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Perceptual Presence

The term 'perceptual presence' (and related terms such as 'phenomenal presence' and 'presentational phenomenology') was rarely used until the last couple of decades. Recent years have seen an increase in its popularity, with a number of articles and books which use this term or explore the issues around it¹. In this paper I shall explore three sets of issues concerning perceptual presence. The first set of issues involves clarifying what perceptual presence is; the second involves indicating possible ways in which it might be explained; the third involves considering some of the work to which this notion might be put.

1.

To start, is there a distinctively *perceptual* presence, i.e., a sense of presence which is distinctive of all and only perceptual experiences? This sense could be distinctive of perceptual experiences in either a narrow or broad sense (e.g. it could be restricted to genuine perceptual experiences, or it may also characterise illusions and hallucinations)². In what follows, I assume that it is at least worth considering the suggestion that perceptual presence is characteristic of all and only perceptual experiences, broadly construed. Indeed, it may be that perceptual presence is one of the features which marks off perceptual experiences, broadly construed, from other types of experience.

To say that there is a *sense* of presence indicates that this is a *phenomenological* aspect of experiences, e.g. an aspect of what it is like to have a perceptual experience. To say that it is characteristic of perceptual *experiences* indicates that perceptual presence is not just characteristic of judgements one might make on the basis of what one perceives or seems to perceive. And because this sense characterises perceptual experiences broadly construed, to say that one has a sense of the presence of the object of one's perceptual experience does not entail that this object actually exists or actually is the way it appears to be in one's experience³.

What, then, is the sense of perceptual presence? In the recent literature, the most familiar use of this term is to describe our sense, not just of specific properties or parts of the object we perceive, but of the whole object. For instance, Alan Thomas writes "The problem of perceptual presence is that of explaining how our perceptual experience of the world gives us a sense of the presence of objects in perception over and above the perceived sensory properties of that object"⁴. Or consider this example from Alva Noë, who more than any other writer has popularised the terminology of perceptual presence:

"A cat sits motionless on the far side of a picket fence. You have a sense of the presence of a cat even though, strictly speaking, you only see those parts of the cat that show through the fence. How is it that we can in this way enjoy a perceptual experience as of a whole cat? [...] We have a

sense of the presence of that which, strictly speaking, we do not perceive."⁵

Noë stresses that one's sense of the whole cat is specifically perceptual: the cat is not simply present in thought, but in one's perception.

Different theories have been offered to account for this phenomenon. Noë suggests that the occluded properties of perceived objects "are present perceptually in the sense that they are perceptually accessible to us"⁶. This access consists in our tacit understanding of sensorimotor skills, our ability to reveal occluded properties by our movements. Proponents of an alternative account suggest that occluded properties are present because the properties we actually perceive are supplemented by those we imagine to be there⁷.

However, this sense of presence (i.e., the sense we have of the whole object as opposed to the parts or properties which are directly sensed) is not strictly perceptual. It arguably applies to other modes as well, e.g. it can characterise experiences in recollection or imagination. In recollecting a previous experience of seeing a tomato, I have a sense of the tomato as a whole, not just the properties of the tomato which I actually sensed. We can refer to this as the *sense of objectivity* or *objecthood*: what is present to the subject is the whole object and not just some part, property or surface of it. The sense of objectivity is not limited to perceptual experiences, even broadly construed.⁸

I suggest that the phrase 'perceptual presence' actually denotes a different (though related) phenomenon, the sense in which a perceived object is present to the subject in a way in which a recollected or imagined object typically is not. In other words, the appropriate contrast for perceptual presence is not the givenness of the whole object as opposed to the givenness of some of its properties, but the givenness of objects in perception as opposed to the way in which they are given in recollection or imagination. This sense of presence is what Edmund Husserl termed *Leibhaftigkeit* or bodily presence:

"The object stands before us in perception as bodily present, as, to put it more precisely yet, actually present, as given

What it is like to hold an orange or hear a siren is different to what it is like to imagine holding an orange or recollect hearing a siren.

in propria persona in the actual present. In imagination, the object does not stand before us in the mode of bodily presence, of reality, of actual presence. Certainly, it stands before our eyes, but as an object that is not actually given now. It might be thought of as now present or as simultaneous to an actual present, but this presence is a presence in thought, not the presence that belongs to bodily presence, to the presence of perception.⁹

A more recent description of the same phenomenon is given by Mohan Matthen:

“When I look down at my hands right now, it looks as if they are working on a black computer keyboard. There is something about my visual state that makes it seem as if the keyboard is really there, and that it is really black. [...] When I am relaxing in an armchair, I can close my eyes and summon up a fairly detailed and vivid image of my hands on a black keyboard. This state of visual imaging is different from my present visual state. It does not make it seem as if the keyboard is really there, nor that it ever was, or that it is really black.”¹⁰

It may be that bodily presence requires a sense of objecthood, but it is not exhausted by this sense. In perception the object is not only given as a whole, but it is also given as in some sense *here*, in the present moment. Once again, this is not to say that the object actually is where it is given as being, or that it actually exists simultaneously with the experience. The claim is not an ontological one, but rather phenomenological: this is the way that things seem to the subject of the experience.

Consider an experience of holding an orange or hearing a siren, as opposed to imagining holding an orange or recalling hearing a siren. The difference between perceiving and other modes, e.g. recollecting or imagining, is in part phenomenological: what it is like to hold an orange or hear a siren is different to what it is like to imagine holding an orange, recollecting hearing a siren, etc. Furthermore, this difference remains even if the perceptual experience is illusory or hallucinatory, that is if the orange or the siren is not as it appears, or even if it is not there at all. And this difference is, in part, a matter of the object’s seeming to be here now, to be bodily present as Husserl puts it.¹¹

2.

One might ask what can be said about perceptual presence which could be of philosophical interest. Once clarified, it seems to be such an obvious and pervasive phenomenon that one might doubt whether an informative account of it could be given. Certainly, it is not obvious that it can be analysed or reduced. However, this is no reason to think that an informative account of perceptual presence is not possible in principle. Such an account could work in at least two ways: by relating perceptual presence to other aspects of the phenomenology of experiences, of what it is like for a subject to undergo them; or by relating perceptual presence to non-phenomenological aspects of experiences, or to aspects of other events, processes etc. In this section I shall not attempt to provide an informative account or explanation of perceptual presence, but to indicate how each of these ways of providing an account might be developed.

An account of the second kind is offered by Elizabeth Pacherie: “What characterizes perception and accounts for its distinctive character is the fact that it exhibits a temporal organization the dynamics of which is under the dependence of both the object and the subject’s activity of perceptual exploration.”¹²

Pacherie stresses the importance of the temporal extension of perceptual experiences, the fact that each experience extends across a dynamically developing sequence of movements and changes, and the fact that the development of this sequence involves not only the object but also the subject’s own movements. The role of kinesthesia and the subject’s “perceptual-motor exploration activity” suggest that Pacherie’s account is similar, at least in its general outline, to the sensorimotor account of the sense of objectivity proposed by Noë¹³.

I am sympathetic to Pacherie’s account, but I would stress two further aspects of perceptual presence, which connect it to different phenomenological aspects of the subject’s experiences and so indicate ways in which an account of the first kind might be developed. The first of these is the importance of tense, or more specifically the subject’s sense of something as occurring *now*. It is arguably characteristic of all perceptual experiences that the object of the experience is given as existing at the present moment, as simultaneous with the experience in

which it is given.¹⁴ This is true even when the perceived object is not in fact simultaneous with the experience, as when one sees a star which has ceased to exist in the time it took for the light to travel to one's eyes. The perceptual presence of objects is in part a sense of their existing at the present moment. In contrast, in recollection one will have a sense of the objects and events one remembers as having existed or occurred in the past.

Second, the adjective 'present' when used in straightforward, non-quotational speech, is implicitly relational: something is present if it stands in a certain relation to the speaker or the context of utterance. But I suggest that when used in the context of perceptual presence, this word is relational in a further sense. The object is given as relative to the perceiver's *body*, as located in an egocentric spatial framework, that is a framework oriented around the body of the perceiver. For an object to be experienced as present is, in part, for it to be experienced as *in the same space* as the perceiver's body. Or, to put it another way, to perceive an object is to experience oneself as belonging with the object, as in an *experienced spatial proximity* with it¹⁵. The object is 'here', in this space, and so am I, the perceiver. Perception gives me the object directly, but what this comes to is the sense that I am in the scenario along with the object: I am (bodily) here along with the object.

3.

Moving to the third range of issues, I shall consider three philosophical debates in which the concept of perceptual presence may prove useful: debates concerning the semantics of perceptual judgements, the epistemology of such judgements, and the metaphysics of perceptual experiences. What I shall say about each debate will be brief but will hopefully indicate some interesting avenues for further discussion.

Many singular judgements are perceptual, e.g. when one speaks of 'This chair' or 'That tomato' one will often be perceiving the object to which one refers. Indeed, it is arguable that when one has a perceptual experience, one is typically in a position to make a singular judgement about the object of that experience¹⁶. Is perceptual presence relevant to this fact?

To see that it might be, consider what Michelle Montague terms "the phenomenological particularity fact": we perceive (or at least seem to perceive) individual objects as particulars, "as discrete, numerically distinct" entities¹⁷. She cites the following example from Michael Martin: "When I look at a duck in front of me, I am not merely presented with the fact that there is at least one duck in the area, rather I seem to be presented with *this* thing in front of me, which looks to me to be a duck [...] It looks to me as if there is a particular object before me."¹⁸

It is plausible that part of what it is for an experience to exhibit perceptual presence is for the object of that experience to be given as a particular entity. The suggestion is that this sense of particularity explains why when one

has a perceptual experience, one is thereby in a position to make a singular judgement about its object. The object is given as particular, which means it is apt to be referred to as that very object itself (rather than as something which satisfies a certain description); and it is perceptually present, which explains why (for the subject experiencing it at least) it is apt to be picked out by being pointed at¹⁹.

This line of thought may be questioned in the case of hallucinations (and perhaps some illusions). For instance, it has been argued that when there is no object to be picked out or referred to, the subject cannot make a genuine singular judgement. The content of such judgements is often regarded as object-dependent: "one can think thoughts of this kind only where an appropriate object to be thought about actually exists"²⁰. So regardless of how things may appear to one when one is undergoing a hallucination, one would not be in a position to make a singular judgement about the object which one seems to see when one hallucinates. Furthermore, it might even be argued that hallucinations have no intentional object, as Gareth Evans does: "when a person hallucinates, so that it appears to him that he is confronting, say, a bus, then, whether or not he is taken in by the appearances, there is literally nothing before his mind"²¹. It might seem, therefore, that in hallucinations either no object appears to be present, or its presence does not allow one to make a singular judgement about it.

In one sense, what Evans says is correct: when one undergoes a hallucination, there is literally nothing there, i.e., no actually existing entity which is the object of one's experience²². But in another sense, what he says is wrong, or at any rate misleading. From the subject's own point of view, something *is* before her mind: that is, in having the experience it appears to her that she is confronted by, e.g. a bus. In discussing perceptual presence, we are concerned precisely with how things seem from the subject's point of view, i.e., how things seem to the subject who is having the experience. And from her point of view, an object does seem to be present²³. It is in this sense that we are entitled to say that hallucinations are characterised by perceptual presence: in hallucinating, one has a sense of the presence of an object.

This leaves open the question of whether one can make a singular judgement about an object which one hallucinates. If the contents of singular judgements are object-dependent, then this would be impossible, since there would be no object to be judged. However, it seems to me that this claim can be questioned. While there may be judgements which are object-dependent, it is arguable that not all singular judgements must belong to this category. If we assume that a singular judgement is one which picks out (or purports to pick out) its object or objects in a non-descriptive way, then it may be possible to characterise some judgements as both singular and not object-dependent.²⁴

Consider a subject who is undergoing a hallucination which is subjectively indistinguishable from a genuine

perception of seeing an apple on her desk; and suppose that she is not aware that she is hallucinating. What kind of judgements is she thereby in a position to have? She will be unable to make any judgements which are object-dependent on the apple which she seems to see. But it seems possible for her to judge, e.g. 'That apple is red'. This judgement is not object-dependent, but nor does it seem to be descriptive judgement: that is, in reporting how things appear to be, it is not obvious that she is picking something out by using a description which, so it seems to her, something satisfies.

One could try to insist that the subject is mistaken about which judgement, or what kind of judgement, she is actually making (as Evans and McDowell do)²⁵. For instance, it might be suggested that in the case where the subject is hallucinating, this judgement really is descriptive (e.g. it is really a judgement that 'There is an apple such that it is the only apple I am currently having an experience of, and this apple is red'). One possible problem this suggestion faces is as follows: it may be that a subject undergoing a hallucination can judge, e.g. 'That is red', despite not being able to think of any description which could uniquely pick out the object which appears to be red. At any rate, it certainly seems possible that a subject undergoing a hallucination could utter those words and behave in a way which we would be inclined to explain by attributing to her a judgement with the content that she is confronted by a red object.

There is much more to be said on this topic. McDowell and Evans may well be correct in suggesting that a subject may be wrong about the contents of her judgements. Furthermore, nothing I have said rules out subjects making judgements which are genuinely object-dependent. But it is still open to us to ask whether there might be judgements which are neither object-dependent nor descriptive. If such judgements could be made, then judgements about the objects which seem to be present when one hallucinates would seem to be of this type²⁶.

4.

Genuine perceptual experiences are often thought to play a special epistemic role, by providing immediate justification for certain judgements:

"From the epistemological point of view direct realism is a claim about the role of perception with respect to the epistemic situation of the perceiving subject. Direct realism in this domain includes the claim that perceptual experiences provide the subject with *immediate* justification, a kind of warrant that does not depend on, for instance, any further inferentially acquired justification."²⁷

In part, the immediacy of this justification is a matter of the metaphysics of genuine perceptions: as Fabien Dorsch puts it, "[h]ow veridical perceptual experiences present aspects of reality as being is nomologically dependent on how those aspects are really like"²⁸. But perceptual presence may also play a role. As Dorsch goes on to say,

"Veridical perceptual experiences are reason-providing because of their nomological dependence on reality; and they seem to us to be nomologically dependent on reality as part of their apparent relationality. It is in this sense that perceptual reasons are phenomenally present to us."²⁹

By the 'apparent relationality' of perceptual experiences, Dorsch means something very close to perceptual presence: the sense that the objects one perceives are present to one and that one is thereby related to them. Furthermore, genuine perceptions do not only provide immediate justification; when we have such experiences we commonly take ourselves to be immediately justified in judging that things are they seem to be. And what explains this fact, our regarding ourselves as being justified, is the sense we have of the presence of what we perceive.

Things may be different in the case of other perceptual experiences, i.e., illusions or hallucinations. It is not clear whether a subject who is hallucinating or undergoing an illusion is thereby immediately justified in judging that things are as they seem to be³⁰. However, even if genuine perceptions and other perceptual experiences differ in this respect, there is an important similarity in how perceptual experiences of all kinds stand to perceptual judgements.

From the subject's perspective, if she has a perceptual experience of any kind, she will usually take herself to be justified in judging that things are as they seem to be. Furthermore, she will not take herself to be so justified by appeal to any further evidence or inference. And the fact that she will take herself to be justified can plausibly explain how she will be inclined to behave: for instance, she will be inclined to answer certain questions ('Is there a cup on the table in front of you?') in the affirmative, because that is how things seem to her.

If we ask what feature of perceptual experience explains these phenomena, a plausible answer is that perceptual experiences are characterised by perceptual presence: that is, one has a sense of the presence of the object of the experience. This sense of its presence involves what we might describe as a *defeasible commitment to the existence of the object*: if a subject has an experience characterised by a sense of the presence of object *a*, the subject will accept (or be inclined to accept) that *a* exists. This commitment is defeasible in that, in certain circumstances, the subject can have a perceptual experience as of *a* but not accept that *a* exists (if, for instance, she has reason to think that she is hallucinating). Dorsch refers to perceived objects as having a sense of existence: they "appear to exist as part of the actual or real world [...] and we consequently treat them in our interactions with them as parts of reality"³¹. He also suggests that perceptual experiences involve an *epistemic commitment*: "if it seems to us that there is actually a mind-independent object which determines our experience of it [...] the experience becomes non-neutral with respect to the real world: it involves a claim about how things really are"³².

I am not convinced that perceptual experiences literally involve claims, at least if 'claim' is understood in the relevant sense of stating or asserting that something is true (or even where claims are understood not as linguistic acts but as mental attitudes, e.g. judgements)³³. But perceptual experiences do, it seems to me, involve a commitment on the part of the perceiver to things being as they seem to be (we might say that the subject of the experience is inclined to take things as they seem to be, where 'taking' is not to be understood as a propositional attitude). And this commitment is best explained by the sense of presence which characterises perceptual experiences.

5.

Finally I shall briefly consider the metaphysics of experiences. Talk of the presence of an object in experience can be interpreted in various ways. One of these, which has become increasingly prominent in recent discussions, is naïve realism. On the naïve realist view a genuine perceptual experience is relational, in that this experience (or an experience of this kind) could not exist unless the object of the experience exists. This is often expressed by saying that the object or objects one perceives are partly constitutive of the experience³⁴. Correlatively, hallucinations belong to a fundamentally different type of mental state, since in hallucinations the object which one seems to perceive does not in fact exist.

I shall briefly consider two ways in which perceptual presence might be relevant to naïve realism. The first suggestion is that naïve realism can explain perceptual presence, at least in the case of genuine perceptions (and maybe illusions). For instance, it might be thought that in a genuine perceptual experience, the perceived object is present to the subject because the experience meets two conditions: (i) the subject is aware of object in virtue of having the experience; (ii) the object is constitutive of the experience³⁵.

One objection to this is that perceptual presence characterises experiences which are not genuine perceptions, e.g. which are not partly constituted by the object of which one is aware. But leaving this objection aside for the time being, there is a more straightforward problem with this suggestion. This is that it is not clear how the *perceptual* presence of a perceived object could be explained by its presence as a constitutive part of the experience. Granted that the object helps to constitute *that* the object is given in a certain way (as perceptually present), or can help us to explain *why* the object is given in this way. It seems quite possible to learn that conditions (i) and (ii) hold, but to not understand how these conditions together explain the perceptual presence of the perceived object.³⁶

Furthermore, the suggestion is open to possible counterexamples. Suppose that any visual experience which one can undergo is in part constituted by a certain function, which is realised by a specific pattern of neural activity. Now suppose one is undergoing a visual experience

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such that one is perceiving this pattern of neural activity (for instance, one is somehow able to perceive one's own brain while it is being operated on). When one has this experience, it may be that conditions (i) and (ii) are both satisfied with respect to the function: this function helps to constitute the experience, and one is aware of this function in virtue of having this experience. However, it does not seem as though the function itself will thereby be perceptually present to one (although the pattern of neural activity which realises it may well be). It may of course be possible to develop this suggestion in a more convincing way, but until the details are provided it is not clear that naïve realism can explain perceptual presence³⁷.

The second way in which perceptual presence might be thought to relate to naïve realism is as follows: I have argued that perceptual presence characterises hallucinations and illusions as well as genuine perceptual experiences. It might be thought that this indicates that all such perceptual experiences belong to a common kind: indeed, I suggested earlier that perceptual presence may be one of the features which allows us to distinguish perceptual experiences, broadly construed, from non-perceptual experiences. And if hallucinations and genuine perceptual experiences belong to a common kind, then it seems that we have the materials for an argument against naïve realism. The naïve realist is committed to rejecting the claim that hallucinations and genuine experiences belong to a common kind:

“If naïve realism is true then it follows that the kind of experience you have when veridically perceiving the vase of flowers could not occur in the absence of the vase and flow-

ers that are its constituents, and so could not occur were you merely hallucinating the vase rather than seeing it.”³⁸

But if hallucinations and genuine perceptions are each characterized by perceptual presence, they each belong to a common kind, and so the naïve realist is wrong. By hallucinating the flowers, it would be possible for one to have an experience of the same kind as when one perceives the flowers.

The argument from hallucination against naïve realism is a familiar one, and I shall not properly assess it here. What I shall say is that perceptual presence by itself does not seem to add much weight to the argument. To appreciate this, note that we can distinguish at least two ways in which different experiences can be said to be of the same kind. One kind to which experiences can belong is *phenomenal*: that is, we can group different experiences together insofar as the phenomenal character of these experiences, what it is like for a subject to have them, is similar. Since hallucinations and genuine perceptions are each characterized by phenomenal presence, they can be said to belong to a common kind, that of perceptual experiences broadly construed. (Of course, we can also group different perceptual experiences into more restrictive kinds, e.g. visual experiences, aural experiences, and so on.)

Another kind to which different experiences can belong is *ontological*: we can group different experiences together insofar as their ontological structure is similar. I

shall not attempt to outline in detail what I mean by ‘ontological structure’, but the notion can be illustrated by a distinction between relational entities (entities which are constituted by a relation and its relata) and non-relational entities. A molecule is a relational entity, since it is made up of atoms arranged in a certain way; certain sub-atomic particles may be non-relational, since it may be that they are not made up of any entities arranged in certain ways.

Given the distinction between phenomenal and ontological kinds, it is clear that the version of the argument from hallucination which I outlined above (the version which appeals to perceptual presence) trades on an ambiguity. Hallucinations and genuine perceptions belong to a common phenomenal kind, but it does not follow that they belong to a common ontological kind. And what is at stake in the argument from hallucination against naïve realism is ontology: that an experience of the same ontological kind could occur even in the absence of a perceived object. The naïve realist maintains that genuine perceptions are relational entities, and so belong to a different ontological kind than hallucinations which are non-relational³⁹. Without some further argument, for instance that the phenomenal kind of an experience determines its ontological kind, the argument from hallucination cannot go through.⁴⁰

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Notes

- 1 E.g. Noë 2004, 2012; Pautz 2007; Leddington 2009; Thomas 2009; Nida-Rümelin 2011; Chudnoff 2013; Ferretti forthcoming; MacPherson & Dorsch forthcoming.
- 2 An additional point is that perceptual presence may characterise experiences in some sense-modalities but not others. I am not sure whether, for instance, olfactory experiences are characterised by perceptual presence, but I shall not discuss this issue in what follows. I shall restrict my discussion to visual, tactile and aural experiences, and it is plausible that every perceptual experience in each of these modalities is characterised by perceptual presence.
- 3 I shall use the term ‘object’ to denote whatever it is which has perceptual presence for one. For instance, when one has a genuine perceptual experience, the object is whatever it is that one perceives. I do not assume that objects need to belong to any specific ontological category.
- 4 Thomas 2009, 154.
- 5 Noë 2004, 60.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 63.
- 7 See Strawson 1974; Thomas 2009; Church 2010.
- 8 It may be that the sense of objectivity is connected to perceptual experiences,

- even if it is not limited to them. For instance, it may be that one’s ability to have non-perceptual experiences which are characterised by the sense of objectivity depends upon or is explained by one’s having had certain perceptual experiences.
- 9 Husserl 1973, § 4. This translation is taken from Pacherie 1999, 152.
- 10 Matthen 2010, 107–108.
- 11 It is true that one can imagine that a particular object is here now, or that one is actually perceiving this very object. But such imagining involves an element of stipulation: one has to decide to configure one’s imagining so that it seems that the object is actually present (on the role of stipulation in imagining, see Kung 2010). In perception, objects are automatically given as here and now, and this sense of presence is pervasive; it seems to characterise all perceptual experiences (leaving aside the worry mentioned in note 1 above).
- 12 Pacherie 1999, 158. Another account of this second kind is discussed in section 5, when I consider the suggestion that naïve realism can explain perceptual presence, at least in the case of genuine perceptions.
- 13 *Ibid.*

- 14 For a classic phenomenological discussion, see Husserl 1991; for a recent alternative view, see Kriegel 2015.
- 15 By ‘proximity’ here I do not mean ‘nearness’ in a spatial sense: the perceived object may be very remote in terms of distance. Rather, I mean that the object and oneself are experienced *as* together, as co-spatial.
- 16 This certainly seems true of genuine perceptions and many illusions.
- 17 Montague 2011, 121.
- 18 Martin 2002, 173.
- 19 Perceptual presence may also play a role in explaining how one can make singular judgements about objects which one has perceived, even if one can no longer perceive them. The object was given as a particular and as present; this might explain how the subject is able to fix on the object itself, and subsequently refer to it using a demonstrative.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 174.
- 21 Evans 1982, 199–200.
- 22 Leaving aside so-called veridical hallucinations (see, e.g. Martin 2002, 183).
- 23 Evans 1982, 200.
- 24 The phrase ‘singular judgement’ is often understood as picking out judgements which express singular Russellian propositions, and which are by definition

object-dependent. Someone who understands 'singular judgement' in this way can distinguish between singular judgements and non-descriptive judgements (those which pick out their objects in a non-descriptive way). The issue I raise in the main text can then be put as follows: is it possible for non-descriptive judgements to be non-singular?

25 Evans 1982, 45–46; McDowell 1986, 154.

26 There are different ways in which this suggestion might be developed. One is that hallucinations are like cases of failed demonstrations: they have a Kaplanian character but no content (Tye 2014). Another is that when one hallucinates one cannot refer to the object which one seems to perceive, but one can quasi-refer to it (Nida-Rümelin 2011). A third possibility is to appeal to Sainsbury's notion of internally singular thoughts, which are singular even though no object exists to be thought of (2010). Which of these possibilities would best suit my suggestion, and which would be closer to the position defended by Evans and McDowell, is a further matter which I shall not consider here.

27 Soldati 2012, 29–30.

28 Dorsch forthcoming, § 4.

29 Ibid.

30 One position which suggests that such a judgement is at least prima facie justified (in the absence of defeaters) is phenomenal conservatism (see Huemer 2007 and the papers in Tucker 2013). Note that even if the subject is not justified in judging that things are as they seem, she may have non-immediate justification for some other judgements, e.g. that she has taken a substance which is causing her to hallucinate.

31 Dorsch 2010, 179.

32 Ibid., 181.

33 See McDowell's suggestion that "[w]e can think of judgements as inner analogues to assertions" (2009, 262).

34 Nudds 2009, 335.

35 For a closely related claim, though not put in terms of perceptual presence, see Nudds 2009, 334–335.

36 Joseph Levine raises a similar objection to the suggestion that the physical presence of an instance of a phenomenal property can explain what he terms the cognitive presence of that property when one uses a phenomenal concept: "It is not at all clear why, or how, physical presence translates into cognitive presence" (2007, 162). See also Montague's argument that naïve realism does not explain the phenomenological particularity fact (2011, 127, 132).

37 Whether alternative metaphysical theories of perception (e.g. intentionalism or sense-data theories) are better equipped to explain perceptual presence is an open question. My own preference would be for intentionalism, perhaps starting with Pacherie's account (see section 2 above).

38 Nudds 2009, 335.

39 Strictly speaking, the naïve realist need not claim that hallucinations are non-relational; it is possible, after all, that hallucinations are in part constituted by some relation or other. But they are not constituted by the object which is hallucinated. I take it that this provides at least a prima facie reason for the naïve realist to place hallucinations in a different ontological kind to genuine perceptions.

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