

Lecture 3. Minds that speak enjoy a special perceptual consciousness Philip Pettit

1. *Maker's and taker's knowledge*

If I judge that p, implementing a plan to take care over whether p, and then judging that p, I will know what I am doing; I will know the plan followed and can see how it is realized. But if I judge that p I manifestly ensure, absent disruption (Casino), that I believe that p, so can tell that I believe that p; I will have something like a *maker's knowledge* of the state.

Thus, I will *consciously* believe anything that I judge to be so, and can *reason to*;

I know *that* I believe, and *what* I believe: this is a representation *for me*—not just *in me*. But I must also consciously believe anything that I *reason from*, because of the linking belief. I will have a *taker's knowledge* of what I believe if, e.g., I reason from 'Brothers and sisters ...'

The observation extends to perception as well as belief; again, we sideline desire for now. Of course, I cannot *reason to* what I seem to perceive (not up to me); but I can *reason from* it. Thus, I must have a taker's knowledge of what I seem to perceive—of the percept. Such perceptual consciousness is of great interest, since it has a broadly qualitative character.

2. *Three assumptions about perception*

Abstracting from finer points explored in the philosophy of perception, I shall assume that perception, even in the absence of a capacity to judge or reason, has three broad features. Unlike belief, perception is a *direct*, *attentional* and *disallowable* process. DAD.

Perception is classificatory or predicative, not a mere passive stream of sensation; seeing (or hearing...) an object will typically involve *seeing it as* one or another kind of thing. In veridical cases, any item so classified is *directly* tracked on a causal basis, not inferred; it *programs* for how the item presents across different senses, perspectives, and interactions.

Equally, the properties it is assigned in classification are *directly* identified too.

A property like being-regular will be exemplified by the instance of regularity present; qua exemplar it will give the truth-condition (similarity class), qua instance the truth-maker. The perception will be predicative, then, but in a distinctively analog fashion, not a digital one.

The perceiver classifies items (more sharply) after (saccading and) exercising *attention*: it will shift attention, perhaps intentionally, in response to various cues: this, by all accounts. The perceptual process presents a range of cues, each liable to prompt attentive classification, so that the perceptual field will be progressively enriched in working, classifying memory.

Finally, while the default function of perception is to generate belief, adjustment and action, a perception as of X's being F may be *disallowed* in mirages, illusions, and hallucinations. A mature dog will act spontaneously on most of its perceptual inputs, forming matching beliefs, but, unlike a puppy, it will not react to the dog that it seems to perceive in the mirror. It may not believe that that is-not-a-dog but it will not-believe it is; it will 'dis' the perception.

3. *Unreasoned perception and consciousness*

Consider agents that *cannot* reason from perception, so that they lack taker's knowledge.

Must their perceptions generate their perceptual beliefs in blind transitioning? No.

Perceptions would only figure in that way if they provided blind triggers for belief, as in 'blind-sight', where subjects are said not to know why they form this or that belief.

Unreasoning subjects may intendedly pay (and control) attention, seeking the learning effect. Thus, they may pay attention, as in curiosity, out of a wish for knowledge or true belief. They will not reason from perception, being unable to ask or judge about a percept's lessons. But neither will they be unconsciously triggered—they know not why—to form certain beliefs. There is something the perceived world will be like for them, by contrast with blind triggering and in that sense they will enjoy a perfectly intuitive form of consciousness.

Nonetheless, unreasoned perceivers may be immersed and lost in the perceptual world. They will hardly be able to contrast perceiving and believing; to raise independent questions for perception to resolve; or to recognize that things may not be as they perceptually present.

4. Reasoned perception and consciousness

Agents that can reason from perception like you or me will differ in such DAD respects.

- a. In reasoning from perception I can think *about* the properties *directly* present (like objects) and distinguish the sensory modes, relevant for reasoning, in which they are presented.
- b. As I act intentionally to vary *attentional* focus, I can raise and resolve independent questions, and make perception responsive to novel issues, exemplifying new similarity classes.
- c. Realizing that perception may lead me to reason to otherwise falsified judgments, I can be aware of the perceptual field as *disallowable*: a way things seem *but may not be*. It will be *a manifestly defeasible, indefinitely explorable, directly accessible field* for reasoning.

This being so, I can attend to the objects and properties presented in perception, forming beliefs about them qua presumptive features of the world but also qua perceptually given. Thinking about the look, shape, smell and motion of an object, I can conclude it's a tennis ball, but I can also think about the perception's being as of something with those properties. The as-of features will belong to the perception, as I can realize, whether it is veridical or not. Not only will there be something the perceived world is like for me, as in the unreasoned case, there will be something it is like to be in the perceptual state involved (Nagel). Akinetopsia.

5. The big question

Does my capacity to be guided in judgment on the basis of how I perceive things to be require that there be an independent *quale* (e.g. a look or feel) present in the perception? Or does the exercise of the capacity give perceptions that *quale*: give them a look or a feel? I tend to the view that the *quale* is derivative from how we perceptually read the world.

That view appeals to me because a) it involves a relatively parsimonious ontology; b) the notion of an independent *quale* may be misconceived: no way a look looks, a feel feels; c) the *quale* need not the source of guidance in perceptual reasoning, but a byproduct; d) looks and feels may plausibly be judgmental 'affordances', showing up in how I am guided; e) there is empirical evidence that as a perceiver gains judgmental skills, things look different: Ivo Kohler's experiments with color-distorting lenses support this, as do familiar effects.

What of the modal (zombie) & epistemic (Mary) arguments for independent *qualia*? (McGeer) If zombies are possible, Mary might be one. If Mary's Aha is decisive, so is her zombie's Aha. True, as we imagine observing a functioning agent, nothing may seem to ensure consciousness. But what about imagining being that agent, simulating her undergoing the functional effects?

But notice that even if judgmental sensitivity makes perception qualitatively conscious, that does not resolve the issue of consciousness in the field of bodily sensation, or elsewhere.