

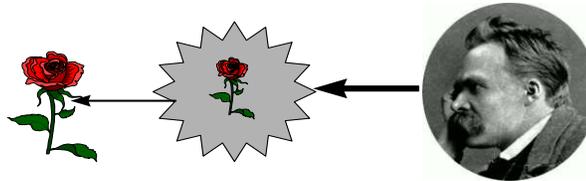
Philosophy 136
The Philosophy of Perception
Handout 18
Tuesday 1 November 2005

1. Intentional Approaches to Perception

The intentionality of perceptual experience which is to explain what is lacking in the sense-datum theory. How should it do that?

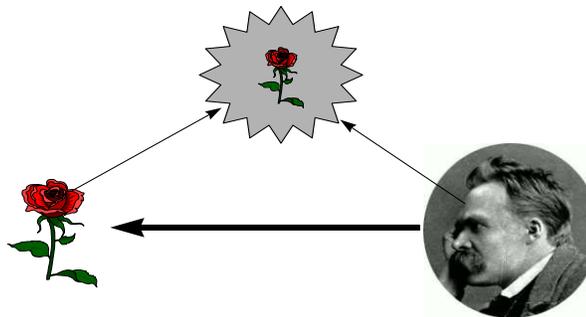
The Sense-Datum Model

Nietzsche is aware of the sense-datum of the rose and through being aware of the sense-datum is aware of the rose



The Intentional Model

Nietzsche is aware of the rose in virtue of how his experience represents his environment to be.



One is aware of the objects of perception in virtue of how one's experience represents the world to be, but one's experience could represent the world to be that way even if the objects were not there. The presence of the content in both perception and hallucination explains their common character. But one is aware of the objects of perception *immediately*—one is not aware of them through being aware of the content.

Does the intentional approach respect this claim?

Standing on the beach in Santa Barbara a couple of summers ago on a bright, sunny day, I found myself transfixed by the intense blue of the Pacific Ocean. Was I not here delighting in the phenomenal aspects of my visual experience? And if I was, doesn't this show that there are visual qualia?

I am not convinced... I experienced blue as a property of the ocean not as a property of my experience. My experience itself certainly wasn't blue. Rather it was an experience that represented the ocean as blue. What I was really delighting in, then, were specific aspects of the content of my experience. It was the content, not anything else, that was immediately accessible to my consciousness and that had aspects that were so pleasing... (Michael Tye, 'Visual Qualia and Visual Content', in T. Crane, ed., *The Contents of Experience*, p. 160.)

Compare this again with the Harman:

None of them are experienced as intrinsic features of her experience. Nor does she experience any features of anything as intrinsic features of her experience. And that is true of you too. There is nothing special about Eloise's visual experience. When you see a tree, you do not experience any

features as intrinsic features of your experience. 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...(Harman, 'The Intrinsic Quality of Experience', p.39.)

Tye, like Harman, denies that introspection reveals awareness of 'intrinsic features'. *But* he also claims that 'the content' of one's experience is 'immediately accessible' to consciousness. What does that mean?

Content as *propositional* content – what is expressed by a declarative sentence – *versus* content of consciousness – what is before the mind.

Cf. here Frege on the idea of 'content of consciousness' and William James:

...ideas are had. One has sensations, feelings, moods, inclinations, wishes. An idea which someone has belongs to the content of his consciousness. (G. Frege, 'Thought', in his *Collected Papers*.)

Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up into bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life. (W. James, *The Principles of Psychology*, p.233.)

What is it to be aware of the propositional content of your mental state? It is to be able to determine what you think or what you desire: i.e. to know that you believe that there are more than fifteen chairs in Wheeler 110, or to know that you would like there to be more palm trees in Gordon Square. How might this apply to the case of perceptual experience, though?

What of the case of representations, inscriptions or photographs? It is to know that this shape:

DO NOT REMOVE THIS WRITING FROM THE BLACKBOARD

Instructs you not to remove the writing from the blackboard. Or it is to know that this:



depicts palm trees and a truck.

In each case one is aware of what is represented – something that one can report in a further sentence – but one is also aware of the medium of representation. This cannot be what Tye has in mind, anymore than Harman, since he denies that one is aware of the intrinsic features of one's sense experience.

What, then, is the connection between supposing that your sense experience has a propositional content and supposing that the content of consciousness is a palm tree or the blue of the pacific ocean?

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