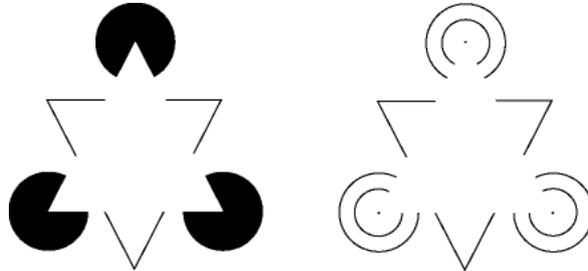


Perception 4

1. *The Argument from Illusion and the Argument from Hallucination*

Perceptual illusion: one perceives some object yet misperceives it to be some way

Perceptual hallucination: how things appear to one is not how one perceives one's physical, public environment to be.



Kanisza Illusion

Note that in this diagram there are illusory objects (the white triangles) but we don't suppose that these illusions are hallucinatory, even though there is no object in the environment which matches how things look to one.

The argument from illusion or hallucination needs to establish:

- (a) in some significant kind of case, the subject is not (immediately) perceiving any physical object; and
- (b) if the subject is not (immediately) perceiving any physical object in situation (a) then the subject is not (immediately) perceiving any physical object in any situation.

Criticisms of the argument from illusion often focus on (a). Why should the fact that you are misperceiving an object be reason to suppose that you are perceiving something else entirely?

The importance of focusing on cases of hallucination, therefore, is that typically we accept that in those cases (a) holds. The question, then, is whether we can show that (b) must hold.

2. *Three Assumptions*

- (A) Naïve Realism: No instance of the specific kind of experience I have now, when seeing the white picket fence for what it is, could occur were I not to perceive such a mind-independent object as this.
- (B) Common Kind Assumption: whatever kind of mental, or more narrowly experiential, event occurs when one perceives, the very same kind of event could occur were one hallucinating.
- (C) Experiential Naturalism: our sense experiences are themselves part of the natural causal order, subject to broadly physical and psychological causes.

3. *An Argument from Hallucination*

- (1) *S* sees a table in front of her, at that time she is thereby having a sensory experience *V*
- (2) Corresponding to *S*'s veridical perception, *V*, it is possible to produce a perfectly matching hallucination, *V**, which is produced in *S* solely through appropriate local neural causes in *S*'s brain;
- (3) Any object of awareness (i.e. that *S* is related to) in having *V** must be constitutively dependent on *S*'s awareness of it through having *V**.
[That is: *either* there is *no* object of awareness for *V** or the object of awareness is dependent on *V**.]
- (4) Whatever kind of experience *S* has when veridically perceiving, say when *S* has *V*, the very same kind of experience could occur were *S* not perceiving but hallucinating
- (5) *V** is the same kind of experience as *V*
- (6) If *V** is not a relation to any mind-independent object of awareness, then *V* is not intrinsically a relation to any mind-independent object of awareness
[That is: *either* *V* is not intrinsically a relation to any object or *V* is a relation to a mind-dependent object of awareness.]

So, *S*'s sensory experience *V* is *not* intrinsically both i.) a relation to something and ii.) a relation to a mind-independent object.

Considered this way the argument from hallucination presents a *reductio* of what we have called 'naïve realism'. It does not establish the truth of *either* a sense-datum view or a so-called intentional theory of perception. (We can see the sense-datum view as rejecting (ii) above but

holding on to (i) and the intentional approach as rejecting (i) but holding on to something like (ii.)

4. Disjunctivism about Perception

(A \vee B) Either I see a flash of light, or I have the illusion of a flash of light. (JM Hinton, 'Visual Experiences', *Mind*, 1967, p.217.)

Even if few things are certain, it is certain that there are what I shall call perception-illusion disjunctions: sentences or statements like 'Macbeth perceives a dagger or is having that illusion', which you can compose by adding words like '...or x is having that illusion' to a sentence which says that a particular person, x , perceives a thing of some particular kind. (JM Hinton, *Experiences*, p.37.)

It looks to S as if there is an F : (there is something which looks to S to be F) or (it is to S as if there is something which looks to him (S) to be F). (PF Snowdon, 'Perception, Vision & Causation', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1980-1, p.202.)

...an appearance that such-and-such is the case can be either a mere appearance or the fact made manifest to someone... the object of experience in the deceptive cases is a mere appearance. But we are not to accept that in the non-deceptive cases too the object of experience is a mere appearance, and hence something that falls short of the fact itself... appearances are no longer conceived as intervening between the experiencing subject and the world. (J McDowell, 'Criteria, Defeasibility & Knowledge', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1982, pp.386-7.)

Three Commitments of Disjunctivism:

- (I) No instance of the specific kind of experience I have now, when seeing the white picket fence for what it is, could occur were I not to perceive such a mind-independent object as this.
- (II) The notion of a visual experience of a white picket fence is that of a situation being indiscriminable through reflection from a veridical visual perception of a white picket fence as what it is.
- (III) For certain visual experiences as of a white picket fence, namely causally matching hallucinations, there is no more to the phenomenal character of such experiences than that of being indiscriminable from corresponding visual perceptions of a white picket fence as what it is.

Indiscriminability

S discriminates a from $b \Rightarrow S$ tells a apart from $b \Rightarrow S$ manifests knowledge of a and of b that the one is not identical with the other

S discriminates a from an $F \Rightarrow S$ tells apart a from the F s $\Rightarrow S$ manifests knowledge of a that it is not an F

a is indiscriminable through reflection from an $F \Rightarrow$ reflection is not a way of coming to know that a is not an F
 F^* = the kind of things indiscriminable by reflection from being an F

If there is such a kind as F^* , all F s are F^* s

FURTHER READING

Jonathan Dancy, 'Arguments from Illusion', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 1995

Alan Millar, 'The Idea of Experience', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1996

Scott Sturgeon, 'Visual Experience', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1998

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