

THE PARAPHENOMENAL HYPOTHESIS

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- Sam:* Say, Abe; can you explain to me how the telephone works? I don't get it.
Abe: Sure. Imagine you've got a very, very big dog. It's so big, it can stand in Manhattan with its head in Brooklyn and its tail in the Bronx.
Sam: Uh huh?
Abe: So, when you talk to the head in Brooklyn, the tail wags in the Bronx.
Sam: Ah, okay; I see now. Very nice. But what about wireless? Can you explain to me how that works?
Abe: Simple. It's the same thing, only you don't have the dog.

In *The Concept of Mind*, Gilbert Ryle accused Descartes of advancing what he called the 'paramechanical hypothesis', according to which the structure and operations of the mind can be understood on the model of the structure and operations of a physical system. The body is a complex machine – 'a bit of clockwork' – that operates according to laws governing the mechanical interactions of material things. The mind, on the other hand, according to Descartes (according to Ryle), is an immaterial machine that operates according to formally analogous laws governing the paramechanical interactions of immaterial things – 'a bit of not-clockwork'. In other words, mental processes are the same as physical processes, only you don't have the matter.

I don't know whether Descartes actually thought this. But, surely, if he did, he was making some kind of logical or conceptual error. Mental processes *can't be the same as* physical processes, minus the matter, since the matter matters. The properties of physical systems have physical explanations, which are explanations in terms of physical properties and physical laws. But it's *absurd* – a category mistake – to suppose that mechanical explanations could apply to immaterial things with no physical properties, subject to no physical laws.

Now, whether or not Descartes made this mistake, I think contemporary reductive representationalists make a precisely analogous one in their account of non-veridical perceptual experience. These theorists hold that the phenomenology of perception (and of introspection and proprioception) can be reduced to a kind of non-phenomenal intentionality, which in turn can be explained in naturalistic causal-informational-teleological terms. The qualitative features associated with an experience are properties, not of the experience, but of the worldly (or bodily) things it represents. The blue that characterizes what it's like to see a clear sky at noon, for example, is a property, not of one's *experience of the sky*, but of *the sky*. Its relevance to the characterization of the experience of a clear sky at noon is due to the fact that one's experience *represents* it, not that one's experience *instantiates* it. These views are *externalist* about qualia (see Byrne and Tye 2006).

To suppose that experience instantiates perceivable properties is to commit what Place (1956) termed the 'phenomenological fallacy' – that is, to conclude that properties of experienced objects are properties of experiences of them (because experience is required for awareness of them) – and to court all of the mysteries and explanatory dead ends of ontological dualism. Sound scientific philosophy requires that we give materialistic explanations of *all* phenomena, including mental ones. The mind is (or arises from, or supervenes on, or is realised in; or whatever) the brain; mental processes are brain processes; mental states are brain states; etc. Your brain doesn't turn blue when you look at a clear sky at noon; it doesn't taste like chocolate when you eat chocolate; and it doesn't sound like the Beatles when you listen to *Revolver*. All of those properties are out in the world, though they are *represented by* what's in the head. One's perceptual representation of the sky is no more blue than one's conceptual representation of snow is white, or cold.

However, a prima facie problem for views like this is the existence of illusions, dreams, and hallucinations – cases where there *isn't* anything out there that is the bearer of the properties we're aware of in experience. If you've ingested a hallucinogenic substance, you might have an experience just like one you'd have if you were floating down stream, or surrendering to the void, in the absence of any such things within sensory range. But how could this be, if the qualitative properties characterizing experience are properties of things perceived?

According to Place, what's common to veridical and non-veridical experience is the brain process underlying each, regardless of the presence or absence of the objects or properties you seem to be seeing. When you have veridical experiences, your brain processes represent external objects and their properties, which latter you mention when characterizing how it is with you, experientially. And when you have non-veridical experiences, you the same brain processes occur, but in the absence of the external objects and their properties. Hallucinating a clear blue sky at noon is (internally) the same thing as perceiving it, only you don't have the sky.

But where is the *blue* in such a case? On this view, it's not in the brain (*it never was*); and it's not in the world. But it's still in your *experience*, in the sense that you're still consciously aware of blueness. You would (*pace* Fish 2008) describe your experience in exactly the same way as you would if you weren't hallucinating: what it's like to see the sky at noon and what it's like to hallucinate the sky at noon are *subjectively indistinguishable*. And, one may suppose, they're subjectively indistinguishable because they're *phenomenally identical*.¹ But

¹ In some discussions of non-veridical experience, much is made of the fact that subjective indiscriminability isn't sufficient for phenomenal identity, given the soritical possibility of experience A being indiscriminable from B, and B from C, where A is discriminable from C. But all this shows is that arguments from hallucination ought to appeal to the metaphysical premise of phenomenal identity instead of the epistemological premise of indiscriminability.

now there's no place to put the property you'd mention in describing what your experience is like. It *can't* be the same thing, only without the sky, since the sky was where the qualitative feature you experienced was supposed to be located. This *paraphenomenal* hypothesis is no more plausible than the paramechanical one.

Some reductive representationalists, in particular Dretske (1995, 1996, 1999), Lycan (1987, 1996, 2008) and Tye (2000, 2015), propose that in cases of non-veridical experience there *is* something that exists contemporaneously with your experience, and which is represented by it – though it's not the same as what's represented in subjectively indistinguishable veridical perceptions. For Dretske and Tye, non-veridical experiences represent *uninstantiated universals*; whereas for Lycan they represent *properties instantiated by non-actual objects in non-actual possible worlds*. The non-veridical experiential states are intrinsically just like the veridical ones, and represent the same objects and properties; it's just that the objects don't actually exist and the properties aren't instantiated (at least not *locally*).

Intuitively, it may seem unproblematic to speak of non-veridical experience in this way. If you hallucinate a baboon wearing a pink party hat in the living room, it seems perfectly natural to say that your experience represents an object that might have been, but isn't, in the living room, and a colour that might have been, but isn't, locally instantiated. But interpreting this to mean that your experience represents an object that is located in the (or a) living room in some *other* possible world, or an *uninstantiated* colour, is not consistent with the reductive representationalist's claim that the qualitative features of experience are features of the objects of experience, and not experience itself. For, uninstantiated blue and pink *are not blue or pink*, and neither otherworldly objects nor uninstantiated properties *appear to us* the way actual objects and instantiated properties do. Indeed, they don't *appear* at all. Neither merely possible baboons nor

uninstantiated colours *look like* anything. We can't *see* them. The reductive representationalist says that in veridical experience objects appear to us in certain ways, but that these ways are properties of experienced objects, not our experience of them. But if the things that have the properties that appear to us are removed – either by simply eliminating them or by replacing them with things that don't have appearance properties – then the basis for a reductive account of the phenomenality of experience goes with them.² Saying it's the same thing, only the dog is in another possible world, or doghood isn't instantiated, is just as bad as saying it's the same thing, only you don't have the dog. If there's no actual *dog*, there's no sense to saying it's the same thing.

Given that veridical and non-veridical experiences can be phenomenally identical, the claim that the latter represent what might have been is plausible only on a *non-reductive* version of representationalism, according to which experiences instantiate phenomenal properties which are themselves intrinsically representational.³ If what might have been veridically perceived, but isn't, is experientially identical to what is veridically perceived, then it can't be that the properties in virtue of which the experiences are identical are themselves experientially distinct. But instantiated pink and uninstantiated pink *are* experientially distinguishable – both subjectively and objectively – as are actual and merely possible baboons. We can't see counterfactual apes, and we can't see uninstantiated colors. We *can*, however, according to the *non-reductive* representationalist – and anyone else who holds that phenomenal properties are

² This point is made in Thompson 2008. Thompson does not, however, recognise the *absurdity* of the reductive representationalist's position.

³ See Chalmers 2004 for detailed explication of the distinction between reductive and non-reductive representationalism. See also Loar 2003 for a presentation of non-reductive representationalism.

intrinsic properties of experience – have qualitative experiences *as of* baboons and pink party hats where and when there are none, since the properties that characterise what the experience is like *are* instantiated – just not in the external world.⁴

Dretske's, Tye's and Lycan's proposals can't account for the subjective indiscriminability of veridical and non-veridical experience. If subjective sameness of experience is understood in terms of the ways things appear, and uninstantiated properties and non-actually-existing objects don't appear, and don't instantiate perceivable properties, then dreaming or hallucinating and perceiving can't be the same, minus the external object, any more than a mental process can be the same as a physical process, minus the matter, or wireless can be the same as telephone, minus the dog. They are guilty of advancing an absurd paraphenomenal hypothesis.

It might be thought that this problem can be avoided by going disjunctivist. According to disjunctivism, veridical experience is 'a basic, unanalyzable metaphysical condition' (Brewer 2008: 170) of experientially apprehending facts about the external world. Subjectively indiscriminable non-veridical experience is metaphysically distinct, since the relevant worldly facts are no longer involved. Perception and hallucination do not have a substantive common nature: hallucination is not the same thing as perception, minus the world. If they are subjectively indiscriminable, it is only because they share the disjunctive property of being either veridical or non-veridical. Nothing more can be said by way of *explaining* their subjective indiscriminability. In particular, it's not due to their instantiating or representing the same phenomenal properties. Thus, attempts like Dretske's, Tye's and Lycan's to explain

⁴ The uninstantiated 'clusters of properties' and 'sensible profiles' of, respectively, McGinn 1999 and Johnston 2004 are as problematic as Dretske's and Tye's uninstantiated universals. They can't explain the *phenomenal* sameness of veridically and non-veridically experienced scenarios.

indiscriminability in terms of objects and properties represented are quixotic, since there is in fact nothing *substantive* to explain.

This strikes me as a triumph of obfuscation. In general, the idea that indiscriminability of veridical and non-veridical experiences – or of anything else, for that matter – could be due to nothing more than the sharing of disjunctive properties is very hard to believe. (Shall we conclude that pencils and pork chops are indiscriminable because they share the property *being-a-pencil-or-a-pork-chop*?) Moreover, to say that perception is indiscriminable from hallucination when the subject can't tell whether she's perceiving or hallucinating – when all she can know is that the experience is either a perception or a hallucination – isn't to give an *explanation* at all, even a superficial one.

Furthermore, the metaphysical version of the argument from hallucination is based on the premise that it's possible for veridical and non-veridical experiences to *be* phenomenally identical (from which it follows that they are subjectively indiscriminable; the converse need not hold). A disjunctivist would, then, have to argue that this is in fact not possible – that veridical and hallucinatory experiences must differ in their intrinsic phenomenal character. Then it could be denied that it's possible for one to be having the very same experience one has of the external world while hallucinating.

But how is this claim to be made out? Either, I think, by maintaining that hallucinations have phenomenal character which is (perhaps detectably, perhaps not) relevantly different from that of veridical perceptions, or by maintaining that hallucinations have no phenomenal character at all – i.e., that there is *nothing* it's like to hallucinate.⁵ The main problem with the former strategy is that it won't help the reductive representationalist, since, for him, if an experience has

⁵ Bill Fish once held this view (Fish 2008). I believe he no longer does.

a correct phenomenal characterization at all, it is in terms of the qualitative properties of the objects experienced. However, the phenomenal characterization of the experience will either mention properties that are instantiated by objects one perceives or not. In the former case, we no longer have a hallucination. In the latter case, the problems detailed above remain. As long as there is something it is like to hallucinate, the problem of the *location* of the properties experienced will arise.

So it seems the only option for a disjunctivish solution to the reductive representationalist's problem is to deny that there is any phenomenology of hallucinations (or dreams, or, to the relevant degree, illusions) at all. Once hallucinations are phenomenally characterised, the problem of the placement of the mentioned qualitative properties arises. So the only way out of it is to deny that hallucinations have phenomenal characterizations. But surely it is a *reductio* of disjunctivism, as well as reductive representationalism, and any other qualia-externalist view (including at least some versions of direct and naive realism) to deny that there is something it is like to hallucinate, or to dream.⁶

⁶ My thanks to two referees for *Analysis* for very helpful comments.

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