Book Review

Perception, Hallucination, and Illusion, by William Fish. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Pp. x + 198. H/b £32.50.

William Fish's book defends a naive realist view of veridical visual experience, a disjunctivist account of hallucination, and a mixed view of illusion, combining elements of his accounts of veridical experience and hallucination. Its core thesis is that the phenomenal character of any visual experience — in so far as it has one — consists in being acquainted with mind-independent facts. Fish's central contentions are clearly and carefully presented, their motivations and challenges even-handedly laid out, and interesting responses to the latter are offered. His view is illuminatingly placed in relation to recent discussions in the philosophy of perception.

For Fish, naive realism is a theory of the phenomenal character of veridical visual experience. He adopts as his agreed starting point that the phenomenal character of veridical visual experiences can be characterized in terms of what things — what objects, properties, or other items — are presented to the perceiver. Different views of perception can then be distinguished according to their answer to two questions: (i) what sorts of things are presented, and (ii) how is it that being presented with these things can characterize the phenomenal character of the experience? Naive realists and their chief rivals, representationalists — the only ones Fish considers in depth — agree on (i), at least in so far as they take outer, mind-independent items to be presented, but disagree on (ii). Representationalists say the phenomenal character of an experience consists in the perceiver *representing* the things she is presented with, while naive realists reply that it consists in her being *acquainted* with them. Representation and acquaintance differ in their modal profiles. Being acquainted with a property, such as the redness of a rose, requires that the property is 'instantiated in the part of the environment at which the subject is looking' (p. 14), whereas representing the property does not.

Fish reviews how naive realism has been supported by appeal to phenomenological considerations (e.g. by Benj Hellie), to its potential to prevent worries of scepticism from arising (e.g. by John McDowell), and to its role in explaining the possibility of perceptual-demonstrative thought (e.g. by John Campbell). He reserves judgement on the last two lines of argument, but takes a stand in favour of the first. The naive realist has an edge over the

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representationalist, he argues, when it comes to accounting for how, when we see a sheet of paper, we seem not to be aware simply of whiteness, but of an instance of whiteness — whiteness as instantiated by this piece of paper, we might say. The naive realist can account for this link to instances by saying we are acquainted either with a whiteness trope, or, as Fish prefers, with the fact of this piece of paper's being white. Now could not the representationalist make the corresponding move, proposing we represent the trope/fact? Fish argues, in effect, that this would collapse representation into acquaintance, as the trope/fact would be there to be represented only if there is something white where one is looking. Even if Fish is right about this, it seems to me he overlooks a more obvious representationalist response. It is not as if we, on the one hand, perceptually represent the paper, and on the other, whiteness, and that that is it; the whiteness is perceptually attributed to the paper. The link to instances that Fish rightly puts his finger on may just be how this perceptual analogue of predication shows up phenomenologically.

Naive realists notoriously face a challenge with hallucination. I can hallucinate a yellow canary even if there is no canary and nothing yellow anywhere around me. My hallucination cannot then be a matter of my being acquainted with yellow (or a canary, or its being yellow). So the naive realist's account of what it is like veridically to experience a canary cannot apply to the hallucination. Hence the commitment to a form of disjunctivism. Following Michael Martin (Michael G. F. Martin, 'The Limits of Self-Awareness', *Philosophical Studies*, 120 (2004), pp. 37–89), Fish accepts any such account must respond to a worry of 'explanatory screening off'. Take a hallucination of a yellow canary and a veridical perception of the same that neurally, psychologically, etc. are as similar as they can be compatibly with the absence of any outer object of perception in hallucination. It seems any condition that plausibly could be invoked to account for the psychological nature of the hallucination will be one that also obtains in the veridical case. If this condition suffices in the hallucinatory case, should it not also suffice to account for the psychological nature of the veridical perception? That would seem to make the naive realist account of the latter's phenomenal character (a part of its psychological nature) explanatorily redundant.

Martin's response is to offer an account of hallucination on which its psychological nature constitutively depends on that of veridical perception. All there is to be said positively about the hallucination's psychological nature, he proposes, is that it is a state bearing a certain epistemic or cognitive relation to a veridical perception. As long as the relevant condition of being thus epistemically related to a veridical perception depends for its explanatory force on the prior property of being a veridical perception, as Martin argues it does, the nature of the latter property is saved from explanatory redundancy. Fish agrees with Martin so far, but disagrees over what should be singled out as the crucial epistemic or cognitive relation between the hallucination and the veridical perception. While Martin identifies this as

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being indiscriminable, through reflection, from a veridical perception, Fish takes it to be a matter of yielding the same cognitive effects, given the same prior beliefs (or 'doxastic setting' in Fish's terms), as a veridical perception. He adds, as Martin does not, the negative claim that hallucinations simply lack phenomenal character. His 'formal definition of the hallucinatory state' (p. 94) reads more precisely:

> For all mental events, *e*, in doxastic setting *D* with cognitive effects *C* (in its subject), *e* is a pure hallucination *of an F*, if and only if
>
> - *e* lacks phenomenal character, and
> - there is some possible veridical visual experience *of an F*, *V*, that has a rational subject who is in *D* and produces *C*, and
> - *C* is nonempty. (p. 94)

One oddity of this view is that it does not require absence of a suitable outer object of perception for hallucination. If there could be a 'superblindseer' who trains himself to react to blindsight states just as it is possible for some rational perceiver sometimes to react to her visual experiences, these blindsight states come out as hallucinations, which seems wrong. Adding a requirement that hallucinations lack an outer object of perception may get around this problem, but leaves another one, viz. of accounting for how objectless, non-veridical blindsight states in such a perceiver differ from hallucinatory experiences.

Another problem is that the cognitive effects of experiential states, even in a rational subject, are modifiable by all sorts of weird and wonderful reasoning. For example, it seems a Pyrrhonist philosopher rationally could bring herself—at least for brief, contemplative moments—to react to a visual experience (veridical or otherwise) of *whatever it may be* with complete suspension of judgement except for a generic belief that (say) her senses yet again are trying to tempt her to judgement. Fish's view implies that any hallucination the Pyrrhonist then suffers from is one of a desert landscape, *and* one of Midtown Manhattan, *and* one of whatever else she could then veridically have been perceiving. Can a hallucination really be of such a wild profusion of incompatible things?

Fish's book closes with a nuanced discussion of illusion, where he adopts a divide-and-conquer strategy. One subclass of illusions, dubbed 'physical' illusions, are treated as a special case of veridical perceptions; two remaining subclasses, 'optical' and 'cognitive' illusions, receive the same treatment as hallucinations. The distinctive property of physical illusions is that the illusory appearance can wholly be accounted for by features of the pattern of light impinging on the retina. Paradigm examples are misperceptions of an object's shape, when seen through a distorting lens, or misperceptions of its colour, in non-standard lighting. A representationalist would say such illusions manifest the perceptual misattribution of the property we commonly would say the perceived object looks to have. Fish proposes they rather

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involve acquaintance with the mind-independent fact of that object's (or (a) related object(s)') having not that property, but a somehow related one. For example, if one tennis ball looks larger than another thanks to a magnifying lens present in parts of my visual field, the glass prevents me from being acquainted with some facts, such as the equality of size of the balls, but, equally importantly, enables me to be acquainted with 'new' facts, such as more detailed facts about the surface texture of the magnified ball.

Fish's book is recommended to anyone interested in disjunctivism for providing, in a reader-friendly format, both an introduction to the state of the art in the disjunctivist approach, and a stimulating version of it.

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