11. Disjunctivism

- The Disjunctive Theory of Perception
- Assessment
Three Theses About Perception

- **The Phenomenal Principle**: $S$ perceives $a \rightarrow a$ exists

- **The Common Kind Assumption**: veridical perception, illusion and hallucination mental events of the same fundamental kind

- **Mind-Independence**: we are directly aware of mind-independent physical objects
# Three Theories of Perception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Phenomenal Principle</th>
<th>Common Kind Assumption</th>
<th>Mind-Independence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense-Datum Theory</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentionalism</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disjunctivism</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disjunctivism

- Experience **EITHER** veridical perception **OR** illusion/hallucination
- No ‘highest common factor’ (McDowell)
- Perception a relation between perceiving subjects and mind-independent physical objects.
- Nature of perceptual experience determined by what the perception is a perception of:
  - Different object, different perceptual experience
  - No object, no perceptual experience
Object-Dependence

- Jemima and Jim are identical (let’s suppose)
- Perception of Jemima is **indiscriminable** from perception of Jim.
- But perception of Jemima is **different** from perception of Jim
  - Perception is of Jemima: a relation to Jemima, not Jim
• Perception of Jemima **indiscriminable** from hallucination *as of* Jemima

• Perception of Jemima **different** from hallucination *as of* Jemima
  – Perception is *of* Jemima
  – Hallucination is not a perception at all!
Williamson on Knowledge

- Williamson is (almost) a disjunctivist about knowledge. (N.B. not quite right, but details aren’t important.)
- S knows that $p$ OR S merely believes that $p$
- Knowledge cannot be analysed in terms of belief: belief is not a ‘highest common factor’ to knowing and merely believing
- Knowledge is factive: S knows that $p$ entails $p$ is true.
Assessment

Criteria for assessing theories of perception

- Phenomenology
- Metaphysics
- Epistemology
Phenomenology

• In veridical perception we are directly aware of the mind-independent physical world
  – ‘the appearance that is presented to one in those cases is a matter of the fact itself being disclosed to the experiencer’ (McDowell, p. 211)

• Consistent with ‘transparency of experience’ and the ‘phenomenal principle’

• Explains phenomenological difference between perception and belief
1. Indiscriminability

- Veridical perception and hallucination are subjectively indiscriminable.
- Things that are indiscriminable are of the same fundamental kind.
- So, veridical perception and hallucination are experiences of the same fundamental kind.
- Compare: if two colours are indiscriminable then (plausibly) they are the same kind of colour.
Metaphysics

Replies?

• Are veridical perception and hallucination indiscriminable?
  – Austin: ‘I may have the experience (dubbed “delusive” presumably) of dreaming that I am being presented to the Pope. Could it seriously be suggested that having this dream is “qualitatively indistinguishable” from actually being presented to the Pope?’ (Sense and Sensibilia, p. 80)
Metaphysics

Replies?

- Are things that are indiscriminable necessarily of the same fundamental kind?
  - Jade: nephrite and jadeitite
  - Austin: ‘If I am told that a lemon is generically different from a piece of soap, do I “expect” that no piece of soap could look just like a lemon? Why should I?’ (Sense and Sensibilia, p. 81).

Q: Are either of these replies convincing?
Metaphysics

2. Same Cause, Same Effect

• Veridical perception and hallucination can have the same proximate cause, i.e. same cause in the brain.
• Same (kind of) cause, same (kind of) effect.
• Therefore, veridical perception and hallucination mental events of the same kind?
Metaphysics

Replies?

• Same cause, different effect
• Different cause

Q: Are either of these replies convincing?
Epistemology

• Secures knowledge of the external world...
  – ‘Suppose someone is presented with an appearance that it is raining. It seems unproblematic that if his experience is in a suitable way the upshot of the fact that it is raining, then the fact itself can make it the case that he knows that it is raining’ (McDowell, p. 213)

• ...but at the expense of self-knowledge
  – cannot distinguish perception from hallucination ‘from the inside’
Further Reading
