

# **Perceptions and Hallucinations**

The Matching View as a Plausible

Theory of Perception

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## **Preface**

The bachelor thesis that is lying in front of you was written for the bachelor program of philosophy at Utrecht University.

I would like to thank Menno Lievers for supervising me while writing this thesis. His literature suggestions and comments helped me tremendously. This thesis could not have existed in its present form without his guidance.

## **Abstract**

A strong intuition about perception is that what we perceive when we perceive an object is a mind-independent object. However, this does not explain the possibility of hallucinations and illusions, since in both cases there is no direct relation between a subject and an object. Various solutions have been proposed to this problem of perception. One of them is the matching view, defended by Michelle Montague. I argue that this account of perception provides a plausible solution to this problem of perception. In order to do this, I will draw on the sense-datum theory, intentionalism and disjunctivism.

## **Introduction**

Intuitions can be a good starting point for a philosophical theory. In the case of perception, a strong intuition is that what we perceive when we perceive an object is that actual object. ‘Actual’ here means that the object is external or mind-independent as opposed to mind-dependent, like a mental representation. This intuition is defended by a theory referred to as ‘direct realism’ or ‘naïve realism’ within the philosophy of perception. Although direct realism can account for the intuition that what we perceive are mind-independent objects, it has trouble explaining the possibility of illusions and hallucinations, since there is no direct relation between the subject and the object in either case. Various solutions have been proposed to this problem of perception. One of them is to turn to indirect realism and deny that mind-independent objects are ever perceived directly. An example of this is the sense-datum theory. This solution opens the way to an explanation of hallucinations and illusions, but it makes it hard, if not impossible, to take into account the intuition that we perceive objects directly. Another possible solution is to defend direct realism. In this case an explanation will have to be given for the possibility of hallucinations and illusions that is compatible with the idea that mind-independent objects are perceived directly in case the perception is veridical. Intentionalism, disjunctivism and the matching view, the latter of which is defended by Michelle Montague, can all be regarded as attempts that belong to the second category.

In this thesis I will briefly explain the solutions proposed by the afore-mentioned theories. However, my main focus will be the matching view since little has been written in secondary literature in reaction to it so far. The matching view claims to be a direct realist account that nevertheless offers an explanation for the possibility of hallucinations and illusions. If the matching view succeeds in this objective, we have a theory that takes the best aspects of direct and indirect realist accounts and combines them into a new account of perception.

The outline of this thesis is as follows: in chapter 1, I explain the position of direct realism and show the trouble it faces when confronted with the problem of perception. Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5, are dedicated to the following proposed solutions to the problem of perception: the sense-datum theory, intentionalism, disjunctivism and the matching view. In chapter 6 I evaluate the matching view in the light of the

other accounts. I argue that Montague provides a plausible solution to the aforementioned problem of perception.

## **Preliminaries**

Before I begin, it is important to define what I mean, when I am talking about 'perceptual experiences'. A clear distinction has to be made between perceptual experiences that are correctly caused by an external object and those that are not. I will refer to perceptual experiences of the first category as 'veridical perceptions', or 'perceptions' for short. Perceptual experiences that are not correctly caused by an external object will be referred to as either 'hallucinations' or 'illusions'. The difference between these two will be explained in due course. This also means that the term 'perceptual experience' is a collective term for veridical perceptions, hallucinations and illusions.

## Chapter 1: The problem of perception

What do we perceive when we have a perception of say, a chair? According to direct realism the answer to this question is exactly that, a chair. That is to say, in having a perception of a chair, we are in direct contact to a mind-independent object that is a chair. This seems like a sensible account for veridical perceptions, but what about perceptual experiences that are not correctly caused by an object? Direct realism does not seem to be able to answer this question and if it cannot, it provides only half of an answer to the question about perception and half an answer is effectively no answer at all. This, in a nutshell, is the problem of perception I want to discuss. I will explain both the account of direct realism and this problem of perception in more detail in this chapter.

### 1.1. Direct realism

A strong intuition about perception is that it connects us to the external world. Direct realism takes this intuition as its central idea. This means, that if I have a perceptual experience of a chair – that is, a perceptual experience that can be called veridical - I perceive the chair directly, as a mind-independent object. So in having this perception one could say that I have direct access to the actual chair, as opposed to, say, a representation of it.<sup>1</sup> Direct realism is opposed by indirect realism, which claims that we do not perceive the world, or in this case the chair, directly, but through an intermediary that is placed between the subject and the object. The sense-datum theory is such an account, claiming that what we perceive are non-physical mind-dependent objects rather than mind-independent objects.<sup>2</sup> I will explain the sense-datum theory in more detail in chapter 2.

Returning to direct realism, we see that there is a relation between the perceiving subject and the perceived mind-independent object. This relation is a constitutive

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Crane, *Elements of Mind: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 130-132.

<sup>2</sup> Laurence Bonjour, "Epistemological Problems of Perception", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/perception-episprob/>.



relation, in the way that the object determines the phenomenal character of the perceptual experience. William Fish says the following about this relation:

This talk of constitution and determination should be taken literally; and a consequence of it is that one could not be having the very experience one has, were the objects perceived not to exist, or were they to lack the features they are perceived to have.<sup>3</sup>

This is a crucial point, because even though direct realism seems to be a clear and sensible account of perception, there is a problem when it comes to the possibility of hallucinations and illusions. In both cases there is no direct access to the object perceived because in the first situation, the object does not exist and in the second situation, the object lacks the features that it is perceived to have. Consequently, according to direct realism, it cannot be that the subject is having the same experience in case of a veridical perception on the one hand and a hallucination or illusion on the other. I will explain this problem in more detail in subchapter 1.2.

## **1.2. Illusions and hallucinations**

I briefly mentioned in subchapter 1.1. that direct realism can only give an explanation of a perceptual experience in case the experience is veridical. This means that, in case of my perceptual experience of a chair, I can only have direct access to this chair if there is a relation between my perceptual experience and an actual chair. However, such a relation is not always given. I might, for example, perceive a table while the object that caused me to have this perceptual experience is actually a chair. I will refer to this as an ‘illusion’ from now on. Or I might perceive a chair while no object is present at all to cause this perceptual experience; in other words, the perceptual experience was not caused by a mind-independent object. I will refer to these kind of perceptual experiences as ‘hallucinations’. The following example illustrates the difference between the two nicely:

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<sup>3</sup> William Fish, *Perception, Hallucination, And Illusion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 68.

[...] you hallucinate a pink rat, say, in the middle of the carpet, just to the right of that chair, both of which you genuinely perceive. As far as the specifically hallucinatory aspect of such a situation goes, however, it remains the case that there is an element of your perceptual field that constitutes, or goes towards constituting, a perception of no physical object whatsoever. If you are misperceiving a part of the carpet as a pink rat, we have a case of illusion, not hallucination.<sup>4</sup>

The possibility of illusions and hallucinations threatens the account of direct realism since in neither case is any object perceived directly. In this thesis I will focus on hallucinations and more or less leave illusions aside. This is not to say that illusions are not as important a problem as hallucinations are, but simply put that I will not be concerned much with them here. However, some of the things said about hallucinations might apply to illusions just as well.

### **1.3. The argument from hallucination**

The problem of hallucination has been formulated in a number of ways. One such way is to formulate it as an argument consisting of two premises.<sup>5</sup> The first premise of the argument is that hallucination is (or at least can be) phenomenally indistinguishable from veridical perception. This means that it is impossible for the subject experiencing the hallucination to infer from the experience itself that the perceptual experience is in fact a hallucination. Even if the subject might suspect that it might be a hallucination, there is no way to validate whether this suspicion is true.

The second premise is that veridical perceptions and hallucinations are the same type of mental event. What ‘being the same type of mental event’ means, will have to be explained by any account that accepts this premise. I will get back to this when discussing the sense-datum theory, intentionalism and the matching view. This premise is connected to the first in that it is a straightforward move to claim that if two events are indistinguishable, they are of the same type. This is not to say that the

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<sup>4</sup> A.D. Smith, *The Problem of Perception* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 192.

<sup>5</sup> I am here following the formulation used by Harmen Ghijssen, *Perception or Hallucination? Disjunctivism as a defence of naïve realism*, unpublished Master’s Thesis at Utrecht University, 2010.

second premise is entailed by the first. It is perfectly plausible that two events are completely indistinguishable and yet are of different types. Accepting these two premises forces one to accept that it cannot be the mind-independent object that is essential to perceptual experience. After all, if it was mind-independent objects that determined our perceptual experiences, it should not be possible for someone to have a realistic perceptual experience of a chair when no such chair is present. However, this is precisely what direct realism claims; so according to the argument from hallucination, the account of direct realism cannot be correct.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to keep in mind that the possibility of hallucination as described is not meant as an empirical possibility, but rather as a metaphysical one. It is of no importance to the argument from hallucination whether a hallucination of this kind has ever actually happened. What is important is that it seems possible for a perceptual experience of this kind, meaning one that is not caused by a mind-independent object and is indistinguishable from one that is, to occur. To see that hallucinations are indeed possible, consider the following: it seems save to assume that perceptual experiences involve certain causal processes. We might say that a certain cause typically – meaning under circumstances that are likely to occur along with that cause – brings about a certain perceptual experience. Yet, it seems plausible to suppose that the same perceptual experience might be brought about by a different cause. We might imagine a perceptual experience of a house that is not caused by some mind-independent object that is a house but instead by a rock shaped like a house. This would explain the possibility of an illusion. However, In the case of a hallucination no mind-independent object is present to cause the perceptual experience at all but still the circumstances of the perceptual experience might be identical to those in a situation where a perceptual experience of a house is caused by an actual house.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Tim Crane, "The Problem of Perception", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2011 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.),

<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/perception-problem/>.

<sup>7</sup> Crane, *Elements of Mind*, 133-134.

## Chapter 2: The sense-datum theory

There are various ways to deal with the problem of perception. One way is to reject direct realism and to introduce an intermediary between the perceiving subject and the external world. This makes it possible to accept the premises of the argument from hallucination. One theory of this category is the sense-datum theory. In this chapter I will explain in more detail how this account aims to solve the problem of perception.

### 2.1. The sense-datum theory and perceptual experience

There are a number of versions of the sense-datum theory. I use the term here to refer to the version that claims that our perceptual experiences are not directly related to the external world. Instead, what we perceive are sense-data. Sense-data are whatever is given to the senses when having a perceptual experience, hence the name. The underlying principle here is Howard Robinson's *Phenomenal Principle*:

If there sensibly appears to a subject to be something which possesses a particular sensible quality then there is something of which the subject is aware which does possess that sensible quality.<sup>8</sup>

So when I have a perception of a chair, there is something that possesses the phenomenal qualities of a chair that I am aware of. Formulated this way, it does not automatically follow that what we perceive in case of a perception could not be a mind-independent object. However, if we would say that what is given to the senses in a perceptual experience is a mind-independent object, we would face the same problems that direct realism runs into. After all, the problem was that in case of a hallucination, there is no mind-independent object to be perceived.<sup>9</sup> We might call the underlying principle of direct realism the *Genuine Perception Principle*:

If a subject is genuinely perceiving that an object has a certain sensible quality, then there is an object which the subject is perceiving which seems to possess this property.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Howard Robinson, *Perception* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 32.

<sup>9</sup> Crane, *Elements of Mind*, 132.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

This principle is similar to the Phenomenal Principle. Both assume that there is a relation between the subject and the object. However, there is a crucial difference. The Phenomenal Principle states that there must be *something* which possesses the perceived quality, whereas the Genuine Perception Principle claims there must be an *object*.<sup>11</sup> We saw before that there is no mind-independent object involved in the case of a hallucination. Because of this, the sense-datum theory claims that sense-data are mind-dependent, non-physical objects in which the sensory qualities experienced by the subject are contained.

It is now easy to see what the sense-datum theory says about hallucinations. What is immediately perceived in case of a hallucination, is not some mind-independent object, but sense-data. In the case of a veridical perception, the least we can say is that it is impossible to identify the mind-independent object among the different perceptual experiences we can have of one object. This means that, from an epistemological perspective, it is as though no mind-independent object was given at all, regardless of whether this is in fact the case. In other words, we can say that what is perceived directly in the case of a hallucination as well as a veridical perception, are sense-data, not a mind-independent object.<sup>12</sup> Let us consider again the argument from hallucination, which said that veridical perceptions and hallucinations are (or can be) phenomenally indistinguishable and that they are the same kind of mental event. Accepting these two premises causes a problem for direct realism because it claims that it is the mind-independent physical object in the world that determines the nature of a perceptual experience. The sense-datum theory deals with the problem by accepting the two premises, but also rejecting this direct realist idea. Instead it claims that non-physical sense-data determine perceptual experiences. These sense-data figure both in veridical perceptions and hallucinations, thus the second premise of the argument is fulfilled.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 135-136.

<sup>12</sup> BonJour, "Epistemological Problems of Perception", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

## 2.2. Objections to the sense-datum theory

The sense-datum theory runs into certain problems. One of these problems is that the subject is effectively cut off from the external world because the sense-data function as an intermediary between the subject and the object. This makes it at least problematic to explain how a subject acquires knowledge about the world. A further consequence of this is that the sense-datum theory gives way to scepticism about the external world. John McDowell says the following about such scepticism:

What shapes this scepticism is the thought that even in the best possible case, the most that perceptual experience can yield falls short of a subject's having an environmental state of affairs directly available to her. Consider situations in which a subject seems to see that, say, there is a red cube in front of her. The idea is that even if we focus on the best possible case, her experiences could be just as it is, in all respects, even if there were no red cube in front of her. This seems to reveal that perceptual experience provides at best inconclusive warrants for claims about the environment. And that seems incompatible with supposing we ever, strictly speaking, *know* anything about our objective surroundings.<sup>13</sup>

Let us consider again what was said about direct realism earlier, namely that in the absence of a mind-independent object to be perceived, it cannot be the same experience as in the case of veridical perception. We see that direct realism does not allow this kind of scepticism about the external world. Since the mind-independent object (partly) determines the perceptual experience, it is possible to gain knowledge about the world in case of a veridical perception, but not in the case of a hallucination, because no such object is available.

Another problem is the nature of the sense-data, at least in a naturalistic view of the world. Naturalism claims that the only things existing are physical objects and that everything can be explained in terms of the natural sciences. However, sense-data are understood to be non-physical entities and therefore do not seem to fit into a

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<sup>13</sup> John McDowell, "The Disjunctive Conception of Experience as Material for a Transcendental Argument," in *Disjunctivism: Perception, Action, Knowledge*, Adrian Haddock and Fiona MacPherson (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 378.

naturalistic account of the world.<sup>14</sup> Even though naturalism might not be unanimously accepted, it is the leading conception nowadays. In other words, to accept sense-data at the expense of naturalism requires good arguments. Therefore, we might want to consider alternative views with less ontologically controversial implications.

It should be noted that none of the arguments against the sense-datum theory are meant to be knock-down arguments (and neither will the arguments against intentionalism and disjunctivism in the next chapters). They are meant to illustrate some of the problems an account of perception is prone to face, given the positions they defend. These arguments will later prove useful when we evaluate the matching view.

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<sup>14</sup> BonJour, "Epistemological Problems of Perception", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

## **Chapter 3: Intentionalism**

So far we have examined two theories of perceptual experience. Direct realism claims, in accordance with our intuitions, that in having a veridical perception, we perceive an object directly. This leaves us without an explanation of hallucinations, since these are perceptual experiences in which no mind-independent object is perceived. The sense-datum theory claims that what we perceive directly are sense-data and never a mind-independent object. These sense-data are the common factor between veridical perceptions and hallucinations. However, it is questionable whether we should welcome sense-data into our ontology. What we want is a theory that is compatible with the intuition that we perceive objects directly in case of a veridical perception and that can explain the possibility of hallucinations. In other words, we need to combine the good aspects of direct realism and the sense-datum theory into one account. Intentionalism is an account that purports to do just this.

### **3.1. Intentionalism and perceptual experience**

Just as in the case of the sense-datum theory, intentionalism comes in different versions. I will limit my explanation of it to the version that accepts the argument from hallucination and thereby has to claim that veridical perceptions and hallucinations are the same type of mental event.

In contrast to direct realism and the sense-datum theory, intentionalism denies that there is a relation between the perceiving subject and the object that is perceived. In other words, intentionalism rejects the Phenomenal Principle and the Genuine Perception Principle. When I have a perception of a chair, there does not need to be something, let alone a mind-independent object, that I am aware of and that possesses these qualities. Instead, perceptual experience is an intentional state.

The term 'intention' is often referred to as 'aboutness', meaning in this case that perceptual experiences are about something. On the face of it, this might sound to be exactly what the Phenomenal Principle and the Genuine Perception Principle assume. However, this something does not need to exist in the form of a mind-independent object or as a sense-datum, but merely as a representation of a mind-independent object. So the relation here is not one between a subject and an object, but between a



subject and intentional content. Crane explains the rejection of the Phenomenal Principle by applying it to knowledge-states and beliefs:

- (1) If a subject knows that *a is F*, then there is something *a*, which the subject knows to be *F*.
- (2) If a subject believes that *a is F*, then there is something *a*, which the subject believes is *F*.<sup>15</sup>

The first principle is true, but the second is clearly false. If I know that there is a chair in the living room, then there is indeed a chair of which I know that it is in the living room. However, if I believe that there is a chair in the living room, it does not follow that there is a chair, which I believe to be in the living room. This is not to say that the second principle might not be true in some situations, only that it is not a valid generalization. In other words, Robinson's Phenomenal Principle is not applicable to beliefs. In the same way, intentionalism does not believe the principle to be applicable to perceptual experiences.<sup>16</sup>

Since intentionalism does not entail a relation between a subject and an object, it is possible to perceive an object that does not actually exist; in other words, to have a hallucination. A veridical perception is a correct representation of a mind-independent object, whereas a hallucination is a representation without an object. Just like the sense-datum theory, intentionalism accepts both premises of the argument from hallucination and aims to solve the problem of perception by saying that both veridical perceptions and hallucinations involve representation rather than a relation to some mind-independent object. However, intentionalism does agree with direct realism that in case of a veridical perception, what is perceived is ultimately a mind-independent object. The difference between direct realism and intentionalism is that intentionalism denies that this mind-independent object which is perceived determines the phenomenal character of the perception.<sup>17</sup> In other words, intentionalism can maintain that the very same perceptual experience of a chair can occur in the presence and absence of an actual chair.

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<sup>15</sup> Crane, *Elements of Mind*, 137.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Crane, "The Problem of Perception," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

### 3.2. Objections to intentionalism<sup>18</sup>

One of the objections against intentionalism is similar to the one faced by the sense-datum theory. Although intentionalism states that what we perceive are ultimately mind-independent objects, it denies that these mind-independent objects are essential to the nature of a perceptual experience. In other words, the mind-independent object does not have a constitutive relation to perceptual experience, as in the case of direct realism. To recap, direct realism claims that the mind-independent object determines the phenomenal character of a perceptual experience because it is this mind-independent object we perceive directly. By denying the existence of such a constitutive relation, intentionalism dodges the problem direct realism has in regard to the possibility of hallucinations (and illusions). This problem arises precisely because there is no relation between a mind-independent object and a perceptual experience in the case of a hallucination, so there cannot be a constitutive relation either. However, the consequence of rejecting the idea of this constitutive relation, is that intentionalism does not seem to do any better than the sense-datum theory in accounting for the intuition that when we perceive an object, we perceive it directly. The reason for this is that both theories take the essence of perception to be a state of mind rather than a state of affairs out in the world. The content of a perceptual experience, then, does not necessarily have to consist of mind-independent objects, which ultimately leads to the possibility of scepticism about the external world, just like in the case of the sense-datum theory. This scepticism entailed that the most perceptual experiences can provide are, in McDowell's words, "inconclusive warrants for claims about the environment."<sup>19</sup> Perceived this way, intentionalism seems to be an indirect realist account, just like the sense-datum theory.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> I only consider the argument against intentionalism that denies it being direct realist. There is also a problem of qualia, but I have left this out because it is not as strongly connected to the hallucination problem. For a defense of intentionalism against the problem of qualia, see Tim Crane, *Elements of Mind: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 137-155.

<sup>19</sup> McDowell, "The Disjunctive Conception of Experience as Material for a Transcendental Argument," 378.

<sup>20</sup> Crane, "The Problem of Perception," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

## Chapter 4: Disjunctivism

So far we have considered two ways of dealing with the problem of perception, both of which accept the argument from hallucination and ultimately seem to face the problem that they cannot account for the intuition that veridical perception is direct. Another way to deal with the problem is to reject the second premise of the argument from hallucination, which claims that veridical perceptions and hallucinations are the same type of mental event. This is what disjunctivism does. In this chapter I will explain in more detail how disjunctivism aims to solve the problem of perception.

### 4.1. Disjunctivism and perceptual experience

Just like direct realism, disjunctivism states that the objects of perception are mind-independent entities and that the phenomenal character of a perception is essentially determined by these objects. We saw earlier that an account that holds these two beliefs is threatened by the possibility of hallucinations, because these are perceptual experiences where no mind-independent object is involved. Disjunctivism deals with this problem by denying the second premise of the argument from hallucination, namely that veridical perception and hallucination are the same kind of mental event. This is not to say that disjunctivists deny that a veridical perception is (or can be) indistinguishable from a hallucination. What they deny is that this proves that veridical perceptions and hallucinations are indeed the same kind of mental event. Just because two things seem identical does not mean that they are. So while we cannot describe the two perceptual experiences as the same type of event, we can still maintain that they are indistinguishable. The first premise of the argument is therefore maintained. This results in a disjunctive description of perceptual experience in the way that any perceptual experience can either be a veridical perception or a hallucination (or illusion). This way, our intuition about perception can be harbored because we can accept the direct realist claim that mind-independent objects are perceived directly in the case of veridical perceptions, while still being able to deal with the possibility of hallucinations.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

## 4.2. Objections to disjunctivism

Denying the second premise of the argument from hallucination is what saves disjunctivism from criticism raised against the sense-datum theory and intentionalism. However, it simultaneously opens doors for new criticism. Disjunctivism is right in saying that the mere fact that two events are indistinguishable does not mean that they are the same kind of event. Disjunctivists do not deny that there is something that veridical perceptions have in common with hallucinations, but they do deny that this is a significant kind of mental state. However, this does not explain why they are indistinguishable. This lack of explanation leads to certain unwelcome consequences. For instance, disjunctivism cannot explain the fact that both veridical perceptions and hallucinations can cause beliefs that might in turn lead to actions. In case of my perception of a chair – regardless of it being a veridical perception or a mere hallucination – it will likely cause me to believe that there is in fact a chair and this in turn might cause me to try and sit down on it. Beliefs are mental states and since the same belief can be caused by a veridical perception and a hallucination, this mental state can be said to be significant. It then seems sensible to assume that veridical perceptions and hallucinations are the same type of mental event. Since disjunctivism denies this, it will have to find another way to account for the indistinguishability.

Another point of criticism is that according to the disjunctivist, hallucinations bear no content. It seems sensible to talk about the experience of hallucinations as having a representational or intentional content. In hallucinating a chair, I would then represent my perceived environment as containing a chair. I might express the content of this experience by saying “That is a chair”. If the disjunctivist accepts this description of the experience of a hallucination, it would be natural to assume that hallucinations bear the same kind of intentional content as veridical perceptions do. However, this is exactly what disjunctivism denies. If the disjunctivist denies the description, a sensible alternative description will have to be proposed.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 5: The matching view

The matching view is a relatively new and little debated account of perception. It is developed and defended by Michelle Montague in her essay *The Content of Perceptual Experience*<sup>23</sup>. The matching view combines various aspects of the different accounts of perception that we have discussed so far. It is a direct realist and essentially externalist account, but it is also internalist in a fundamental respect. I will explain all of this in more detail in this chapter.

### 5.1. The matching view and perceptual experience

Montague rejects disjunctivism, because it seems to her to be an unnecessary move to state that veridical perceptions and hallucinations are not the same type of mental event. According to her, accepting the second premise of the argument from hallucination does not interfere with the idea of direct access to objects. So what we have here is an account that defends direct realism (just like disjunctivism and contra the sense-datum theory), but that accepts the argument from hallucination (just like the sense-datum theory and intentionalism and contra disjunctivism). Montague refers to her account as an anti-disjunctivist account.<sup>24</sup>

Montague's account is direct realist in so far that she believes that whenever we perceive something, we perceive that actual thing and not some intermediary like a sense-datum or a representation of it. What makes her theory externalist is that the mind-independent object, in this case a chair, is part of the content of the perception. I mentioned that Montague's account is also internalist in a fundamental respect. Internalism claims that the content of a perception is, at least partly, determined by internal features as opposed to being determined by the individual's surroundings. This is called *narrow content*. This means that two subjects could have different perceptions of, for example, a boy playing a trumpet, even if their environments are the exact same environment. On the other hand it also means that two subjects in

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<sup>23</sup> Michelle Montague, "The Content of Perceptual Experience," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*, A. Beckermann and B. McLaughlin (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 494-511.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 506.

different environments might nonetheless share some perceptual content. Montague's account is internalist in the following way:

Being in the phenomenological state just is directly perceiving the boy, so long as the phenomenological state is appropriately caused by the boy: for nothing gets in the way, nothing at all.<sup>25</sup>

In other words, although Montague believes that whenever we have a veridical perception of a chair, we perceive the actual chair, she does not deny that there is an internal phenomenological state that is responsible for this. A perceptual experience always involves the subject being in a phenomenological state. This is the internal aspect of Montague's account. A perceptual experience of a boy playing a trumpet can be said to be veridical if this phenomenological state is caused by a boy playing a trumpet. This is the direct realist and externalist aspect of her account. The internalist aspect can also be explained in terms of causation. It is a mind-independent object that causes a perception, but this perception involves an internal representation being formed in the mind.<sup>26</sup>

We can now consider how Montague's account deals with hallucinations. We have already seen that a veridical perception of a certain object is caused by a mind-independent object. Of course, it is not enough for the perception to be veridical to merely be caused by some mind-independent object. Montague gives the following example:

Suppose one is in causal, sensory and indeed visual contact with a garden shed. However, due to a disorder in one's visual system, or perhaps a hypnotic command, when one looks at the shed one has an experience as of a pink elephant. Despite one's inaccurate conception one can locate and track the shed. But does one see the shed? It is arguable that one does not, because one's conception of it is simply too inaccurate. On this view, to stand in a causal, sensory and indeed visual relation to an object is not enough to guarantee that one sees it, and this is so even if this relation allows one to

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 505.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 504-505.

locate and track the object: to truly see an object, one's experience (conception) of the object must not be wildly inaccurate.<sup>27</sup>

So if a perceptual experience of an object is to be veridical, it must not be too inaccurate; there has to be a certain 'match' between the perceptual experience and the object. In case of a hallucination, there is no mind-independent object that caused the perception. There is however, just as in the case of veridical perception, a mental representation. So what veridical perceptions share with hallucinations is the mental representation that the subject has. The same mode of presentation can be present in a hallucination and a veridical perception.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 509.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 508-509.

## **Chapter 6: Evaluating the matching view**

So far we have considered four solutions to the problem of perception. The sense-datum theory and intentionalism accepted the premise that veridical perceptions and hallucinations are the same type of mental event but faced the problem that they consequently cut the subject off from the external world. Disjunctivism defends direct realism by rejecting this premise but faces the problem that this makes it difficult to account for the similarities between veridical perceptions and hallucinations. The matching view takes a middle road by accepting the premise while still defending direct realism. The question is if this solution can withstand the criticism raised against the three other accounts.

### **6.1. The sense-datum theory and the matching view**

In chapter 2 we saw that the sense-datum theory runs into certain problems. The first problem was that by introducing the notion of sense-data, there is no direct connection between the subject and the world. This has the unwelcome consequence that it becomes difficult or even impossible for the subject to gain knowledge about the world. How does the matching view fare against this criticism? In contrast to the sense-datum theory, the matching view agrees with direct realism that what we perceive in case of a veridical perception is a mind-independent object. The sense-datum theory states that the content of a perception is always a sense-datum and never a mind-independent object. The matching view says that a veridical perception is caused by a mind-independent object, which in turn causes an internal mental representation. So unlike the sense-datum theory, the matching view offers a connection between the subject and the world, allowing the subject to gain knowledge about it. But what about hallucinations? In the case of a hallucination, there is no mind-independent object that caused the perceptual experience. It is in the nature of hallucinations that they are not connected to the external world. In other words, a theory of perception does not have to explain how the subject can gain knowledge of the world through a hallucination, because it is not a possibility. So the matching view wins this round.

The other problem faced by the sense-datum theory was the peculiar ontological nature of the sense-data. These mind-dependent, non-physical objects cannot be



captured by a naturalistic account of the world. It seems easy to see that the matching view does not face this problem since this criticism, just like the previous one, is aimed at the indirect realist nature of the sense-datum theory, whereas the matching view purports to be a direct realist account of perception. However, we have seen that intentionalism faced the criticism that it was no better than the sense-datum theory, despite claiming that what is received in a veridical perception is ultimately a mind-independent object. Let us therefore turn to intentionalism and see if the matching view is prone to the same criticism.

## **6.2. Intentionalism and the matching view**

As we have already seen, intentionalism believes that veridical perceptions are ultimately perceptions of mind-independent objects. However, these objects are not essential to the phenomenal character of a perceptual experience. This way intentionalism can account for hallucinations, but runs into the problem that it ultimately seems to be unable to account for the intuition that when we perceive an object, we perceive it directly. The matching view does aim to account for this intuition by claiming that a perception is veridical, when there is a sufficient degree of ‘match’ between the object and the perception. What Montague’s account comes down to is that the mind-independent object is essential in the case of a veridical perception, but not in the case of a hallucination. In contrast, intentionalism seems to say that the mind-independent object is never essential, but the representation is. This still sounds a lot like the matching view, since the matching view says that the aspect veridical perceptions and hallucinations have in common is the internal mental representation that is present in both forms of perceptual experience. Both intentionalism and the matching view use the notion of representation to explain how it can be that veridical perceptions and hallucination can be indistinguishable.

To find out whether the matching view is right in saying that the mind-independent object is essential in case of a veridical perception, let us again consider the argument posed against intentionalism. The argument claimed that mind-independent objects had a merely causal role in determining the phenomenal character of a perceptual experience, as opposed to a constitutive one. This can be traced back to what we just said about mental representation. The upshot of it is that intentionalism takes the essence of perception to be a state of mind rather than a state

of affairs out in the world. When considering the matching view, we seem to face a similar situation. After all, Montague claims that we might misperceive a garden shed as a pink elephant even though the externalist properties are, in her words, “sufficiently met”<sup>29</sup>. In other words, mind-independent objects ultimately do not constitute the phenomenal character of perceptual experiences. We already saw in Chapter 3.2 that intentionalism makes this same point, which was criticized and led to the allegation that intentionalism is ultimately indirect realist. Montague claims that the matching view is direct realist, but can this really be maintained in combination with the claim that mind-independent objects do not constitute the phenomenal character of perceptual experiences? In other words, either it will have to be shown that the criticism against intentionalism being indirect realist is ill-founded or the matching view will ultimately be shown to be indirect realist just like intentionalism. In the latter case, Montague will have to be able to defend her theory against the criticism raised against indirect realism.

### **6.3. Disjunctivism and the matching view**

One point of criticism against disjunctivism is, as we have already seen, that it cannot explain why veridical perceptions and hallucinations are, or at least can be, indistinguishable. The reason disjunctivism cannot account for this is because it denies that veridical perceptions and hallucinations are the same type of mental event. The matching view can account for it on account of the notion of mental representation as the commonality between veridical perceptions and hallucinations. A veridical perception can be indistinguishable from a hallucination, because in both cases the subject has a mental representation. The difference being that in case of a veridical perception, the mental representation is caused by a mind-independent object. According to disjunctivism, accepting the second premise of the argument from hallucination ultimately leads to an indirect realist account of perception, which will in turn have a hard time accounting for the intuition that when we have a veridical perception, we perceive a mind-independent object directly. Again, we have gotten to a point where we get stuck until we can give an answer to the question whether the matching view is direct or indirect realist.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 509.

#### 6.4. Is the matching view direct realist?

The crucial question now is whether Montague's matching view is direct or indirect realist. Montague realizes that her account might be regarded as indirect realist by some. After all, we have seen that so far, any account that accepted the second premise of the argument from hallucination received this verdict from its critics. However, Montague maintains that anti-disjunctivism does not entail indirect realism, because she sees no reason why it should not be possible to maintain direct realism while accepting the second premise of the argument from hallucination.<sup>30</sup> However, we have seen that this is precisely what critics have claimed. The criticism was that in denying that mind-independent objects constitute the phenomenal character of the perceptual experience, the intuition that we perceive objects directly is jeopardized. What we seem to perceive directly, instead, are mental representations. Both in the case of intentionalism and the matching view it are mental representations that figure in veridical perceptions as well as hallucinations. In other words, the essence of perception is taken to be a state of mind. Montague says the following in her defense:

The internal phenomenological aspect is obviously something of which one is directly aware, but it does not follow that the boy is not directly perceived. This is because *being in the internal phenomenological state just is directly perceiving the boy* (given that the external connections are right).<sup>31</sup>

So according to Montague, an object is perceived directly in the case of a veridical perception, because the internal phenomenological state is properly connected to the mind-independent object. In the case of a hallucination, there is nothing over and above this internal phenomenological state. This seems to offer us what we have been searching for all along: a way to unite the aspects of direct realism and the second premise of the argument from hallucination. The matching view is direct realist, because the fact that there is an internal state involved in perceptual experience, does not mean that mind-independent objects are not perceived directly. As long as the external conditions can be said to match the internal phenomenological state, this is precisely what it means to perceive an object directly. The matching view also accepts

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 506.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 505.

the second premise of the argument from hallucination, which claimed that veridical perceptions and hallucinations are the same type of mental event. The shared aspect of veridical perceptions and hallucinations is that both involve an internal phenomenological state. This explains why perceptions and hallucinations are indistinguishable.

If this argument is satisfactory, the disjunctivist concern that accepting the second premise of the argument from hallucination will lead to indirect realism is proven unjustified. However, a direct realist might not agree that being in an internal phenomenological state really means that a mind-independent object is perceived directly. He might argue that this internal phenomenological state still figures as a sort of intermediary, especially since in the case of hallucination, this phenomenological state is all there is to perceive. In other words, can the idea that being in an internal phenomenological state is the same as perceiving a mind-independent object directly really be said to be compatible with the intuition of direct perception? According to Montague it can:

No realist, however direct, can plausibly deny that there is a *causal process* involved in seeing the boy, that perception is a causally mediated process. Nor can any sensible direct realist deny that there is indeed a phenomenological state involved in perception, at least in the case of creatures like ourselves. The existence of the phenomenological state can be made vivid precisely by the point that a realistic hallucination could in principle be completely indistinguishable from the veridical perception of the boy.<sup>32</sup>

This seems to me to be very true. Even in the case of veridical perception, it seems necessary to allow some internal aspect to figure in the perception. Consider again the example of having a veridical perception of a chair. According to the direct realist, what is perceived directly is the actual chair, the mind-independent object. The matching view agrees that this is indeed the case, but adds that this chair causes a mental representation to be formed in the mind. The phenomenal qualities of this mental representation ‘match’ with those of the mind-independent object and thus, it can be said that the chair is perceived directly. Again, a direct realist might not want to accept this kind of perception of the chair as ‘direct’, but it would be implausible to

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 505.

assume that a veridical perception should only involve external properties when it is clearly true that these external properties are not always presented to us properly. To see this, let us consider the possibility of illusions, since this allows us to involve the chair we have just considered in the case of a veridical perception. The exact same chair we just considered when talking about veridical perception might also figure in an illusion. I might look at the chair and perceive a table. How could this happen if the phenomenal character of my perceptual experience was fully determined by external conditions? After all, the external conditions would cause me to perceive a chair, yet I perceive a table instead. Montague's suggestion, namely that perceiving a mind-independent object directly entails being in an internal phenomenological state, therefore seems to be sensible because it takes both the external world and the internal state to figure in perceptual experiences. Hallucinations are something entirely internal, no mind-independent object is involved, whereas veridical perceptions are correct representations of the external world. The matching view therefore seems to be a plausible theory of perception, namely one that can account for the intuition that we perceive objects directly and the possibility of hallucinations.

## Conclusion

In this thesis I have considered a number of solutions to the problem of perception. This problem states that while we intuitively believe perceptions of mind-independent objects to be direct, in the sense that we perceive the object rather than some sort of intermediary, this idea seems to be incompatible with the possibility of hallucinations (and illusions). The argument from hallucination consists of two premises, the first being that hallucinations are (or at least can be) indistinguishable from perceptions and second, that hallucinations and perceptions are the same type of mental event. These premises entail that mind-independent objects never determine the phenomenal character of a perceptual experience. The account of direct realism, which centers precisely on the intuitive idea of direct perception, therefore seems to be incorrect. A straightforward solution to the problem therefore seems to let go of direct realism and claim, instead, that mind-independent objects are never perceived directly. This makes it possible to accept the argument from hallucination but only at the cost of our intuitions of perception. The problem now faced is how our perceptions connect us to the external world. So what we want is an account that answers to our intuitions and is able to account for the possibility of hallucinations. In other words, an account that is direct realist and accepts the second premise of the argument (for it is this premise that proves to be difficult to unite with the ideas of direct realism). I have argued that Montague's matching view is a plausible candidate. In short, her account states that veridical perceptions and hallucinations are indeed the same type of mental event; they both involve an internal phenomenological state that ultimately determines the phenomenal character of the perceptual experience. This might sound indirect realist at first but Montague maintains that in the case of a veridical perception, we really do perceive the object directly. Every perceptual experience has to involve some kind of internal aspect. If they did not, the external properties would fully determine the phenomenal character of every perceptual experience. The possibility of hallucinations and illusions show that this is not the case. So Montague claims that as long as the external properties match the internal phenomenological state of the subject, the subject does perceive the object directly.

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