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und der Beobachtung**

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Editors

Christoph Limbeck-Lilienau
Friedrich Stadler

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Kontakt: <joseph.wang@uibk.ac.at>

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The Presentativity of Perceptual Experiences

Alberto Voltolini

Torino, Italy | alberto.voltolini@unito.it

Abstract

As is well known, direct realism on perception claims that we straightforwardly perceive objects and properties of the world. In this paper, I will try to show how the phenomenological datum according to which perceptual experiences have a presentative character can be explained in direct realist's terms both for perceptions (both veridical and nonveridical) and for hallucinations. This prompts me to drop the naïve realist account of the datum. It also lets me see the presentational character and the (singular) representational content of perceptual experiences as independent.

1. The phenomenological datum, a problem with it, and some possible solutions

As Crane and Craig maintain (2017), the phenomenology of our perceptual experiences provides us with an interesting datum, the *openness* claim. According to this datum, not only the objects of such experiences are given to us as mind-independent items, but also the *phenomenal character* of such experiences gives such objects to us as present (i.e., as being out there) in a way responsive of such a presentness: unlike imagination, one cannot modify at will what one perceives. Phenomenologically speaking, therefore, the *presentational character* of a perceptual experience contributes to its phenomenal character; in that experience, objects are *felt* as present. Thus, it also contributes to the *mode* of such experiences, i.e., to what kind of mental states such experiences have. Since in thoughts objects are not felt as present, presentness tells perceptual experiences from thoughts.

According to direct realism, we straightforwardly perceive objects and properties of the world. Now, a problem with the above datum immediately arises for a direct realist. How can nonveridical perceptual experiences – illusory experiences, hallucinatory experiences – be presentational, if the worldly sensible properties those experiences apparently mobilize are not instantiated out there? Either I see a green wall as yellow, or I straightforwardly hallucinate a yellow wall. In both cases, the sensible property of *being yellow* is not instantiated: either because another such property, *being green*, is instantiated, or because no such property is instantiated. Then, how can the uninstantiated property be given in my experience as being out there?

Clearly enough, the problem arises for any theorist on perception, but it is particularly pressing for a direct realist. For an *indirect* realist on perceptual experience solves it by saying that the sensible properties in question are indeed instantiated, yet not by a worldly object but by a mind-dependent object, i.e., what one immediately senses and in virtue of which one may indirectly perceive a worldly object: a sense-datum. Indeed, it is because of this problem that the indirect realist may convincingly appeal to the so-called Phenomenal Principle:

(PP) If it sensibly appears to one to be something that possesses a certain sensible property, then there is something of which one is aware that possesses that property.

For (PP) naturally leads to her solution to the problem in terms of mind-dependent objects as instantiating the relevant sensible properties.

As is well known, indirect realism is full of independent problems. So, one might try to go in the other direction and radicalize direct realism in terms of a *naïve realist* account of the datum. Naïve realism sticks to the stronger thesis that we straightforwardly perceive objects and properties of the world *as they are* in the world. Thus, it may provide two intertwined solutions to the problem. First, as to perceptual illusions, the naïve realist may say that some, perhaps all perceptual illusions are *veridical* experiences; they indeed veridically grasp objective properties yet of a different kind from worldly properties (Fish 2009). Second, as to hallucinations, the naïve realist may say that hallucinations, at perhaps some perceptual illusions as well, are not presentational experiences; thus, they constitute a different kind of mental states from perceptions. Two variants of the second solution are available. Hallucinations are not presentational either because i) by not being related with worldly sensible properties, they have no presentational character hence no phenomenal character either (Fish 2009), or because ii) they just make as if they were as presentational as veridical perceptual experiences are, by being parasitic or dependent on the latter experiences with respect to their phenomenal character (Martin 1997 Nudds 2013).

In what follows, by scrutinizing why such naïve realist solutions do not seem to be viable, I will try to show how the aforementioned phenomenological datum can be explained in mere direct realist's terms both for perceptions (veridical, nonveridical) and for hallucinations.

2. The problem of illusion

As Fish (2009) says, there are three different kinds of perceptual illusions, which displace themselves along a line going from the more objective to the more subjective: a) *physical* illusions (e.g. a stick seen as bent in water) b) *optical* illusions (e.g. grasping the Müller-Lyer figure) c) *cognitive* illusions (e.g. mistaking a rope for a snake). I will try to show that the first naïve realist solution may work both for a) and b), but not for c).

With respect to the a)-cases, in seeing a straight stick as bent, a green wall as yellow, a round coin as elliptical etc., a naïve realist may say that one does not experience the uninstantiated worldly property, but rather another *objective* property of a different kind. This property may be: a *situation-dependent* property (a relational property involving environmental factors, e.g. light refraction) (Schellenberg 2008, Fish 2009), or a *look* (the stick, the wall, the coin have the looks that paradigmatically bent things, paradigmatically yellow things, paradigmatically elliptical things respectively possess) (Martin 2010, Kalderon 2011),

or even a *mind-dependent* property (an outline shape, the solid angle traced to the object's contours from a certain point of view; an occlusion size) (Hopkins 1998, Hyman 2006).

Some such solutions also apply to the b)-cases, e.g. the 'look'-solution: the Müller-Lyer figure has a look that figures whose lines are paradigmatically different in length possess. Yet no such solution applies to the c)-cases. While mistaking a rope for a snake, I ascribe the rope a 'snakish' look – what paradigmatic snakes possess – that the rope does *not* possess, for the rope actually possesses another look, a 'ropish' look – what paradigmatic ropes possess – which I grasp once I recover from the illusion. Thus, as to c-) cases the original problem arises again: how can we account for the presentness of an illusory experience if the objective property it supposedly mobilizes is not instantiated?

Granted, the naïve realist has a reply. Cognitive illusions are perceptual experiences that only suffer from a conceptualization problem – in our experience, we first conceive something as a thing of a kind *K*, then (once freed from the illusion) we reconceive it as a thing of another kind *K'*. Thus, reconceptualization does not affect the phenomenal character of that experience (Fish 2009).

Yet although this reply may work in some cases, it does not work in the snake/rope case. For here, a phenomenal change occurs between the 'before' (the misrecognition) and the 'after' (the recognition) stage of the experience (indeed, we no longer experience fear because we are phenomenally affected by the recognition).

Thus, appealing to all such properties (situation-dependent properties, looks, mind-dependent properties) does not explain the *illusoriness* of a perceptual experience. The problem of how an illusory perceptual experience can be presentational remains.

Here comes my suggestion as to how a direct realist may face this problem without espousing naïve realism. To begin with, regardless of their veridicality, perceptions are presentations of instantiated worldly sensible properties because the latter properties are manifested in the sensory features of those perceptions that affect their phenomenal character (Smith 2002). Sensory features are the properties of such experiences that are *manners of presentation* of those worldly properties. Moreover, again regardless of their veridicality, perceptions are qualified in their *mode*, in their being the kind of mental states they are, by their being caused by existing worldly objects (Recanati 2007). Thus, no similarity between their sensory features and the instantiated sensible properties they present must occur. Thus, both a veridical perception, say of a green wall, and a nonveridical perception, say of that wall again yet as being yellow, are presentations of the same instantiated sensible worldly property, *being green* in this case. Yet that property is respectively presented in different manners, via the different sensory features such experiences possess. These features determine different phenomenal characters for such perceptions, respectively *being green** and *being yellow** (Peacocke 1983).

Clearly enough, such sensory features qualify the phenomenal awareness (Block 1995) of such perceptions; they can even be attended to in an indirect way. Yet they are not objects of awareness, for they do not contribute to the aboutness of such phenomenally aware experiences. Thus, this account is no indirect realism in disguise.

3. The problem of hallucination

I may now assess the original problem with respect to hallucinations. Let us reconsider the second naïve realist solution to that problem, in particular its first variant, the '*no phenomenal character*'-solution. This variant adopts a *relational* conception of phenomenal character: having for an experience a phenomenal character amounts to its being acquainted with certain *instantiated* worldly sensible properties constituting its presentational character. As a consequence, a hallucination has *no* phenomenal character, it simply has the same cognitive effects as the corresponding indiscriminable perception (Fish 2009).

However, this variant hardly works. Since as to a perfect hallucination we may not realize that the experience we took to be a perception is a hallucination, it is implausible that that experience originally yet erroneously seemed to have a phenomenal character. Moreover, this solution implausibly equates a hallucination with a zombie perception, which is by definition cognitively identical with the corresponding experienced perception yet, unlike a hallucination, is a perception of an existing worldly object.

The second variant, the '*parasitic phenomenal character*'-solution, seems definitely better than the first one. For in holding that hallucinations just make as if they were as presentational as veridical perceptual experiences are, it still ascribes such hallucinations a phenomenal character.

Yet it presupposes a hardly justifiable dependence of hallucinations on perceptions. Pace Martin (2006), hallucinations do not stand to perceptions in the same relationship fiction stands to reality. Fiction may depend on reality, both ontologically and epistemically: not only fiction presupposes reality, as a way of modifying it or its representation (Husserl 1970), but also one cannot represent a fictional world unless one has already represented the real world. Yet hallucinations do not exhibit either dependence on perceptions: one's first perceptual experience may be hallucinatory and if Cartesians are right, all perceptual experiences may turn out to be such. Granted, one may say that hallucinations are the bad cases whereas perceptions are the good cases of perceptual experiences. In order to say so, however, one must postulate a shared function that only perceptions satisfy, thereby pointing to a common factor between perceptions and hallucinations that may be hard for a naïve realist to swallow. Moreover, it is generally not the case that bad cases depend on good ones. As the history of technology abundantly shows, bad artefacts do not depend on good ones.

Granted, one might differently justify the second variant by saying that the very notion of presentation is *causally* based. For one might then say that, unlike perceptions, hallucinations present no sensible worldly properties. For since in the hallucinatory case such properties are uninstantiated, they can cause no feature in the phenomenal character of the experience.

Yet why must one invoke that notion, rather than say that, unlike thoughts, *qua* perceptual experiences all such states are *presentational* ones (Searle 2015)? Presentation has merely to do with the fact that a property manifests itself in the perceptual experience; even with respect to the actually existent and causally determinant object of a perception, not all its relevant properties are so manifested (in particular, those properties that are instantiated in occluded parts of that object, Noë 2004).

By appealing to a noncausal notion of presentation, one may then say that hallucinations are presentations of worldly sensible properties via their sensory features as

manners of presentation. Simply, unlike perceptions, the sensible worldly properties the sensory features of hallucinations present are not fixed by a causal, but rather by a similarity, relationship. Unlike an illusory experience of a green wall as yellow, a hallucinatory experience of a yellow wall presents yellowness, not greenness, the property that is more qualitatively similar to the sensory features that hallucination instantiates. Thus, there is no determination route from manners of presentation to presented properties: the sensory feature of *being yellow** may present both the worldly sensible property of *being green* (in an illusion) and the worldly sensible property of *being yellow* (in a hallucination). Yet this noncausal fixation depends on the fact that, unlike the perception mode, the hallucination mode is not qualified by its being caused by existing worldly objects, since in its case no such things are easily available. Thus, the phenomenological datum from which we started, the openness claim, may be ultimately justified for all perceptual experiences.

One may wonder whether the claim that even a hallucination presents worldly sensible properties entails a definitely not trivial consequence; namely, that it has an object of the *same* metaphysical kind as a perception, a *concrete* object, i.e., an object that *may* exist (Cocchiarella 1982, Priest 2016²), yet something that, unlike the object of a perception, does not actually exist.

In the framework of direct realism, some have already claimed that both perceptions and hallucinations have ordinary objects, existent and nonexistent respectively (this idea traces back to Thomas Reid; see Butcharov 1994, Smith 2002, Priest 2016²). Yet a direct realist may defend the two claims independently. For *pace* Smith (2002), unlike mind-dependent objects such as sense-data, the concrete merely possible object of a hallucination does not exemplify the worldly sensible properties it is ascribed in a hallucination. For since they are existence-entailing, those properties are uninstantiated. Something that is hallucinated to be yellow is not yellow, for *being yellow* entails to *exist*. Indeed, this direct realist does not commit to (PP), but to a weaker version of it:

(PP*) if it sensibly appears to one to be something that possesses a certain sensible property, then there is something of which one is aware that *seemingly* possess that property.

If a direct realist allows that hallucinations to have concrete yet merely possible objects, another consequence rather ensues. Although three qualitatively identical perceptual experiences sharing their *presentational* character – a veridical perception, an illusory perception, a hallucination – also share their *predicative* content, their whole singular *representational* contents do not supervene on that char-

acter. For the *objectual* parts of such different contents are different, the first two involving different concrete existent objects, the last one involving another concrete yet non-existent object. E.g., three yellowish experiences are respectively a veridical perception *that O is yellow*, an illusory perception *that O' is yellow*, a hallucination *that O" is yellow*.

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