

Philosophy 136
The Philosophy of Perception
Mid-Term Questions
Distributed 4 October 2005
ESSAYS DUE: THURSDAY 20 OCTOBER 2005

You should use one of the following questions to write a four-paged double-spaced essay.
Reminder: my office hours are *Thursdays* 2.30-4pm Moses 134.

1. In what sense can I be said to see the aircraft *in virtue of* seeing its underside? Do I really *only* see the aircraft in this way?

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.)

2. Why does Clarke deny normally we see an object only by seeing a part of the object? Is he right to deny this?

The 'HM fact' [the fact that normally we can see no more of a physical object than part of its surface] is not a fact. 'Noting' this 'fact' alters the original situation...producing one in which it is true that all that can be seen of the physical object is a portion of its surface. (Thompson Clarke, 'Seeing Surfaces and Physical Objects', p. 112.)

3. What conclusions is Hume trying to draw here? What arguments does he offer (or could he be taken to be offering) for these conclusions? Do you think his argument is sound?

But this universal and primary opinion of all men is soon destroyed by the slightest philosophy, which teaches us, that nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception, and that the senses are only the inlets through which these images are conveyed, without being able to produce any immediate intercourse between the mind and the object. The table, which we see, seems to diminish, as we remove farther from it: but the real table suffers no alteration: it, was, therefore, nothing, but its image, which was present to the mind. These are the obvious dictates of reason; and no man, who reflects, ever doubted, that the existences which we consider, when we say, *this house* and *that tree*, are nothing but perceptions in the mind, and fleeting copies or representations of other existences, which remain uniform and independent. (D Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, pp.151-2)

4. What does Anscombe mean by talk of 'intentional objects'? Are intentional objects a special kind of entity? If not what are they?

I will introduce the phrase "intentional object" to mean "object" in the older sense which still occurs in the "object of desire"... an intentional verb [is] a verb taking an intentional object (Anscombe, "The Intentionality of Sensation", (p.56)

5. How does Foster argue for the claim that we are not directly aware of physical objects? What is Austin's challenge to the sense-datum argument? Does Foster avoid that challenge?

When we consider the possibility of artificially inducing perceptual experiences by electrical stimulation of the subject's nervous system, it seems impossible to deny that, for each genuine perception i.e. for each perception of a physical object, there could be a hallucinatory experience of

exactly the same intrinsic psychological character. If this is so, then whenever someone perceives a physical object, his experiential state is, in itself, logically neutral between genuine perception and hallucination, and his perceptual awareness of the physical object is mediated by this experiential state... (Foster, *A.J. Ayer*, p.161)

But if we are prepared to admit that there may be, even that there are, *some* cases in which 'delusive and veridical perceptions' really are indistinguishable, does this admission require us to drag in, or even let in sense-data? No. For even if we were to make the prior admission (which we have so far found no reason to make) that in the 'abnormal' cases we perceive sense-data, we should not be obliged to extend this admission to the 'normal' cases too. For why on earth should it *not* be the case that, in some few instances, perceiving one sort of thing is exactly like perceiving another? (J.L. Austin, *Sense & Sensibilia*, p.52.)