

Philosophy 136
The Philosophy of Perception
Handout 3
Thursday, 8 September 2005

1. *Philosophical Accounts of Direct/Indirect and Immediate/Mediate*

(A) *Direct Perception as Perception without Inference*

x directly perceives y iff x perceives y without inference

(cf. the quotations from Descartes and Berkeley)

Are we concerned with *objects* of perception or *facts* perceived?

(i) Mary saw the china dog

(ii) Jane could see that the china dog was to the left of the Barbie doll

What is the connection between *object* and *fact* perception?

In general there is no one fact which one must perceive to be the case concerning an object in order to perceive the object (contrast the claim: one must perceive some fact or other about an object in order to perceive it with the claim that there is a fact, that an object is in a certain location (say) which one must perceive to be the case whenever one perceives the object).

Likewise one can perceive that a fact obtains concerning an object without necessarily perceiving the object.

One may see an object and see that something is true concerning it without inference but know something else only as the result of inference.

If we define the direct/indirect distinction for the *objects* of perception, we cannot define it directly in terms of what facts we do or do not perceive.

Secondly, if direct perception is supposed to give us an advantage with respect to knowledge or justification this should be a *consequence* of direct perception, not definitional of it.

Thirdly: suppose we consider the claim that the immediate objects of perception are those which are wholly or totally known through perception, what would justify the supposition that there are any immediate?

The ordinary objects of perception can be perceived while also being misperceived, so not all aspects of an ordinary object need be known for the object to be perceived. Why should we think that there are any objects which are only perceived through one knowing everything about them?

2. *Immediate Perception and Perceiving x in virtue of perceiving y*

... x is a *mediate object of (visual) perception* (for S at t) iff S sees x at t , and there is a y such that ($x \neq y$ and) S sees x in virtue of seeing y . An *immediate object of perception* is one that is not mediate; and we can define the relation of *immediately perceiving* thus: S immediately perceives x at t iff x is an immediate object of perception for S at t ... (F. Jackson, *Perception: A Representative Theory*, pp.19-20.)

a.) what does 'in virtue of' mean here?

Some other examples:

(iii) John broke the law *in virtue of* poisoning the vicar's cup of tea

(iv) Scott is located in the United Kingdom *in virtue of* being located in London

(v) Rosemary is taller than Geraldine *in virtue of* Rosemary being five foot eleven inches and Geraldine being five foot ten inches

In all of these cases there seems to be a *non-causal* connection between facts—the holding of one fact is constituted, or non-causally depends, on the obtaining of another fact.

Contrast:

(vi) The window broke in virtue of the hardness of the ball

Jackson's definition is looking for a non-causal and constitutive connection between seeing one thing and seeing another.

Note that Jackson tries to explain it in terms of definition. But this is too restrictive—there is no definition which can give of breaking the law which shows why poisoning is definitionally a way of breaking the law.

Jackson's idea is that we think that we perceive some objects in virtue of having perceived distinct objects. The immediate objects of perception are those we simply perceive; the mediate objects of perception are those perceived in virtue of perceiving something else.

b.) Applying the definition

Jackson's definition is well-formed. But we can apply it to the world only if we can find cases of perceiving some things in virtue of perceiving others. Are there such cases?

Cf. again:

We commonly see things in virtue of seeing *other* things: I see the aircraft flying overhead in virtue of seeing its underside (and the aircraft is not identical with its underside); I see the table I am writing on in virtue of seeing its top; I first see England on the cross-channel ferry in virtue of seeing the white cliffs of Dover... (F. Jackson, *Perception*, p.19.)

Is it so obvious that this is so?

One may claim that you see the table's surface by seeing the table – Jackson denies that this is so. Or you may claim that you see the table, you also see the surface, but that there is no constitutive link between the two. How would one have gone wrong?

To put this in perspective consider one of Jackson's other examples of constitutive connections – between being in one location and being in another.

3. *The Basis of Location*

Suppose I grant i.) Scott is located in London; ii.) Scott is located in Britain; iii.) London is in Britain, but *deny* iv.) (ii) holds in virtue of (i). Can we show that I have gone wrong, and where I have gone wrong?

(A*) ... x is a *mediately* located at t in region $R1$ iff x is located in region $R1$ at t , and there is a region $R2$ such that ($R1 \neq R2$ and) x is located in $R1$ in virtue of being located in $R2$. An *immediate location of an object* is one that is not mediate; and we can define the relation of *being immediately located in* thus: x is immediately located in R at t iff x is immediately located in R at t ...

(A1) x completely occupies a region R iff x excludes all other material objects entirely distinct from x from all parts of R

(A2) x is located in a region R^* if x completely occupies some region R which is partly/wholly enclosed within R^* [and R and R^* are C -related]

(A1) and (A2) help explain our commitment to (A*). Someone who does not deny any of the basic facts about Scott's location in London and the location of London in Britain would seem to be disputing one of these principles. Can we appeal to similar principles in the case of immediate and mediate perception?

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