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Perception, Causation, Disjunction

I met Hanjo Glock in 1986, when we were both graduate students in Oxford, and I have admired and learned from his scholarship, his philosophical acumen and his intellectual passion ever since. Contributing to Hanjo's festschrift is a perfect opportunity to express my gratitude for our friendship and for his contribution to philosophy. He is one of relatively few philosophers today whose work is always alive to the historical roots of contemporary problems, and whose historical work illuminates philosophy today, above all his work on twentieth century analytical philosophy, which is where the topic of this essay belongs. It is as reminiscent—redolent even—of Oxford philosophy in the last century as any, the topic of perception.

British philosophy of perception conducted a step-by-step retreat from empiricism in the twentieth century, as Lockean indirect realism and phenomenalism gave way to the modern causal theory of perception advanced by Paul Grice and defended by Peter Strawson, and as that theory came under attack by Paul Snowdon, Mike Martin and others, under the banner of disjunctivism. I should make it clear right at the beginning that there are several versions of disjunctivism, which differ in significant ways (see Sturgeon 2008, 112-119). But I shall focus almost exclusively on Grice, Strawson and Snowdon. Even so, I shall not attempt a comprehensive assessment of their views about perception. Instead, I shall begin with some introductory comments placing the modern causal theory against its empiricist background, and then examine Strawson's argument in favour of the theory and Snowdon's objection to it. I shall not contest the objection. On the contrary, I shall press it further, against the disjunctivism Snowdon himself defends. The burden of my argument is that the retreat from empiricism has not gone far enough.

The modern causal theory: conceptual analysis

In his last defence of the modern causal theory of perception, Strawson (2008, 311) states its cardinal claim as follows: 'it is a conceptual truth that when a subject S sees an external object O, O is causally responsible for S's visual experience.'[1] (The claim is meant to generalise across the senses.) But there is more to the theory than this. I shall

explain what more by setting out the arguments Grice and Strawson offer in its favour, and by exploring two key ways in which it differs from the classical causal theory advanced by Locke.

The principal argument supporting the theory is that the sensory experiences we have when we perceive features of the world around us match or correspond with these features to a high degree, although of course we are also susceptible to hallucinations, illusions and mistakes. But—and this is the critical step in the argument—if the correspondence is coincidental, the experience will not qualify as a perception. For example, suppose I am barbecuing lamb chops in the garden, and my wife has the experience of smelling barbecued lamb chops. It would be a mistake to think that she is smelling *these* lamb chops, the ones on *our* barbecue, if the fact that we have lamb chops on our barbecue is purely coincidental and the delicious vapour she is inhaling comes from our neighbour's barbecue, and not our own. So, if the correspondence between our experience and our environment is coincidental, the experience will not qualify as a perception; and if it is *not* coincidental, then barring metaphysical fantasies such as occasionalism or pre-established harmony, the reason must be that our experience is responsive to its objects, in other words, that changes in the features of our environment that we perceive cause changes in our sensory experience to occur. Hence, the experiences that *do* qualify as perceptions must be caused by the objects we perceive.

Both Grice and Strawson argue along these lines. The principal difference between them is that they support what I called the critical step in the argument in different ways. Grice supports it by appealing to 'linguistic fact'—for example, the fact that we would not *say* that my wife was smelling the lamb chops on our barbecue in the circumstances described. Whereas Strawson supports it by pointing out that we think of perception as a source of knowledge, and belief (e.g. my wife's belief that there are lamb chops on our barbecue) does not qualify as knowledge if it is true fortuitously, or by chance. I shall examine both Grice's and Strawson's arguments in due course. But I shall begin with some preliminary remarks about the aim of the modern causal theory and its historical background.

I have called the theory of perception Grice and Strawson defend the *modern* causal theory to distinguish it from the classical causal theory advanced by Locke. They differ in two principal ways. First, the modern theory is an exercise in conceptual analysis, whereas Locke means to provide a framework for scientific enquiry and a model of the mind. Second, it is a version of direct realism, or, more cautiously, it is not a version of indirect realism. I shall enlarge on these two points in turn.

First, in Grice's words (1961, 121-122), the modern theory is meant 'to elucidate or characterize the ordinary notion of perceiving a material object'. On the one hand, it is not meant to define a concept better suited to scientific enquiry than the unscientific concept we learn to use as children. On the contrary, it is meant to elucidate or characterise that very concept. On the other hand, it is not sufficient, in order to count as accepting the theory, merely to hold that the perception of an object occurs as a result of a process that involves the object itself 'at an earlier stage'. 'Such a belief', Grice says (1961, 121), 'does not seem to be philosophical in character', because 'it has the appearance of being a very general contingent proposition.'

Similarly, without any commentary or context, Strawson's claim that the experiences enjoyed in sense-perception are caused by the objects we perceive might look like 'a very general contingent proposition' or an elementary scientific fact. But he states emphatically in several places that this is not what he has in mind. For example, in *Analysis and Metaphysics*, he writes as follows:

> This notion of the causal dependence of the experience enjoyed in sense-perception on features of the spatio-temporal world (...) is not something we discover with the advance of science, or even by refined common observation. (…) It is conceptually inherent in a gross and obvious way in the very notion of sense perception as yielding true judgements about an objective spatio-temporal world. (Strawson 1992, 61.)

And in his last published article on the topic, Strawson insists that the notion of causal dependence 'is integral to the ordinary concept of perception', and as already noted he re-states his key claim as follows (concentrating on the sense of sight): 'it is a conceptual truth that when a subject S sees an external object O, O is causally responsible for S's visual experience.' (Strawson 1998, 311.)

Why does this matter? Why should we care whether a belief is philosophical in character or whether a truth is conceptual? Suppose the objects we perceive do cause our perceptions. Do we need to decide whether the fact that they do so is implicit in the concept of perceiving an object or whether it is a very general item of scientific or proto-scientific knowledge, which has been known for hundreds or perhaps thousands of years? Besides, how sharp is the distinction between these kinds of truths? For example, is it a scientific truth or a conceptual truth that men beget children or that spaghetti does not grow on trees? Is this distinction between kinds of truths sustainable at all?

These sceptical questions cannot be brushed aside, but I shall assume here that the distinction between conceptual truths and scientific truths is legitimate.[2] One of the tasks of philosophy has always been to explain and clarify the main concepts or ideas in a domain of thought—and to criticise or modify concepts, when they give rise to paradoxes or embody confusion. In some parts of philosophy, such as ethics or philosophy of perception as Grice and Strawson practice it, the domain of thought is one we all inhabit, simply in virtue of being mature, socialised human beings; in other parts of philosophy, such as philosophy of law or philosophy of perception as others practice it, it is not. I do not believe that the clarification of concepts is a futile exercise, or that it rests on a mistake. Be that as it may, it is important to understand that this is the task that Grice and Strawson set themselves, because it accounts for the ways in which they argue for the theory, in other words, the kinds of evidence they present in favour of it.[3]

Grice describes the evidence for the causal theory as 'linguistic fact', the fact that it would be correct or incorrect to say that someone saw a particular object, or the fact that we would be inclined to say that he saw it or did not see it, in a given set of circumstances. This would be a very peculiar way of arguing in favour of a scientific or proto-scientific claim about how perceptions occur, or, for that matter, in favour of the claim that men beget children or that spaghetti does not grow on trees. Imagine trying to disabuse a nineteenth-century Solomon Islander who doubts whether men play any role in procreation by analysing pillow-talk between parents, or a twenty-first-century Londoner who believes spaghetti does grow on trees by examining table-talk in trattorie in Milan or Rome. But linguistic facts evidently are pertinent to a claim about the ordinary notion of perceiving a material object, because speech is an immediate manifestation of concepts—an activity in which the use of concepts can be directly observed.

As noted above, Strawson's argument in favour of the causal theory is different from Grice's, and it is not in any obvious or direct way about language. Here is another concise statement of it:

> It is certainly a feature of our ordinary scheme of thought that sense perception is taken to yield judgements which are generally or usually true. Remember that in thinking of the world as objective, we are thinking of it as being the way it is independently of any particular judgement about it; the truth of the judgement, if it is true, consists in its conformity to the way things are in the world. Hence the minimum that seems to be involved in the notion of sense perception generally yielding true judgements about an objective … world is that there should be some

> pretty regular relation of [causal] dependence of the experience enjoyed in sense perception on the way things objectively are. (Strawson 1992, 60.)

If we set aside the question of whether this argument is convincing—we shall consider that question shortly—and focus only on its premises, we shall see that they are simply about relations between features of 'our ordinary scheme of thought', in other words, relations between concepts or ideas. Such and such is 'a feature of our ordinary scheme of thought', Strawson says; and in thinking of A we are thinking of B. Again, these premises could hardly justify a scientific or proto-scientific conclusion about the operation of the senses, and this is clearly not what Strawson intends. His principal claim is that we cannot conceive of the senses as cognitive faculties, as faculties which enable us to learn about objects that exist independently of our experience, without implicitly thinking of our experience as responsive to, as modified by, these objects. It may be an exaggeration to describe this claim as 'gross and obvious', but perhaps we can confirm it by examining 'our ordinary scheme of thought', and its manifestation in our use of words. This is the method Strawson and Grice employ.

The modern causal theory: direct realism

The modern causal theory of perception is an exercise in conceptual analysis. This is the first important way in which it differs from the classical causal theory advanced by Locke. The second is that Locke held (or is widely thought to have held) that the immediate objects of perception are mental images or ideas, which represent the physical objects that cause them, and in a sense stand proxy for these objects in our minds. Because of this doctrine, Locke's theory was commonly—although not universally—thought to imply that the existence of objects beyond the mind cannot be known, except perhaps as a result of making an inference from images or ideas to physical objects, which is hard to justify. Locke himself famously stated that 'the certainty of things existing *in rerum natura*, when we have the testimony of our senses for it, is not only as great as our frame can attain to, but as our condition needs.' (Locke 1997, 9.11.8.) Whether this is a judicious acknowledgement of human frailty and fallibility or a sign of insufficient intellectual rigour (i.e. a fudge) is a matter of judgement. Perhaps it is both.

Be that as it may, the doctrine that the immediate objects of perception are ideas or mental images of some kind, remained prevalent among philosophers until the middle of the twentieth century, both among phenomenalists, such as the early Carnap and C.I. Lewis, and among philosophers who followed Locke, such as Quine and the early Ayer.

It is criticised in *Sense and Sensibilia*, a brilliant and destructive series of lectures about perception, which Austin gave several times between 1947 and 1959. But Grice's article 'The Causal Theory of Perception' convinced many philosophers that it is possible to formulate a version of the causal theory that is not committed to this doctrine, and therefore also avoids the problem about knowledge, which made Locke's theory difficult to accept.

How did Grice manage this? He argued that if a person perceives a material object, the object is causally responsible for his sense-impression or sense-datum, or (in a more cautious form of words) for 'a state of affairs' that is reported by 'some present-tense sense-datum statement' about him. (Grice 1961, 152.) But instead of introducing the terms 'sense-impression' and 'sense-datum' as names of a kind of object that is present in the mind of a person who is perceiving something, Grice introduced them contextually, by introducing the *sentence*, 'S has a sense-impression of O' as a paraphrase of a sentence such as 'It seems to S as if he can perceive O', adding 'I shall myself … often for brevity's sake talk of sense-data or sense-impressions; but I shall hope that a more rigorous, if more cumbrous, mode of expression will always be readily available.' (Grice 1961, 123-124.)[4]

This way of introducing the terms 'sense-datum' and 'sense-impression' means that there is no need to prove 'the existence of objects of a special sort for which the term … is offered as a class-name' Grice 1961, 123), because the term is not introduced as the name of a special sort of object, but—roughly speaking—as part of an abbreviation. And if a term is not the name of special sort of object, then it is not the name of a mental object or an image, which represents a physical object in the mind. Thus, 'Tom has a visual sense-impression of Lucy' does not mean that there is a visual image of Lucy in Tom's mind. It simply means that it seems to Tom as if he sees Lucy. And so the claim that the experience of seeing Lucy is a visual sense-impression caused in a certain way by Lucy is perfectly consistent with the proposition that Tom can see Lucy directly, rather than by seeing an image of her in his mind. As Strawson puts it:

> We take ourselves to be immediately aware of real, enduring physical things in space ... The immediacy which common sense attributes to perceptual awareness is in no way inconsistent ... with the causal dependence of [perceptual experience] on [the things we perceive]. (Strawson 1979, 53.)

Grice's manoeuvre was familiar by the time he used it. Bentham had made use of the same device, which he called 'definition by paraphrasis', to avoid postulating the existence of arcane legal objects, such as rights, and Russell had meted out a similar punishment to sets. In Grice's hands, contextual definition transforms the impression caused by a physical object from an *object* of awareness into an *experience* of awareness. The private mental image is swept away, and with it—or so one hopes—the difficulty Locke's theory faced, of explaining how knowledge can extend beyond mind. Grice's terminology is archaic: the psychological sense of the word 'impression' dates from the seventeenth century, and was introduced into philosophy by Hobbes. But it is a mistake to associate it in Grice's writings too closely with its forbears in the empiricist tradition—with Hobbes's and Hume's 'impressions', Locke's 'ideas', or Russell's 'sense-data'. On the contrary, Grice's intention was to dispense with the arcane mental objects these terms were intended to refer to, and to retain, as he puts it, only the letter, but not the spirit of the classical causal theory. (Though I shall conclude that this is not an accurate description of the relationship between the two theories.)

The arguments

Now for the arguments. The argument I presented earlier about lamb chops is a non-sequitur, but I shall leave it as an exercise for the reader to work out why.[5] I shall now examine Grice's and Strawson's own arguments. First Grice:

> [I]t might be that it looked to me as if there were a certain sort of pillar in a certain direction at a certain distance, and there might actually be such a pillar in that place; but if, unknown to me, there were a mirror interposed between me and the pillar, which reflected a numerically different though similar pillar, it would certainly be incorrect to say that I saw the first pillar, and correct to say that I saw the second; and it is extremely tempting to explain this linguistic fact by saying that the first pillar was, and the second was not, causally irrelevant to the way things looked to me. (Grice 1961, 142.)

We need to consider this argument in a couple of steps. First, the *immediate* reason why it would be incorrect (i.e. untrue) to say that Grice saw the first pillar and correct (i.e. true) to say that he saw the second is that in the set-up he describes he did *not* see the first pillar, and *did* see the second. Second, the simplest explanation of the fact that he did not see the first pillar is that it was hidden behind the mirror, and the simplest explanation of

the fact that he did see the second pillar is that it was visible *in* the mirror.[6] And it seems perfectly possible to understand *these* explanations—banal and uninformative as they are, if one already knows the set-up—without postulating causal connections between the objects a person sees and the way things look to that person.[7] Why then does Grice regard the 'linguistic fact' he averts to as evidence for the causal theory? In effect he relies on two theoretical claims: that the first pillar was hidden behind the mirror *because the mirror made it causally irrelevant to the way things looked to him*, and that the second pillar was visible in the mirror *because the mirror made it causally relevant to the way things looked to him*. But what is the justification for relying on them? Both claims are plausible, given some knowledge about optics, but Grice has not shown—or made any attempt to show—that they are implicit in 'the ordinary notion of perceiving a material object'. And if we *assume* that they are implicit in it, this is tantamount to assuming that the causal theory is correct.[8]

In sum, semantic ascent does not serve a genuine purpose here. It creates the illusion that the argument reveals something about our concepts, but the 'linguistic fact' Grice appeals to—the fact that it would be incorrect to say that he saw the first pillar and correct to say that he saw the second—is explained, trivially, in line with the principle that is (in)correct to say that *p* iff (not-)*p*. The fact that has a *non*-trivial explanation is a fact about what Grice sees in the set-up, not a fact about language, and absent an argument showing that the two theoretical claims are implicit in 'the ordinary notion of perceiving a material object', the explanation of *that* fact does not support the causal theory.

Like Grice, Strawson was attracted by the thought that if the correspondence between a person's experience and their environment is coincidental, the experience will not qualify as a perception. But he seems to have been dissatisfied with Grice's argument for the causal theory, and his own argument is rather different. It appears—with significant variations, as we shall see—in a number of publications, dating from 1974 to 1998. Here are the earliest and latest passages. First 1974:

> The concept of perception is too closely linked to that of knowledge for us to tolerate the idea of someone's being merely flukishly right in taking his M-experience to be the M-perception that it seems to be. Only those M-experiences which are in a certain sense dependable are to count as the M-perceptions they seem to be; and dependability in this sense entails dependence, causal ... dependence on appropriate M-facts. (Strawson 1974, 71.)

(By an M-experience, Strawson means the kind of experience one is having if it seems to one as if one can see or hear or in general perceive an object of some kind. Grice (1961, 121-122) uses the terms 'impression', 'sense-impression' and 'sense-datum' in the same way. For example, as you read this sentence it seems to you as if you can see a page of text. By an M-perception, Strawson means an instance of someone's actually perceiving something —for example, your actually seeing a page of text. And by an M-fact, he means the fact that an object of some kind, such as a page of text, exists.)

Now 1998:

> In order for an experience to amount to a genuine perception of an object (and hence a way of gaining knowledge about it) there must be such a relation between object and experience as to rule out the case of a subject's being merely flukishly or accidentally right in taking it that there is just the object before him that he takes himself to be perceiving. ... the relation of causal dependence ... remains the only plausible candidate [for this relation]. (Strawson 1998, 314.)

The arguments in these two passages are similar, but not as similar as they may look at first glance. One difference is the retreat from 'entails' to 'remains the only plausible candidate'. But the difference I want to focus on is that in the 1974 passage Strawson is explaining what he thinks it takes for an M-experience 'to be the M-perception that it seems to be'. He is evidently assuming that an M-perception is a specific kind of M-experience (or sense-impression, in Grice's terminology), and explaining what distinguishes this kind of M-experience from the rest. In the 1998 passage, by contrast, he carefully avoids making this assumption, or at least making it explicitly—for reasons I shall explain in due course. But why does the difference matter? It matters because if we make the assumption, then we are naturally going to ask the question Strawson does ask, namely, what kind of M-experience (or sense-impression) *is* the perception that it seems to be? And since a perception does not carry a hallmark, a sign of authenticity stamped on it, the answer will have to refer to a *relation* in which an M-experience can stand to something else—presumably the object of which it seems to be a perception, unless, as in some idealist and occasionalist systems, it is God. And this takes us a good part of the way towards endorsing the causal theory's principal claim. The only remaining step is to claim, as Strawson does, that 'causal dependence' is the only relation capable of explaining how an M-experience can be, as he puts it, 'in a

certain sense dependable', that is, a dependable source of beliefs, and thereby a source of knowledge, about the world. So the assumption provides a fast track to the causal theory. But is it true?

Are perceptions sense-impression?

It should be obvious, and is not disputed by philosophers who hold that perceptions are sense-impressions, that *X* may perceive *Y*, whether it seems to *X* as if he perceives *Y* or not. For example, if Tom sees Lucy fleetingly in the distance, it *may* seem to Tom as if he sees Lucy, but it may instead seem to him as if he sees Caroline, or as if he sees somebody, but nobody in particular. If a perception were a kind of sense-impression, Tom's perception would be a different kind of sense-impression in each case: respectively, a sense-impression of Lucy, a sense-impression of Caroline, and a sense-impression of somebody, but nobody in particular. But it would be a perception of Lucy in every case.

What is less obvious is that *X* may perceive *Y* without having a sense-impression that *could* be the perception, because the perception is subliminal or unconscious. This is less obvious precisely because we are not conscious of unconscious perceptions, but it had been well known for several decades by the 1960s, and it is surprising that neither Grice nor Strawson considers the bearing of unconscious perception on the causal theory.[9] Perhaps the Cartesian equation of thought and consciousness still exerted a subliminal influence on philosophers who assumed that every perception is a sense-impression, and hence that it isn't possible to perceive an object unless it seems to one as if one is perceiving *something* (even if it is merely a shadow or a fleck on the horizon) which, whether one realises it or not, *is* the object in question. Perhaps they were influenced by the fact that one would not normally *say*, or be entitled to say, that one saw something, if the perception was unconscious; although the question of whether one would say or be entitled to say something must not be confused with the question of whether it could be true. This seems to have influenced Strawson's thinking in particular, because he devises the form of words he considers apt to describe a sense-impression by asking how someone could formulate a description of their 'current visual experience' that 'confine[d] itself strictly within the limits of the subjective episode' by modifying a spontaneous description of what they were actually seeing. (In effect, they are supposed to replace 'I see …' with 'It sensibly seems to me just as if I were seeing …') But of course a person's spontaneous description of what they are seeing—such as Strawson's example (1979, 97), gazing across the grounds of Magdalen College before the ravages of

Dutch Elm disease, 'I see the red light of the setting sun filtering through the black and thickly clustered branches of the elms …' etc.—is inevitably confined to what they are *consciously* seeing, and so it excludes unconscious perception *a priori*.

Be that as it may, unconscious perception has been the subject of numerous empirical studies since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, including an early article by Peirce and Jastrow, and the examples are legion. The theory of unconscious perception is a lively area of debate, but the reality of the phenomenon is not in doubt.[10] And although the best known examples are pathological—e.g. blindsight, which was not discovered until the 1970s—studies of perception in the periphery of the visual field suggest that it is a perfectly ordinary phenomenon, by no means limited to subjects with brain lesions.[11]

Strawson's assumption in the 1974 passage that a perception is a kind of sense-perception is therefore mistaken. It might be objected that unconscious perception is a recent discovery, and therefore not 'integral to the ordinary concept of perception'. But I am not suggesting that the existence of unconscious perception has always been known, only that it is not conceptually inherent in a gross and obvious—or refined and unobvious—way in the very notion of sense perception that it *cannot* be unconscious. Heliocentrism is a fairly recent discovery, but it is not ruled out *a priori* by 'the ordinary concept' of the sun. Wave-particle duality was only discovered a century ago, but it is not ruled out *a priori* by 'the ordinary concept' of light. Equally, unconscious perception is not ruled out *a priori* by 'the ordinary concept of perception', however strange it may seem to those of us who imbibed empiricist orthodoxies as students. Otherwise it would not be a discovery, it would be a contradiction in terms.

Returning to the terminology of the 1974 passage, Strawson's claim that dependable M-experiences 'count as the M-perceptions they seem to be' is mistaken. But in fact there are two mistakes here rolled into one: first, the assumption that a perception is a kind of M-experience; and second, the idea that M-experiences seem to be perceptions.

Strawson's position is that Tom's sense-impression of Lucy—in other words, its seeming to Tom as if he perceives Lucy—seems to Tom to be a perception of Lucy, and the causal theory identifies a condition it needs to satisfy in order to *be* the perception that it *seems* to be. But this cannot be right. For 'its seeming to Tom as if he perceives Lucy' is a sentence-nominal—a noun-phrase derived from a sentence—which refers to the state of affairs described by the sentence from which it is derived: 'It seems to Tom as if he perceives Lucy'. The sentence-nominal is produced in a standard way, by replacing the

main verb of the sentence with a gerund and putting the subject in the genitive case. 'It is hot in Naples' yields 'its being hot in Naples' in the same way, and 'Brutus killed Caesar' yields the so-called imperfect nominal 'Brutus's killing Caesar' and the perfect nominal 'Brutus's killing of Caesar'.[12] But there is no more truth in the idea that its seeming to Tom as if he perceives Lucy is something that seems than there is in the idea that its being hot in Naples is something hot or that Brutus's killing of Caesar is something that kills Caesar. Tom's sense-impression of Lucy does not *seem* to be a perception. By definition, it is a seem*ing*, not a thing that seems.

Since its seeming to Tom as if he perceives Lucy is its seeming to Tom as if he stands in a particular relation to Lucy—the relation expressed by the verb 'sees' in the sentence 'Tom sees Lucy'—it is instructive to compare a sense-impression with a different case of seeming to stand in a relation. For example, suppose it seems to Tom as if he is married to Lucy: colloquially, Tom feels married to Lucy. Perhaps he began to feel married a few months after they were married, or perhaps he felt married as soon as the ceremony had ended, or perhaps he feels married despite the fact that they are not actually married, for example, because they are cohabiting, or because their marriage was not validly contracted. In any case, suppose Tom feels married to Lucy. Tom's feeling married to Lucy does not feel like a marriage, whether it is a true impression or a false one, and however it was caused. It may have been caused 'in the right way' by an official licensed to perform a marriage ceremony. No matter. Whatever its origin or cause, Tom's feeling married to Lucy neither *feels as if* it is a marriage nor can it ever *be* a marriage, even if it is planted in his mind by God. It is not an experience that feels like a marriage, or seems to be a marriage, and the thought that only those feelings-like-marriage or seemings-to-be-married which are in a certain sense dependable are to count as the marriages they feel like or seem to be is obviously confused. One relation can feel or seem like another relation—cohabitation can feel like marriage—but feeling as if one is married isn't a relation, and cannot seem as if it is one. A person's feeling married is his feeling as he would feel, or as he imagines he would feel, if he were conscious—not merely cognizant—of his married state. Similarly, its seeming to Tom as if he sees Lucy is its seeming to Tom as it would seem, or as he imagines it would seem, if he consciously saw Lucy. So the concepts of being married and feeling married are evidently related to each other, in a way that it is not difficult to explain, and the same is true of the concepts of perceiving something and its seeming to one as if one perceives something.

Strawson's claim that 'only those M-experiences which are in a certain sense dependable are to count as the M-perceptions they seem to be' is doubly misconceived. For M-experiences neither are nor seem to be perceptions. The claim is in fact a residue of the classical causal theory of perception. Remember, according to the classical theory, the immediate object of perceptual awareness is an image, which represents a physical object in the mind. Only the subject's awareness of a dependable image is to count as a perception, and a dependable image is one with the right kind of cause. The modern theory was meant to eliminate the mental object of awareness, but in reality it transferred part of the classical conception of a mental image to the sense-impression. For the impression resembles the classical theory's *awareness of an image* in being an experience, and a candidate for the title of a perception, but it resembles *the image itself* in being dependable if caused in the right way.

In sum, if we assume that some sense-impressions are perceptions, we are bound to ask what distinguishes them from the rest. The distinguishing feature cannot be an intrinsic property of these sense-impressions themselves—they do not have a hallmark stamped on them, which guarantees their authenticity—so their status as perceptions must depend on a relation in which they stand to something else. It is therefore plausible to hold that the authentic sense-impressions, like photographs, are the ones that are caused (in the right way) by the objects they are sense-impressions of—regardless of whether a sense-impression is conceived of as an object of awareness or as an experience of awareness. But the intitial assumption is mistaken. Perceiving is not an élite suburb of seeming-to-perceive, any more than knowing is an élite suburb of believing, *a fortiori* it is not seeming-to-perceive with a specific kind of cause.[13]

If this is right, the conception of sense-perception that underlies the modern causal theory is an unstable compromise between empiricist representationalism and direct realism, as the latter is now generally understood, that is, the doctrine that a sense-perception is an irreducible relation between the subject and the object of perception—no less so than a marriage—in other words, as Mike Martin puts it (1997, 85), a 'relational state of affairs'. In his influential book *Radical Embodied Cognition*, Anthony Chemero writes:

> When an animal perceives something directly, the animal is in nonmediated contact with that thing. This implies, of course, that the perceiving isn't inside the animal, but rather is part of a system that includes both the animal and the perceived object. (Chemero 2009, 5.3.)

The ‘this implies, of course’ is what Strawson denies. The argument above suggests that while the ‘of course’ is an exaggeration, the ‘this implies’ is true.

As far as I know, Strawson only commented once on the idea that sense-perception is an irreducible relation—‘a relational state of affairs’—and even here he addressed the idea obliquely. His comment is surprisingly dismissive: ‘Only someone temporarily blinded by philosophy’, he writes, ‘could dream of denying that when a subject sees an external object, the visual experience enjoyed by the subject is one thing or occurrence in nature and the object seen is another and distinct thing in nature.’ (Strawson 1998, 314.) But considered as an objection to the relational idea this is not merely dismissive, it is wrong. For if Tom’s perception of Lucy is a relational state of affairs, in which Tom and Lucy are the relata, it does not follow that Tom’s perception and Lucy are one and the same thing or occurrence in nature. On the contrary, it follows that they are distinct things, since an instance of a relation cannot be one of its own relata. For example, a marriage is not the same thing as a spouse. (In Strawson’s terminology (2000, 46), Lucy and Tom are substantial particulars whereas their marriage is a non-substantial substance-dependent particular, as is Tom’s perception of Lucy.)

Unlike Strawson, David Armstrong engages with the relational idea directly:

> There is a most serious objection to [the] attempt to construe mental states as relations to things in the world. Suppose, as is perfectly imaginable, that I have exactly the same perceptual experience as I had when I looked at the tree, but suppose that this time there is no tree there… [In this case] there is, by hypothesis, nothing in the world for me to be ‘mentally related’ to. So no unique, irreducible, relation can be involved. Yet, also by hypothesis, the mental state is no different from the mental state in [the case where I looked at the tree]. So no mental relation of ourselves to things in the world is ever involved. (Armstrong 1993, 39.)

But this argument fails for a different reason. In this passage, ‘perceptual experience’ needs to read as meaning sense-impression, since what is perfectly imaginable is that one should have exactly the same sense-impression when there is no tree present. By hypothesis, the sense-impression—its seeming to Armstrong that he sees a certain kind of tree, from a certain point view, in a certain light—is no different in the two cases. But the mental states that are said to be relations to things in the world are not sense-impressions,

they are perceptions. Armstrong simply assumes that a perception is a kind of sense-impression, and therefore finds it natural to infer from the fact that sense-impressions are not 'relations to things in the world' that perceptions are not either.

Like Strawson, Armstrong fails to disprove the relational idea, but his argument confirms its incompatibility with the assumption that a perception is a kind of sense-impression, which Strawson and Armstrong, whose theories of perception differ in other ways, both make (Armstrong 1993, 236-237.) If we reject this assumption, as I have argued we should, we need a theory of perception that is compatible with the existence of unconscious perception, and which breaks with the empiricist tradition more completely than the modern causal theory of perception does. Describing perception as an irreducible relation is the right first step, but it does not get us very far—any more than it would if we were theorising about marriage. I shall outline a theory that I favour in the final part of this paper, but first I shall look at Snowdon's objection to the modern causal theory and Strawson's 1998 passage.

Snowdon's disjunctivism

I have argued that a perception is not a kind of sense-impression, *a fortiori* it is not a sense-impression with a particular kind of cause. Snowdon challenged the causal theory in a series of articles published between 1981 and 2011, on partly similar grounds. Snowdon accepts that statements like 'It seems to X as if he can see an oasis' or 'It looks to X as if there is an oasis in front of him' may be true whether X is actually seeing an oasis or experiencing an hallucination. But he argues that the reason for this is not that perception and hallucination are experiences of the same kind with two different kinds of cause: the reason is that despite their syntax, 'looks' and 'seems' sentences should be construed as disjunctions, whose disjuncts are (as he puts it) made true by two quite different kinds of states of affairs. For example, 'Tom is married' is true if and only if Tom is married, whereas 'Either Tom is married or he is insane' is true whether Tom is married or insane, although marriage and insanity are (as most people will admit) different states of affairs. According to Snowdon, something similar is true of the kind of statement Strawson regards as a description of a 'slice of sensible experience'. The disjunctivist picture, he says, divides what makes this kind of statement true into two classes:

> In cases where there is no [visual perception] they are made true by a state of affairs intrinsically independent of surrounding objects; but in cases of [visual

> perceptions] the truth-conferring state of affairs involves the surrounding objects. (Snowdon 1980, 186.)

In sum, according to Strawson, the statement that it seems to X as if he can see an oasis in front of him, or (the form of words Snowdon discusses in these passages) the statement that it looks to X as if there is an oasis in front of him is true, if it is true, because X is having an experience that may or may not qualify as a perception, depending on how it was caused. Whereas Snowdon claims that it is true 'in virtue of two distinct sorts of states of affairs':

> either there is an object which looks to be an oasis to *X* (this is the case where an object is seen), or it is to *X* as if there is something of that sort happening (*X* is hallucinating an oasis). It is allowed, according to this, that the two cases which are described in the same way … might be of a quite different nature. (Snowdon 1990, 129.)[14]

Snowdon's disjunctivist idea is, I submit, partly right and partly wrong. Snowdon is right in thinking that perceptions and hallucinations are 'of a quite different nature'. For *X*'s perception is an instance of a relation—between *X* and the object he perceives—whereas *X*'s hallucination is not. As Snowdon puts it, an hallucination is 'intrinsically independent of surrounding objects'. But he is wrong in thinking that the claim that it looks to *X* as if there is an oasis in front of him describes, or is made true by, two different sorts of states of affairs, one 'intrinsically independent of surrounding objects' and the other not. In the case where *X* is actually seeing something, the state of affairs that makes the claim that it looks to *X* as if there is an oasis in front of him true is the same state of affairs as the one that does so when he hallucinates.

Recall for a moment the example of Tom's feeling married to Lucy. Disjunctivism about 'feels-ascriptions', such as 'Tom feels married to Lucy', would combine the idea that the illusion of being married and actually being married are 'of a quite different nature', which is true, with the idea that 'Tom feels married to Lucy' describes, or is made true by, both sorts of states of affairs, which is false. 'Tom feels married to Lucy' never describes, and is never made true by, a marriage. It can only ever describe or be made true by a feeling—regardless of Tom's marital status, and regardless of how the feeling it describes, or is made true by, is caused. Perhaps the confusion is easier in the case of perception, because both hallucinations and perceptions are mental

states, whereas feeling married is and being married is not a mental state. But the logical point is just the same. Feelings, not marriages, make 'feels-ascriptions' true, and sense-impressions or M-experiences, not perceptions, make 'looks-ascriptions' true, whether or not they are veridical feelings or impressions, and however they are caused.

Returning to Snowdon's own example, if *X* sees *Y*, and *Y* looks to him like an oasis, (i) *X's perception of Y*, and (ii) *X's sense-impression of an oasis* are themselves two distinct sorts of experiences of a quite different nature. They are distinct, since either can occur without the other occuring,[15] and although we can call them both 'visual experiences' or 'mental states' if we wish, they are of a quite different nature, because (i) is an instance of a relation whereas (ii) is not. When *X* sees something that looks to him like an oasis both states of affair obtain; when *X* hallucinates an oasis only (ii) does. But whether *X* is perceiving or hallucinating, the statement that it looks to *X* as if there is an oasis in front of him is made true, if it is true, only by (ii).

Why does Snowdon embrace the ostensibly implausible idea that despite their syntax 'looks' and 'seems' sentences, such as 'It looks to *X* as if there is an oasis in front of him', should be interpreted as disjunctions? The reason, I suggest, is that he has not entirely freed himself from the way in which Grice and Strawson conceive of perceptual experience. For he accepts the (false) assumption Grice and Strawson make that 'It looks to *X* as if there is an oasis in front of him' can describe or be made true by either a perception or an hallucination, despite (rightly) insisting, against them, that these are two distinct sorts of experiences 'of a quite different nature', and not one sort of experience with two different kinds of cause. This is the uncomfortable combination of ideas which makes it appear as if its looking to *X* as if there is an oasis in front of him cannot be a unitary state of affairs. But the assumption is a mistake. 'It looks to *X* as if there is an oasis in front of him' cannot describe or be made true by a perception. It always describes a sense-impression—whether *X* is seeing something, such as an oasis or a mirage, or not—and so it always describes the same kind of experience or mental state.[16]

In sum, Snowdon criticizes Strawson's assumption that, considered in themselves, independently of their causes and effects, perceptions and hallucinations are essentially the same kind of experience, the kind of experience we can describe by means of 'seems' or 'looks' sentences. According to Snowdon, the assumption is either false or unproven. False, because in fact perceptions and hallucinations are essentially different kinds of experience, and 'seems' or 'looks' sentences should be construed as disjunctions, which describe, or are made true by, experiences of both kinds. Or unproven, because it has not been shown that this is not the case. But the objection is partly right and partly wrong:

partly right because perceptions and hallucinations are essentially different kinds of experience; partly wrong because 'looks' and 'seems' sentences do not describe perceptions.

The 1998 passage

I shall turn now to Strawson's argument in the 1998 passage. Remember, the important difference between this passage and the 1974 one is that in the later passage Strawson tries to formulate his argument for the causal theory in a way that avoids reliance on the assumption Snowdon had contested, that a perception is a specific kind of sense-impression. Here is the passage again:

> In order for an experience to amount to a genuine perception of an object (and hence a way of gaining knowledge about it) there must be such a relation between object and experience as to rule out the case of a subject's being merely flukishly or accidentally right in taking it that there is just the object before him that he takes himself to be perceiving. ... the relation of causal dependence ... remains the only plausible candidate [for this relation].

How does the argument fare, without the assumption? The answer is that it fails, because what the long first sentence says is false: in order for an experience to amount to a genuine perception of an object it does *not* have to be related to the object in a way which prevents the subject's belief from being merely flukishly right. For example, suppose you are watching the competitors as they warm up for a race. You rightly take yourself to be seeing the famous sprinter Sally Fleetfoot at the blocks, but you are unaware that Sally is impersonating her twin sister, who is also a sprinter and was supposed to be competing in this race. In these circumstances, you are indeed merely flukishly or accidentally right in taking it that there is just the person before you that you take yourself to be perceiving. Hence, however your experience and its object need to be related in order for you to perceive it, the relationship does not rule this out.

The literature contains many examples which prove this point, that is, prove that one *can* be merely flukishly right in taking it that there is just the individual or kind of object before one that one takes oneself to be perceiving. For instance, in Alvin Goldman's well-known story about papier-mâché barn façades, Henry, who is driving in the countryside with his son, points out what he rightly takes to be a barn:

> Unknown to Henry, the district he has entered is full of papier-mâché facsimiles of barns. These facsimiles look from the road exactly like barns, but are really just façades, without back walls or interiors, quite incapable of being used as barns. They are so cleverly constructed that travelers invariably mistake them for barns. Having just entered the district, Henry has not encountered any facsimiles; the object he sees is a genuine barn. But if the object on that site were a facsimile, Henry would mistake it for a barn. (Goldman 1976, 773.)

Goldman is interested in explaining why, as he puts it, 'we would be strongly inclined to withdraw the claim that Henry *knows* the object is a barn.' But setting this question aside, indeed setting aside the question of whether we would, or would always, be inclined to withdraw the claim, Henry is certainly merely flukishly or accidentally right in taking it that there is a barn before him. So the relation between the barn and Henry's experience of seeing it, whatever exactly it is, does not rule this out. But Henry's experience *is* a genuine visual perception of a barn.

The argument in the 1998 passage fails because genuine perception does not exclude a flukishly right judgement about the individual or kind of object being perceived. The concept of sense perception is 'closely linked' to that of knowledge, as Strawson says. But while the perception of objects in our environment is a source of factual knowledge, it does not guarantee it, and so luck-excluding conditions that apply to knowledge do not transfer to perception. (Perceiving *that something is the case* is a different matter. For example, seeing *that the thing one is looking at is a barn* is a case of knowing a fact. So any luck-excluding condition that applies to factual knowledge generally applies here too.)

Escaping empiricism

How could Strawson have missed this obvious point? I suspect the reason is that he was still gripped by the fallacy that a perception is a kind of sense-impression, which, as we have seen, makes the argument for the causal theory difficult to resist. Be that as it may, in the final part of this paper, I shall comment briefly on the question of how plausible Strawson's claim remains—the claim that a causal connection between object and experience is 'integral to the ordinary concept of perception'—once we have rejected the fallacy. And then, finally, I shall sketch an approach to the theory of perception that is free, or at least freer, from the empiricist model, which neither Strawson nor Snowdon were quite able to discard.

Concerning the question, it is uncontroversial that we could not perceive physical objects if they did not cause changes to occur in our bodies—directly, in the photoreceptors and the other peripheral neurons on which our senses depend, and indirectly, in the parts of the brain involved in sense perception. Interestingly, however, vision admits an exception to this rule. It is true that we cannot taste a substance that does not affect the chemo-receptors in our tongues and noses, and we cannot hear a vibration that does not affect the auditory nerve. But matt black objects do not emit or reflect any light, or sufficient light to affect the photo-receptors in our retinas, and yet they are visible, unless their background or surroundings are black too; and if one matt black object exactly masks another, its presence does not make a difference to the pattern of excitation caused by the visible scene of which it is a part. This disproves the simplistic idea that every object we perceive initiates a sequence of changes in the body, which terminates in the perception. If we envisage something of this kind, we shall have to treat a visible scene holistically, and not imagine that each individual object in the scene causes a discrete part of the experience that occurs when we perceive it.

However, we can still ask whether the fact that the physical objects we perceive cause our perceptions—either individually or collectively—was discovered when the scientific attitude to nature and to human life began to develop in the ancient world, or whether it is integral to the ordinary concept of perception, and therefore part of what Strawson famously described as 'a massive core of human thinking which has no history—or none recorded in histories of thought.' (Strawson 1959, 10.)

Prosaic at it seems beside this resonant phrase, I favour the first answer. The most we can say is that sense perception cannot be explained scientifically, unless we assume that the objects we perceive cause changes in our bodies—directly, in our sense organs, and indirectly in the other parts of the body involved in sense perception. Certainly, by the seventeenth century, science had progressed far enough for it to be obvious to any informed person who was free from the influence of metaphysical fantasies such as occasionalism, that perception would be utterly mysterious if this were not the case. But the concept of perception is not the concept of a mental state with a special kind of cause, and sentences in which perceptual verbs occur are perfectly intelligible independently of the causal idea. Even the thought that the causal idea must be accepted as a precondition for any scientific study of perception flies in the face of the historical facts. For geometrical optics progressed independently of the study of the physics and physiology of vision at least until the eleventh century, when all three parts

of optics were integrated into a single comprehensive theory by the Arab scientist Ibn al-Haytham (known as Alhazen in the West).[17]

Once we reject the assumption that a perception is a kind of sense-impression, the claim that the causal connection between object and experience is 'integral to the ordinary concept of perception' loses credibility, and it is no longer difficult to see that the causal theory is in reality a proto-scientific *picture* or *model* projected onto 'our ordinary scheme of thought': the object causes changes in our sense organs, and these cause sense-impressions in our mind. The confused idea that a perception is a kind of sense-impression seemed to license an *a priori* argument in favour of this model, but once we have set that idea aside, it does not take a profound study of history to understand that the first step—the object causes changes in our sense organs—was a contested theoretical claim until Alhazen's synthesis became the accepted framework for research in optics, and the second step—changes in our sense organs cause sense-impressions in our mind—is a muddled philosophical doctrine, which was established as an orthodoxy by Locke and modified, but not really abandoned, by Grice. Grice concludes his article with the suggestion that his version of the causal theory, 'however close to the letter, is very far from the spirit of the original theory' (1961, 152). Sixty years on, this seems the reverse of the truth: however far from the letter, it is close to the spirit of the original theory.

So the claim that a causal connection between object and experience is 'integral to the ordinary concept of perception' must be rejected—as long as 'the ordinary concept' is not one that only scientifically literate or well educated people can possess, but is the concept we share with *everyone* who understands that perception is a source of knowledge (the principle Strawson relies on) and knows which pillar it would be correct to say Grice sees in the set-up he describes. But rejecting the claim is not enough. We need to make a more radical break with the modern causal theory than this. It is true, as Strawson says, that sense perception enables us to form true judgements about the world. But this should not be our starting-point when we reflect on the ordinary concept of perception, because infants must learn to perceive objects in their environment before learning to make judgements, and because most sentient animals cannot learn to form judgements. And it is true that learning to form true judgements about the world depends on *conscious* perception. But this should not be our starting point either, because animals that experience conscious sense perception experience unconscious sense perception as well, and because it is arguable—although not certain—that arthropods perceive objects despite not having consciousness at all.[18] For both these reasons, it is helpful to start with unconscious perception—or better, perception as such, without the peculiar quality of

being conscious—and then consider what is special about conscious perception, once we have a tolerably clear understanding of unconscious perception, or perception as such.

So, what is perception as such? The answer, I suggest, is that it is a multi-track disposition, a particular kind of responsiveness to the objects and properties perceived. I have argued elsewhere that knowledge of a fact is an ability—not the ability to perform a specific kind of act or to engage in a specific activity or range of activities, but rather a multi-track disposition, in Ryle's sense of the term.[19] It is the ability to be guided by a fact, to respond to it rationally, in what one thinks, or feels, or does.[20] Cognition of things is similar to (not the same as) cognition of facts. Think of a cat stalking a bird. The bird hops this way, the cat turns this way; the bird flutters across the courtyard, the cat advances a few paces; and so on. The cat's movements are responsive to, are guided by, the bird. Or think of a hiker following a guide. The guide takes the left path, so the traveller takes the left path; the guide pauses, so the hiker pauses; and so on. Whether one is guided by facts or by things, one is responsive to what one is guided by. But as Wittgenstein (1958, §§156-173) pointed out, this is not like a train being guided by the rails. For sense perception—like factual knowledge—is highly plastic, and how it gets expressed depends on one's purposes or goals. Furthermore, an animal's capacity for goal-directed behaviour encompassses controlling the operation of its own sense organs—by changing their orientation, by approaching, touching or retreating from objects, etc.—and this control over sense perception, which can be conscious or unconscious, like perception itself, is an essential part of the normal life of every animal capable of goal-directed behaviour of any kind at all.

All of the highly varied ways in which sentient animals feed, mate, navigate and communicate involve this highly plastic responsiveness to their environment. But arthropods such as dragonflies and praying mantids visually track prey as efficiently as cats do, whether they are conscious (as a few researchers claim[21]) or not.[22] So are we saying not merely that conscious animals can have unconscious perceptions, but that animals can perceive objects in their environment without having consciousness at all? Or was Aristotle (2017, 413b21-24) right to restrict perception to animals that experience desire, pleasure and pain? The approach I am taking is consistent with both positions and I shall not attempt to decide between them here. But if sense perception can*not* occur without the capacity for desire, pleasure and pain, then it is not merely its plasticity and its connection with goal-directed behaviour that account for the distinction between visual perception proper and the sensitivity to light of roundworms, or between the perception of heat and cold and the operation of a thermostat, it is these features of animal life as well.

Turning to the difference between conscious and unconscious sense perception, this does not simply consist in consciousness itself. It has further features, of which two play an especially important part in shaping the concept of perception.

First, conscious sense perception can be pleasant or painful, interesting or dull. This is not to say that only the objects we perceive consciously can make us feel excited, happy or distressed. Unconscious perception can have these effects as well. It means that consciously seeing or hearing something can itself be hedonically or emotionally coloured, as when a cat enjoys the smell of catnip, or when a child is fascinated by an ugly face. Second, conscious sense perception is a source of factual knowledge. For example, if you consciously perceive the green colour of an apple, and know that it is an apple you are seeing, you will normally see, and therefore know, *that it is green*. Hence, the fact that it is green can be your reason for choosing it or rejecting it, and in general for believing or wanting something, and for acting, or not acting, in a certain way. By contrast, the influence of unconscious perception on thought and behaviour normally bypasses factual knowledge. Phillip Merikle has studied this experimentally. The way he puts it is that conscious perception allows subjects to use information to guide their actions, so that they can follow instructions, whereas unconscious perception normally does not. (Merikle & Joordens 1997.)[23]

The case of blindsight also illustrates this point. Blindsight subjects have had part of their striate cortex destroyed, either by injury or because it was surgically removed to treat disease. As a result, they lose conscious visual experience in part of their visual field. But forced-choice experiments have shown that they remain able to identify the locations of point sources of light within the 'blind' part of their visual field, and even the shape of a stimulus, such as a circle or a cross. The subjects deny that they see the stimulus, and think of their answers to the forced choice tasks as guesses, because as far as they can tell, their conjectures are made at random, or at least from uncertain indications, such as an impulse to plump for one answer rather than another. A guess does not need to be perfectly random or completely uninformed. Hence it may not be an accident that a guess is right. But it is generally agreed that what is guessed or plumped for is not known.[24]

In sum, the distinction between conscious and unconscious perception is of critical importance in the theory of perception. If we are mindful of it, we can explore the ways in which perception, action, knowledge, and pleasure are related, freed from the erroneous ideas that perception is conscious by definition and that a perception is a sense-impression with a specific kind of cause.[25]

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[1] This provides a necessary condition for perceiving an 'external' object. As with the causal theory of intentional action, also advanced in the early 1960s, the task of supplementing this necessary condition to provide sufficient conditions was in due course widely acknowledged to be intractable.

[2] Grice and Strawson 1956 defends the distinction against Quine's criticism. Glock 2010 defends it against Timothy Williamson's criticism. See also Glock 2017.

[3] The fact that the modern theory is an exercise in conceptual analysis accounts for, but it does not justify, the narrow range of evidence they consider. The arguments against the causal theory I set out below draw on scientific and historical evidence.

[4] I shall follow Grice here, and assume that the free use he makes of the terms 'impression' and 'sense-impression' is acceptable. Where Grice uses a sentence of the form 'It seems to S as if he can perceive (see, feel, etc.) … ', Strawson uses 'It sensibly seems to X just as if he was seeing (feeling, etc.) …'; others use 'X has a visual (tactile, etc.) experience as of …'; and so on. There are evidently different ways in which these kinds of sentences can be interpreted or understood. For example, one might interpret Strawson's formulation as referring to an experience that represents the subject as having an experience, but this isn't what Strawson has in mind. If I caught sight of myself in a mirror with a startled expression, I could look to myself just as if I was seeing a ghost. But this is an unusual kind of case. 'It sensibly seems to X just as if he was seeing Y' is not meant to refer to an experience which represents X as seeing Y. Nor is it meant to prejudge theoretical questions about perceptual experience—for example, what phenomenal qualities or what kinds of content it can have.

[5] A tip: if smelling X by smelling Y—e.g. smelling lamb chops by smelling the vapour they emit—involves a causal relationship between X and Y, it does not follow that it also involves a causal relationship between Y (or X) and the experience of smelling X.

[6] Strictly speaking, these are explanations of the fact that he *could not* see the first pillar and the fact that he *could* see the second pillar—as opposed to *did not* and *did*. But we might explain the fact that someone *did not* see something in this way if it was relatively salient: there was a presumption that he would see it if it was visible, but it was not visible. And we might explain the fact that someone *did* see something in this way if there was a presumption that he would not see it, e.g. because it was behind him. Explanations can be highly context-sensitive, in this way.

[7] Strawson concurs. He refers in this connection to 'a specific concept, intrinsic to the naïve concept of perception from a-point-of-view, of the causal conditions under which a thing is accessible to perception, namely, that of being within unobstructed range of the relevant organ', and argues that this should not be assimilated to 'the general idea of causal ways or means whereby a material object is causally responsible for producing the experience of perceiving it.' (Strawson 1974, 90.)

[8] The same *petitio* invalidates other arguments modelled on Grice's, such as in Pears 1976 and Lowe 2008.

[9] In his response to Grice in the original Aristotelian Society symposium, White writes: 'Grice's argument […] provides not the slightest evidence for the truth of what he admits is a claim which the causal theory of perception must necessarily make, namely that "perceiving a material object involves having or sensing a sense-datum".' (White 1961, 156). White adds 'I am not saying that the claim is false but only that Grice has given no evidence whatsoever for its truth.' By contrast, I *am* saying that the claim is false.

[10] For a review of the evidence, see Merikle et al. 2001. See also Peirce & Jastrow 1884.

[11] See Merikle et al. 2001; Merikle & Joordens 1997. On this topic, see Glock 2021.

[12] On sentence-nominals, see Hyman 2001; on perfect and imperfect nominals, see Vendler 1967.

[13] The theory that an act is a movement of the agent's body caused in the right way by their mental states was defended in a similar way in the 1960s and 70s. I criticise the assumption that an act is a movement of the agent's body in Hyman 2015, ch. 3.

[14] Two difficulties about the interpretation of these passages have muddied the waters. Lowe (2008, 103-104) interprets the first passage as advancing an externalist view of the content of perceptual experience that is consistent with the causal theory and Child (1994, ch. 5) alleges that the second passage relies on an intuitive grasp of what makes two sorts of states of affairs distinct, or what makes the nature of one case different from the nature of another, and that the claim in this passage is consistent with the causal theory of

perception, if kinds of states of affairs are defined, and their natures are distinguished, in a certain way. But it is not difficult to identify the claim Grice and Strawson are committed to, which Snowdon means to deny, viz. the claim that a particular sense-impression may be either a perception or an hallucination depending on how it is caused. The remark that perception and hallucination are 'of a quite different nature' is to be understood as contradicting this claim. The way of spelling this out I prefer is to say that they are 'of a quite different nature' inasmuch as the former is a relation whereas the latter is not. For example, regardless of its content, *X*'s perception of an oasis is a relation between *X* and an oasis, whereas *X*'s hallucination is not. (By 'regardless of its content' I mean whether it looks to *X* as if there is an oasis in front of him or something else, say, a mirage.) I shall assume that this—as opposed to the externalist idea about content—is what Snowdon's reference in the first passage to a state of affairs that 'involves surrounding objects' and one that is 'intrinsically independent of surrounding objects' is intended to convey.

[15] However, X and Y are distinct if X can exist or occur without Y existing or occurring, even if the reverse is not also true. For example, the conception and the birth of a child are distinct events.

[16] Unsurprisingly, philosophers interested in defending the causal theory of perception against disjunctivist detractors have insisted that the state of affairs a looks-ascription describes or is made true by is the same, whether the subject is perceiving or hallucinating. See for example Lowe 2008, 109.

[17] See Lindberg 1976, ch. 4.

[18] See Feinberg & Mallatt 2017.

[19] See Ryle 2009, 32.

[20] I defend this conception of knowledge in detail in Hyman 2015, ch. 7.

[21] See for example Barron & Klein 2016.

[22] See Land 1992.

[23] Dretske 2006 defends the stronger claim that unconscious perception cannot make a fact about the object perceived available to guide thought or action.

[24] Lowe (1996, 104) says that blindsight subjects are right to deny that they see the stimulus, on the grounds that they do not have a 'visual experience' of seeing it, while rejecting their claim to be guessing, because they are not merely accidentally right. In my view, this is exactly the wrong way round. If we reserve the term 'visual experience' for a *conscious* visual experience, then it is true that the blindsight subject does not have a

visual experiences of the stimulus, but it does not follow that he does not see it. Alternatively, if seeing an object is by definition a visual experience, albeit in some cases an unconscious one, he does have a visual experience of the stimulus. But blindsight subjects are right to insist that they are guessing, for the reason stated in the main text.

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