountered a seeing of what is not, they did share tales of what is not; and their children knew what it was to play games, pretending what is not. And they knew that, sometimes, they could share what is by saying or pretending what is not ("the fishing boat is in the bottom of the 'cup' of the lagoon"); and that, sometimes, there seems to be no better way ("time is a river that flows slowly in youth but swiftly in old age").

Some time later, the tribal leader again instructs his lookout to describe what she sees. "I see a herd of antelope gallop across the plain," the lookout replies. "But," she adds, "perhaps they only gallop within me." The leader understands.

I suggest that this fiction is not entirely fictional; it maps, not a temporal order, but a conceptual one. The locutions of perception—seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching—specify relations with the characteristics of transparency described above.

Misperceptions and ambiguous figures, however, both force recognition of the independence of perceptual experience from the surrounding environment involved in its production, and require employment of these locutions in ways that direct them inward, toward the characterization of the perceiver's state of mind and without regard to their outward success. This is, I suggest, achieved by employing them in a context of pretense, structured by the supposition that one *is* transparently seeing, but where the objects one thereby transparently sees are of a world distinct from the world of the perceiver's physical surroundings.

To use the outward-oriented perceptual locutions for this inward-oriented purpose constitutes an instance of what Kendall Walton (1990, 1993) calls "prop-oriented" games of make-believe.[14] Props are features of the world that play

a role in determining what, according to such a game, is to be imagined. We might, for example, play a game of make-believe in which tree stumps are bears; coming across one in our path, we might then appropriately flee. The use of props in games of make-believe allows aspects of the world to have a hand in shaping the "story"; what we are directed to imagine is a product of the combined effect of the generating principles of the game (such as that stumps are to be imagined as bears) and the world itself (the location of stumps).

Props are typically used to enhance enjoyment of the game. What is "fictional" in the game—what one is to imagine in accordance with the game's generating principles—is not entirely in the players' hands, and this lends the game a more objective, "real-life" quality. But sometimes the game is played only in order to learn more, or convey information about, the props themselves.

> 'Where in Italy is the town of Crotone?' I ask. You explain that it is the arch of the Italian boot. 'See that thundercloud over there—the big, angry face near the horizon', you say . . . We speak of the saddle of a mountain and the shoulder of a highway . . . All of these cases are linked to make-believe . . . The cloud is a prop which makes it fictional that there is an angry face . . . But our interest, in these instances, is not in the make-believe itself, and it is not for the sake of games of make-believe that we regard these things as props . . . [The game] is useful for articulating, remembering, and communicating facts about the props—about the geography of Italy or the identity of the storm cloud. (Walton, 1993, pp. 40–41)

Typically the information thereby communicated can be conveyed more literally.[15] But in some cases the make-believe is unavoidable, there being no conceptual resources available to literally represent the relevant information concerning the props. (It is difficult to see how the passage of time, for example, can be literally represented without stripping it of characteristics that distinguish time from other dimensions as does, for example, graphical representation). Call these "representationally essential" games of make-believe,[16] essential in that there is no available way to characterize the prop (or the features of the prop of interest) except from within the make-believe game.

The use of perceptual locutions, when used not in the outward-oriented characterization of the perceiver's physical environment, but in the inward-oriented characterization of the perceiver's perceptual experience, are, I suggest, employed in a representationally essential prop-oriented game of make-believe. The prop is the course of modifications in the perceiver as she lives her experiential life, which admits of characterization only within the game of make-believe generated by the principle that the perceiver transparently sees a world whose characteristics she describes, and which may or may not resemble the world of her physical environment in various respects.

Consider again the perceptual psychologist's instruction to her subject to "describe what you see." The psychologist is not, of course, asking for her subject's *opinion* as to what object is really in front of her; it would be an ill-prepared subject who responds, "I don't see anything, of course, except this screen you put in front of my face." The physical reality of the object perceived is "bracketed." But the subject has

no recourse except to describe her experiences as though she *were* attempting to characterize her immediate environment, that she sees, e.g., a rotating cube a few feet away. The psychologist understands that this is not her intent, that she conveys information concerning her perceptual experience by engaging in the pretense that she transparently sees a distinct reality and is describing what she thereby discerns within it. And the psychologist joins the game when she asks her subject to tell her "how far away from her the cube is." None of this is incoherent; it is saved from incoherence by the protective context of pretense.

That the game is representationally essential is made particularly clear in the experience of ambiguous objects. As N. R. Hanson (1958, 1965) pointed out long ago, the perceiver is not aware of any "theory-neutral" sense-data over which she proceeds to lay one interpretation after another as her experience shifts back and forth. She just sees a cube in one orientation and then another, one staircase and then another, a vase then faces, and so on, and has no choice but to describe her experience except as of one, and then the other, physical circumstance, notwithstanding her simultaneous awareness of the fact that nothing physically has changed.

Were she to attempt to provide a neutral description—as of a two-dimensional visual spread populated by fluid color expanses as once postulated by sense-datum theorists, for example—she would find herself, not really describing theory-neutral sense-data, but pretending to describe yet another physical environment, one in which there is a screen at some (indeterminate) distance from her upon which a colorful dance of shapes is being played. (This is so whether or not she is accurately representing her perceptual experience—it really does seem to her as though she is confronted by such a screen—or whether she is forced to fit her experience into such a two-dimensional tale in conformity with her philosophical commitments.) Perceptual experience can only be described indirectly—as of an external physical environment to which the perceiver is transparently related—the usual implications of which description are short-circuited by the context of pretense.

9. Advantages

We are now able to speak of the objects of misperception with the indirect realist without believing in such things. Within the context of pretense, the objects seen do indeed have the ordinary characteristics that they seem to have, rather than the amalgam of characteristics that the indirect realist, beholden to the true ontological facts as well as the character of perceptual phenomenology, is forced to ascribe to her mediators. And within the context of pretense, extensionality is preserved; if you see a rotating cube, then it follows—in the pretense—that there exists a rotating cube that you see, just as the fact that Sherlock Holmes lives at 221B Baker Street implies—in the Holmes stories—that someone lives at that address.

We are also able to speak of the perceptual objects' resemblance to the objects in the perceiver's physical environment, which the indirect realist cannot do.

(Neither, of course, can the adverbialist.) When we say that Sherlock Holmes is a more astute investigator than any flesh-and-blood member of Scotland Yard, we continue the make-believe game of the Holmes stories by integrating them with characteristics of the world in order to communicate information, in this case, concerning real British investigators.[17] Similarly, I can communicate the character of my perceptual error by reporting that the moon that I see is smaller and closer than the real moon, although resembling it in other respects. Doing so is also unavoidable: just as we cannot characterize our experience except as of an environment populated with the objects seen, we cannot characterize the ways in which our perceptual experience misrepresents except in terms of the resemblance (or failure thereof) between those objects and the objects of our physical environment.

But none of this commits us to real resemblance relations. I do not commit myself to a small moon nearby in addition to the real large, distant one, or to any actual resemblance-relation holding between any aspect of my perceptual experience and any aspect of the real world. It is fictional that these resemblance relations (or failures thereof) hold: my experience and the physical moon's characteristics together license the assertion in the game that these resemblance-relations hold, or fail to hold, just as the text of Arthur Conan Doyle's books together with the less-than-spectacular abilities of real British detectives license the comparative comment of earlier. None of this commits us to Holmes' existence, or to that of the small nearby moon.

Finally, we have an explanation for why—in full awareness of the fact that we are describing, not our external environment, but our perceptual state—we perversely persist in speaking as though we were doing the former. For that is precisely what we should do if what we are doing is indirectly characterizing that experience by treating it as a prop in a pretense structured by the principle that perception is transparent and guiding our assertions accordingly. Our conceptual repertoire continues to follow the transparency of perceptual phenomenology, even when we are fully aware that that phenomenology is misleading, and when we are attempting to convey information concerning our end of the perceptual transaction rather than the world in front of our eyes. The phenomenological project can therefore safely be completed independently of the ontological project, and without threat of an unwitting return to indirect realism.

It is important to recognize that the claim is not that perceivers are pretending when they describe what they see. In most cases, the perceiver's concern precisely *is* to describe her external environment; her report should be taken accordingly as correct or incorrect insofar as that description matches the environment in front of her and involves no pretense on her (or our) part, whether or not the perception is veridical. But there *are* cases in which the perceiver cannot be taken to be attempting to describe her environment—recall the example of the subject of the psychology experiment who is "describing what she sees"—and which can be coherently characterized as employing such a pretense. And when we (theorists of perception) attempt to complete the phenomenological project, we are able to employ that context in characterizing perceptual experience and its relation to the

perceiver's environment, without taking on untoward ontological commitments, and without commitment to the successful completion of an adverbialist rendering of perceptual phenomenology.[18]

Notes

[1] An argument for doing so is *ipso facto* an argument for naturalism in general, which would take us much too far afield.

[2] Included in the category of misperceptions are both illusions and hallucinations.

[3] "Intuitively, the surfaces you see directly are publicly observable physical surfaces. In seeing these surfaces, you are immediately and directly aware of a whole host of qualities ... you experience them as being qualities of surfaces" (Tye, 2000, p. 46); "Look at a tree and try to turn your attention to intrinsic features of your visual experience. I predict you will find that the only features there to turn your attention to will be features of the presented tree, including relational features of the tree 'from here'" (Harman, 1997, p. 667).

[4] I put aside here cases of very dim light, dense fog, etc., in which it does not *clearly* seem to the perceiver that there is an orange in full view.

[5] 'Illusion' and 'hallucination' are quasi-technical terms in the philosophy of perception, wherein the former requires a real object whose characteristics are misperceived, and the latter requires that no such object as perceived exists. In ordinary parlance, the distinction turns more on the explanation for the perceptual error—whether it be 'internal' or 'external'—than on the object's existence. Rainbow-spottings are not thought of as hallucinations, nonexistent though rainbows be, since the cause—refraction of light through water-droplets—is external. And seeing the fur on one's cat as green-and-red checked due to hallucinogenic drug use constitutes an hallucination, notwithstanding the role played by the cat in the production of the hallucination.

[6] Or at least, not transparent vis-à-vis the physical objects with which the perceiver seems to be presented.

[7] Not everyone agrees with this; see Austin (1962, p. 49). But I agree with, for example, Maund (2003) that the causal facts concerning perception ensure that it is at least possible to produce the same experiential effect from causes that are sufficiently unusual that the result would be a misperception that is phenomenologically indistinguishable from a given veridical perception.

[8] See, e.g., Dancy (1985, p. 170). A. D. Smith (2002), however, does not appeal to an adverbial analysis in order to accommodate misperceptions. Instead he posits ordinary objects for misperceptions as well. The ordinary objects of misperception—in particular, of hallucination—do not exist; but they remain the "intentional" objects of perception nonetheless. This position is sufficiently Meinongian (notwithstanding his insistence that such a characterization is uncharitable) as to be as unattractive a position as any of the alternatives.

[9] This is not to say that *perception* is the causal product of this process. The term 'perception' might reasonably be reserved, as, for example, Johnston (2004) suggests, for the entire process from object to brain. But perceptual *experience*—what Johnston characterizes as of a "sensible profile"—is the end product of that process.

[10] The "New Representationalists," according to Wright (1993b), believe that the observer is not faced with discrete entities but with a unitary "field from which entities are selected" (p. 2). As the title of Wright's book indicates, indirect realism is sometimes referred to as 'representationalism'. The terminology is unfortunate in that it threatens to conflate a very general, widely endorsed doctrine—that perception is representational—with one that

is far more specific and contentious. I will for that reason avoid the term entirely and use 'indirect realism' to identify the more specific position.

[11] As does Maund, an advocate of the argument, for whom indirect realism provides the best explanatory account; see Maund (2003).

[12] It would not, of course, help matters to suggest either that the dog of one's perception only looks like (or unlike) the real dog, or that the representation only resembles in the way a picture resembles a scene. The former invites the question what *it* is that looks like (or unlike) the real dog; the latter leads to a familiar (and vicious) regress.

[13] Criticisms of adverbialism (e.g., Jackson, 1976) that presuppose that it is adequate for this purpose are therefore beside the point.

[14] See Walton (1990) for his account of make-believe and the arts and Walton (1993) for discussion of prop-oriented games of make-believe. Application of Walton's account to various philosophical conundrums has become quite popular. See Evans (1982) and Walton (1990) for application to the problem of non-being; Crimmins (1998) for application to the identity "relation" and to attitude ascriptions; Yablo (1996) for application to possible worlds; and Woodbridge (2005) for application to the concept of truth. Evans (1982) also anticipates application of Walton's view to misperceptions, although there are some differences in both detail and application between Evans' application and that presented here.

[15] One would, however, be hard put to enunciate a literal alternative to the cloud's angry face.

[16] Following Stephen Yablo (1998). See that article for discussion of various ways in which such games of make-believe are representationally essential.

[17] These games are, in Walton's terminology, "unofficial." See Walton (1990, pp. 405–411).

[18] A. D. Smith (2002) discusses Gareth Evans' application of Walton's views to perception, and argues against it. The argument he presents turns on the fact that, within Evans' semantics, the existential predicate can be applied outside of the context of pretense, albeit as one that trivially applies to everything. Smith's concern is that Evans must, and does, allow for two different assertions that have the form, for example, of 'That little green man exists', one that employs the existential predicate outside of a pretense context and one that employs it within such a context. Smith claims that this duality is psychologically implausible. I do not think that it is as implausible as does Smith, but even if it is, Walton (1990) does not follow Evans in affirming a pretense-free use of the existential predicate. The problem that Smith identifies does not therefore apply to an account that follows Walton more closely than does Evans.

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