

WHY DISJUNCTIVISM?

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Abstract

Disjunctivism about perception is the rejection of a view on which awareness of something else can, if conditions are right, constitute *seeing*, say, a lemon on the sideboard. To appreciate what is rejected is to appreciate why disjunctivism is mandatory. Frege shows why that is so (in what is usually counted as his refutation of idealism). The perceptual model does not fit inner experience. That has broad consequences for our special forms of access to ourselves.

Keywords

Disjunctivism, awareness, perception, experience, inner.

*The concept of the 'inner picture' is misleading, for this concept uses the 'outer picture' as a model; and yet the uses of the words for these concepts are no more like one another than those of 'numeral' and 'number'. (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, IIxi (p. 196))*

Why be a disjunctivist about perception? Distinguished philosophers, of varying persuasions, have puzzled over that. The first step towards answering this question is to see just what disjunctivism about perception is; or, better, to press a bit on just what it would be like for it to be wrong. For the rest of the answer we need only follow Frege, specifically, Frege's private language argument, as set out in "Der Gedanke"¹. What follows begins to carry out that plan. There will be an important moral for the ways we may conceive the forms of our special access to ourselves—such things as the special access I have to the fact of my perspiring (not by looking, but by feeling the sweat drip off my nose), or to my feeling sad (in, and by, feeling sad), to my seeing how a series is to be expanded, and to many other aspects of myself. (I leave it to the reader to expand this series.) I will draw this moral in a general way, but say very little here about its applications.

1. What Disjunctivism Is: Not that there is a uniform understanding, even among its champions, as to precisely what disjunctivism about perception comes to. I suggest, though, that it is most fruitfully viewed as a sort of negative thesis; as a rejection of something. Specifically, it is

¹ Beiträge zur Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus 2, 1918-1919, pp. 58-77.

a rejection of what I will call the highest common factor view of perception (henceforth HCF). So the first task is to explain HCF. I note at the start that in philosophy there are, generally, two things rejection may come to: denial (assertion of the negation of HCF); or denial that the rejected view (and thus, too, its negation) so much as makes sense. In matters such as our present ones, the second sort of rejection is often the most advisable.

HCF is a view about experiences of perceiving something (seeing, hearing, or feeling such-and-such (where feeling is perceiving), or seeing, hearing, feeling, what one does on some occasion). I would say that it is about perceptual experiences, but that term is commonly appropriated for a different use (to be discussed below). So I will say, somewhat clumsily, that it is about perceivings. It will do for the present to consider what it says about cases of seeing one thing or another. Suppose, for example, that I see a lemon on the sideboard (just next to the gin). Then one thing I experience (one thing my experience is of) is that lemon. HCF tells us that I also experience something else—call it ‘L’—with two crucial features. The first is that L is something I might experience (in principle) even if there were no lemon. So L is not a lemon. The mere fact that I experienced L leaves it open whether I did see a lemon. The second is that experiencing L in the right surrounding circumstances just is seeing the lemon. (Different versions of HCF might spell out in different ways what it would be for surroundings to be right.) It is not, HCF tells us, as if things would look (or perhaps seem, or appear) any different (to me) where I actually did see that lemon than where I saw no lemon, but still experienced L. Rather, for me to have L would be for things to look just the way they did when I saw that lemon. In fact, cases of having an experience of L and seeing the lemon and having an experience of L but not seeing that (or any) lemon would be indistinguishable, at least in the way things looked in having those experiences, and at least to me. What matters to whether I saw the lemon is merely the satisfaction of conditions whose satisfaction I am not (visually) aware of in any way other than in, and by, being aware of what I am in having L. So I may experience L and see that lemon, or I may experience L and not. We might call a case of the second sort a ‘perfect illusion’ of seeing a lemon (though that is, so far, only to name them).

Seeing a lemon thus consists in visual awareness of something (L), and then the obtaining of something else of which one is not visually aware (except insofar as being aware of L just is being aware of this further thing). L is an object of awareness both where one sees the lemon and in some other range of cases where one does not. It is, of course, incumbent on the HCF theorist, and not on the disjunctivist, to spell out just what range of cases this is meant to be. That will do for an account of what HCF theory is, and, thereby, for an account of what its rejection, disjunctivism, is.

There is one more point, though, that is perhaps worth mentioning at this stage. HCF posits a certain sort of object of experience, exemplified by L—something there is to be experienced visually. Any two experiences of L, the idea is, would be indistinguishable. Otherwise experiencing L could not be as indifferent as it is meant to be to what else is going on when you are doing it—for example, to whether you are seeing anything. Or rather, more precisely, any two experiences of L would (thereby) be experiences of what was indistinguishable by so experiencing it. (L is not the sort of thing that could fade, or sag, or etc., from one experience of it to the next.) That is more precise because, of course, different experiences of L might occur with different awareness, or sources of it, of what else was going on. If, for example, one is in the neurophysiology lab, all wired up, one might thereby be tipped off to the fact that what one is doing is not seeing a lemon on the sideboard next to the gin.

An HCF theorist is going to want a certain conception of what indistinguishability is to consist in here. The idea is that there is something it is like to see the lemon; or, again more precisely, there is something what one thus sees is (looks, perhaps appears) like (viewed as one then views it). Such is called, in the trade, the ‘phenomenal character’ of the experience, or, again more

precisely, the phenomenal character of what is experienced. L, the HCF one then experienced in seeing that lemon, is meant to share that phenomenal character. Otherwise, the idea is, it could not do its job. For then seeing merely L and not the lemon would be distinguishable from seeing the lemon, and thus not something that mere surrounding conditions could conjure into a seeing of that lemon.

It is at least tempting, once one permits oneself the notion of phenomenal character at all, to view the phenomenal character of the lemon, as viewed by me now, say, as something determinate. We can describe the looks of the lemon: it is yellow, waxy, ovoid, etc. It has visible characteristics; or, as viewed by me now, at least visual characteristics. (That distinction will be explained below.) Its phenomenal character, one might plausibly suppose, is the sum of its visible characteristics; or, as viewed by me now, perhaps, its visual characteristics (the particular ways it looks, to me, so viewed). Whatever that (last) phenomenal character is, that will also be the phenomenal character of L (so the idea goes). And that will be what makes any two experiences of L experiences of (visually) indistinguishable things: what makes what is thus experienced the one time indistinguishable from what is thus experienced the other time is that what was experienced the first time had such-and-such a phenomenal character, and what was experienced the second also had just that character.

There is a further reason for an HCF theorist to think in this way. I see the lemon. I also, according to the HCF theorist, experience something else, L—the most there is (phenomenally) in common between that seeing of a lemon and other things I could not tell (by sight) from what I thereby did. Just when would one have L? L cannot be identified as ‘that experience one has in seeing a lemon’, since I might, in fact, see a lemon, though it was disguised as a small orange, or a lime, and did not look much like a lemon at all; and since there is, anyway, no one way what one sees looks even when one sees a lemon that looks like a lemon. (Consider a lemon turning brown, for example.) Nor can the experience be identified by my reactions to it. For I may have L (in the lab, say) while hallucinating, and well aware that I am hallucinating. Whether I am taken in or not is not the mark of having L. (This is a very important point, to which we will return.) By the first point here we need that an experience of L must be an experience of what looks just like that lemon, as it then looked viewed by me. By the second, we need that its looking that way cannot be a matter of my reactions to it. We thus need the above notion of phenomenal character, so that L can be identified by its phenomenal character: to experience L is going to have to be to experience something with such-and-such phenomenal character; that is what looking the right way will have to come to.

There is a way the lemon looks. We are invited to construe that as the sum total of some definite array of looks which are those particular ways it looks (yellow, say). That is already suspicious in the case of lemons; all the more so when the looks in question are the looks as presented to my eye; as viewed by me (on some occasion). It would be worth pursuing those suspicions. In fact, though, I want to highlight here another feature of the position we have arrived in. Insofar as HCF theory needs to construe indistinguishability as suggested above, it is borrowing a notion from the domain of perception, and transferring it to a sort of object of experience, the experiencing of which is not perception. That is an instance of what Wittgenstein warned against: borrowing the picture of the outer for use as a picture of the inner. And, as I will argue later, it really does need that idea of indistinguishability, applied as above to the case at hand. It is thus that, by our present route, HCF theory will come to grief.

What does this borrowing come to? Take the lemon on the sideboard. I could undertake to create a soap, say, that was indistinguishable from it by sight. I might succeed or fail. I would fail if it turned out that it is possible for (some) people to tell the two apart. If that were so, we would reasonably suppose that there was some visible characteristic present in the one, absent in the other, which thus allowed people to be sensitive to which thing they confronted. Conversely,

if we identified some such characteristic, we could train people to be sensitive to its presence or absence. If there simply were no such characteristic, I would have succeeded. Success here might be ascertainable too. That is what it is like, in the case of lemons and soaps, to share a phenomenal character. It is, in such a case, what distinguishability, and indistinguishability, might come to. Lemons and soaps are distinguishable, or not, given the features of them which are available to be visually sensitive to. There is thus a clear distinction here between, on the one hand, the soap and the lemon being indistinguishable, and, on the other, my merely failing, or even being unable, to distinguish them. That distinction already begins to fade somewhat when it comes to the looks of the lemon as seen by me on some occasion. The point will be: the materials for drawing it drop out of sight altogether for the sort of thing an HCF object of experience would need to be.

That, in one form, is the point that draws on Frege. Disjunctivism, then, is rejection of the idea that seeing something is a hybrid achievement, consisting in experiential awareness of an HCF object of experience and the (not otherwise experienced) satisfaction of some further conditions. As I have suggested, the idea of an HCF experience—the most in common to a case of seeing something (a lemon, say) and ringer cases (that is, ones such that, in them, the experienced could not tell by looking that he was not seeing the thing in question (the lemon, say)—requires an HCF object of experience. (I will explain that further below.) One way of rejecting HCF theory, so the hybrids which, on it, seeings are meant to be, would be to reject the idea that there could be such objects of experience. I have so far only hinted at a way that might be done; a way to be found in Frege. To develop it further we will need a few preliminaries, to which I turn next.

2. Judgement: I will mean by judgement what I take Frege to mean by it: in brief, a truth-evaluable stance towards things being as they are. In judgement, the stance is that things are thus and so. Such a stance must be liable to be right or not in such a way that only things being as they are can decide its rightness: for it to be right in that sense just is for things being as the stance thus has them to be part of things being as they are. The stance sees itself as hostage to the way things are; the way things are has sole sway over how it thus fares. Such is a central intuition, to be elaborated. When would it be that things being as they are held sole sway over correctness? Things being as they are as opposed to what? Well, intuitively, as opposed to mere responses on the parts of given thinkers to things being as they are. So far, that is just another intuition.

We can, I think, find the elaboration we want by exploiting the systematic ambiguity in such nouns as ‘stance’ and ‘judgement’. There are stances to be taken—that Jones is admitted to the program over one’s dead body, say—and there are stances which belong to particular takers, and takings, of them—Jones’ unshakeable conviction that she has been hard done by, say. And I think we can say that a stance there is to take makes itself hostage to the world in the wanted way just in case, first, the stance offers a sufficiently clear conception of what, if anything, it would be for it to be correct—just how it purports to be beholden to things being as they are—and, second, given the way it thus purports to be beholden it is correct (in that sense) on any taking of it just in case it is thus correct on every such. This second clause, for one thing, distinguishes truth from justification: you may be justified in judging that sheep bleat, I unjustified, though we both judge truly if either does.

Here, then, is a plan for making proper sense of the kind of implication with the world that makes a stance towards it a judgement, that is, something truth-evaluable. It is a plan for spelling out such metaphors as a stance’s being answerable, or making itself hostage, exclusively to the way things are. But the plan will do its work only where the second condition is not just fulfilled vacuously. It does its work, that is, only where there is a stance-there-is-to-take which is identifiable as the stance it is—a fortiori which is the stance it is—independent of any particular taking of it, so that there is, on the one hand, the stance there is anyway to take, and on the other (perhaps)

someone's taking of it on some occasion, or in some episode of stance-holding. There is, anyway, the stance for me to take that I am (now) hot, even though (now, in Chicago in February) I am very far from feeling the slightest inclination to take that stance.

If Frege is right, in one sense at least, the stance-there-is-to-take must be thus identifiable, and thus what it is, independent of any particular thinker's taking of it. Much has been made, in recent discussions of such matters, of the (usually simply presumed) existence of stances towards the world which are constituted in part by the particular way the world is presented to the taker of it (or the taker's particular means of access to it). Plausibly I have special forms of access to a wide variety of facts about myself—that I am now seated with a computer on my lap, say. (E.g., I feel the heat.) It is often maintained that there are stances towards things being as they are that could not be taken without having that particular mode of access—for example, it is alleged, the stance I take in thinking I am seated with a computer on my lap. This idea raises complicated issues which I mean to bracket here. I think we can bracket them like this: in thinking I am seated with a computer on my lap, I ipso facto have a stance towards the way things are (perhaps the same one, perhaps not) which you might have too (in thinking, of me, that I am seated with a computer on my lap), such that my stance in thinking I am seated with a computer on my lap is correct just in case this (perhaps different one) is. If that is the model, then this general condition of the subject-independence of judgement (as one might say) is: some stance someone takes is a judgement only if in taking it he ipso facto takes a (perhaps distinct) stance which one need not be him to take, and which is correct just in case the first-mentioned stance is. If Frege is right, that general condition holds. But that he is right in this still awaits argument.

Where there is a judgement, there is an aspect of the way things are for it to answer, or be hostage to. The judgement is that things are thus and so. There must be such a thing as things being (or not) that way; so that their so being, or not so being, if that is how things are, may have exclusive say over whether (in the relevant sense of 'correct') that judgement is correct. Part of the idea of judgement was that that aspect of the way things are is meant to decide correctness independent of any merely local, or parochial, responses to it—to things being thus, or to their not. It would be cheating, for this purpose, to suppose that how things were in the relevant respect—whether things were thus or not—depended on someone's responses to things being as they are in that respect. In brief, there are answerable stances only where there is some aspect of the way things are to which they may be hostage. To the first idea about the independence of a stance from any taking of it thus corresponds the idea that anything there is to be hostage to is there to be hostage to independent of any particular response to it. Whether I am hot is something there to which to make myself hostage, even if I do not (and whether I do so by thinking I am hot, or by thinking I am not). Frege's idea (or the part of it hinted at so far) is that (in the sense spelled out above) there is something to be hostage to only where you need not be so-and-so in order to make yourself hostage to it. You may think that I am hot, or that I am not.

There is now an obvious parallel between judgement and perception. Judgement, on the present account of it, takes as (grammatical) object things to be met with in thought. To say that these things are to be met with in thought is to say that their existence is independent of any particular meeting with them (and, if Frege is right, of any particular potential meeter with them). (Recall that what 'judgement' means here is just truth-evaluable stance.) Perception is a sort of contact with things to be met with in one's environment. To say that these things are to be met with is to say that their existence does not depend on any particular meeting of them. Nor, if the parallel point to Frege's holds here, on any particular (potential) meeter of them. Someone might postulate objects of judgement which, in one or both of the above senses, are not to be met with. If the present account is right, such things would not be judgements at all. For, in their case, we could make no proper sense of the needed notion of correctness. That could be put by saying: we could not properly distinguish between the correctness of such a would-be stance and its mere

taking. Someone might—surely enough actual philosophers have—posit objects of perception (or at least of ‘perceptual awareness’, a term still to be explained) things that were not to be met with in the environment. The parallel point would be that these cannot be genuine objects of perceptual awareness at all. The parallel account of the evil with them would be: we cannot properly distinguish between their presence and their being responded to as they thus are. So we cannot make sense of them as objects (in the logician’s sense—what may genuinely satisfy, or fail to satisfy, concepts). That sketches, again, the strategy to be pursued here at one finer grade of detail.

3. Perception: Perception is a form (or family of forms) of awareness of one’s surroundings—of (some of) what is there, or, again, of (some of) how things are in (part) of them. (The linguistic side of that idea is just that perceptual verbs, such as ‘see’ (where it is such a verb), are success verbs (factives): if I see the armadillo on the sideboard, then there is an armadillo on the sideboard.) To say this is not yet to say that perception ever occurs. Plenty of philosophers have excised it from their picture of the world: Descartes (of the first 4 Meditations, at least), Berkeley², Quine, and I think Davidson.

An object to be met with in the environment is an object a thinker would meet if properly positioned in the environment. It is somewhere on a spatio-temporal map of the environment, on which any thinker, or at least any embodied thinker such as us, is also located. You need not be me to meet with it. You need only (at most) be embodied. And, of course, you must work yourself into the right position on the map. If the object is perceivable (not too small or too large, say), then one can perceive it, if one’s perceptual equipment is acute enough, if perceptual conditions are right (it is not too dark, say) by getting oneself into the right position. What I just said applies to anyone. To say this is to say that objects of perception are objects of observation, investigation, discovery and dialogue. We can all get them into thought by perceptual encounters with them (bracketing boring peripheral problems such as their being too far away, or being annihilated too soon). We can thus discourse with each other about them (again bracketing boring problems such as short attention spans). We can also rely on each other for information relevant to confirming or disproving whatever we happen to think about these objects. Thinking about them is a joint project. Our human form of thinking is, *inter alia*, a conception of how the cooperative enterprise would correctly go (of when, say, my belief that I have seen a penguin in my neighbour’s apartment should count as refuted).

An environmental object, so, in particular, an object of perception, shares its environment with other such objects. It is implicated in a tangled web of causal relations with them. Perhaps more generally, it is implicated in a network of factive meaning. If, coming home having after all left the burner on, you see that the pan is red, that means that it is overheated (and you are lucky that the house is not yet on fire). Pia’s red face may mean that she is overheated, or again (depending on the sort of red face it is, depending on the circumstances) that she is embarrassed. Where an item’s being such-and-such way fits into a network of factive meaning, how it does so is, to say the least, not independent of what it is to be that way. The two things—what a pan’s being red is, and how its being so fits into the network—each affects the other. Or so I will argue presently.

² Berkeley engages in a transparent ruse on this point. He first endorses an argument to the conclusion that we never see what we previously thought we did (chairs, say). That argument depends on a certain understanding of what we would be seeing if we ever did such a thing. Accepting that we do, nonetheless, see something, he labels these things ideas. He then tries to pass off on us the thought that chairs just are, in some sense, these things we see. But that is just to reject the argument that the whole idea of ideas (in his sense) depends on. One can’t have things both ways, and one can’t get environmental objects genuinely back into the picture of perception by making them things which precisely cannot be in the environment. (Kant makes the same mistake, which he disguises with *supposed*, but intractably obscure, ‘transcendental’ senses of words like ‘There is a chair.’)

Perception, if the success I have portrayed it as, is a sort of awareness of (some of) what is there to be encountered in one's surroundings; a sort of awareness of their being as they are. It is thus a sort of awareness of the items and features of those surroundings. Those are the things which are experienced in perceiving what we do. The items and features of one's surroundings, as items and features to be met, are surely topics for judgements. Where I see something that is there to be met with—a pig under the oak, say—I certainly encounter something you need not be me to get in mind. Nor, if its (present) grunting is a feature of the environment need one be me to get grunting into one's thought as a thing for a pig to do. I think we exploit these features of objects of perception in thinking about the sort of awareness that perception is. To wit, perception is an occasion for attitudes towards what it is awareness of. One may think of what one is thus aware of, or of some part of it, as what one is thus aware of, and, so thinking of it, think it to be thus and so. (This may be to engage in judgement—that that pig is grunting, say—or to engage in other sorts of stances—e.g., that that pig is gorgeous.) Perception is an awareness of things as things towards which one might have attitudes.

I claim neither that the attitudes one has towards what one perceives are ones one arrives at, e.g., by some sort of reflection on one's perceptual awareness, nor that one could be perceiving at all without any attitudes towards what one perceives. On the other hand, seeing what one does does not require any particular attitudes. Those sheep grazing on the knoll, at the edge of the copse, are what one in fact sees even if one mistakes them for pigs, or for rocks, even if they are cleverly disguised as pigs, and even if one does not quite make them out as discrete objects at all. In any event, in the case of perception one can distinguish, on the one hand, what is perceived, (some part of) the environment, from the perceiver's responses to that. One may, if one likes, think of an experience of perceiving what one does on some occasion as the sum of those two components. (At least one may for all I will have to say about that here.) But the important point is that what is on the one side—the responses—does not change what is on the other—what is, in fact, perceived. And insofar as those responses consist of judgement, such judgement is made true or false by what is on the other side: by what was perceived, or, perhaps, by some wider swathe of environment of which that was a part.

One may see the pig. One may see it under the oak, steaming from its nostrils. Those things are part of the environment. The received view is that experiences of perceiving things are, in general, richer than that. For one thing, things have looks. Pia looks wan. That pig looks young, or butch. That soap looks exactly like a lemon. That lemon looks grey (in this dim light). Of course one may see such things. One sees Pia's wan look, the pig's butch look, or, more generally, one sees how things look (or at least their looking as they do). Such objects of perception do not take perception outside of the environment. They are, rather, features of the environment. For Pia to look wan, or the pig young, or the soap yellow is not just for these things to impress me in some way. Such looks are there to be met with. Nor is the lemon's looking grey in this light its impressing me in some way. That, too, is there to be met with, at least as long as that light holds.

One might be inspired by such features of perception, though, to picture experiences of perceiving things as yet richer in the objects of awareness they provide. Having just awakened, I find that the books on the bookshelf look blurry to me. That is, they look blurry as viewed by me. And now that looks like an object of my perceptual awareness, in seeing the books on the shelf, which is not part of my surroundings, or at least not something to be met with in them, in the present meaning of the act. Well, the blurriness is certainly not to be met with in the surroundings. That is why I go for coffee rather than trying to find out what is wrong with the books.

At the moment I will say only this. If we view the blurriness as an object of my awareness, just like the colours of the spines of the books on the shelf, then we face a *prima facie* problem. Precisely because it is not to be met with in the surroundings, it cannot come by its right to be a topic of judgement in the same way an environmental object of perception can. What I see, whether I

realize it or not, is the books on the shelf. There is no problem about placing them on one side of a line on the other side of which is my responses to them. My responses (at least so long as they remain mere attitudes) will not change the books; the books being as they are anyway, perceived by me or not, will make those responses right or wrong, insofar as they are judgements. As for the blurriness, it is by no means clear that that can stand over against my responses to it as the books do. To think that it can is to do precisely what Wittgenstein warned against in the passage with which I began: the form perception takes, as set out here, is his ‘concept of the ‘outer picture’; to impose that form on what is not part of the environment is to press that concept into work as ‘the concept of the ‘inner picture’’. Whether one can do that is an issue that matters crucially to the fate of the idea of HCF, and to much else as well. It is the main issue to be pursued here.

I am now positioned to explain some terminology. It would be nice to be able to take ‘perceptual experience’ to mean experience of perceiving something. But it has been taken already for another purpose. I see the books on the shelf, and they look blurry to me. But if what one sees is (part of) one’s environment, then I do not see blurriness. (I just see blurrily.) Still, there is a difference between such an experience and an experience of, say, hearing a ringing in one’s ears. One might try to mark that difference by saying that my experience of blurriness is (ipso facto) an experience with a visual character. Assuming that one has thus fixed a determinate category of experiences, one may then say that a visual experience is an experience with such a character. That is why, to avoid confusion, I have used the awkward term ‘perceiving’ for an experience of perceiving something. Similarly, something is visible if it is an item or feature of the environment which one can make out, or take in, by looking (if one’s vision is good enough). Something is visual if it is a possible feature of a visual experience. I apologize for splitting hairs here, but the history of the subject calls for it.

4. Moving Inward: When I see the lemon on the sideboard, I have, according to the HCF account, a certain HCF—call it L. Having L under the right conditions is seeing the lemon; though under other conditions it need not be that. Seeing the lemon is being visually aware of the lemon (which does not involve anything like, for example, seeing that it is a lemon). Nothing could count as visual awareness of a lemon except visual awareness of something (for example, if one is attracted to HCF theory, of things seeming, or looking, a certain way to one—say, blurry). So the idea is that visual awareness of what one is visually aware of in having L may count as visual awareness of the lemon, if circumstances make it do so: one would not need to be visually aware of anything one was not visually aware of in L in order to be visually aware of what might count as being visually aware of the lemon. Of course, one would have to be aware of something more if one were visually aware of nothing in having L. For, in my visual awareness of the lemon, I am visually aware of something that looks yellow, that is ovoid, etc. That is something that would have to be grafted on to my non-visual awareness in having L, if that is all there were to L—if L did not involve such things as visual awareness of a yellow look, or at least a yellow look-as-viewed-by-me. The point I want here is just that L is an experience of something; more specifically, it is a form of visual awareness of something.

The next point is to be that L is identifiable by what it is an experience of; more specifically, by what it is visual awareness of. Consider that perfect ringer for the lemon, the indistinguishable bar of soap. Suppose that the soap is substituted for the lemon on the sideboard. Then, given HCF, I have an HCF experience, L*, in which I am visually aware of something. Since the soap is a perfect ringer, I am visually aware, in L*, of all I am in L, and vice-versa. Otherwise the two would be distinguishable. But then I am visually aware, in L*, of all I need to be for that visual awareness to count as visual awareness of the lemon, if conditions were (only) right; and, conversely, I am visually aware in L of all I would need to be visually aware of for that awareness to count as seeing

the soap, if conditions were only right. So L^* is all it should be to be L , and vice-versa. One can ask no more of either. So L^* is L .

This argument is slightly simplified, so calls for a slight amendment. In having L I am visually aware of all I need be to be visually aware of the lemon on the sideboard. It needs to be noted that, if looking, I would still be visually aware of the lemon on the sideboard if you smashed it with a hammer. I would just be aware of a smashed lemon. But I would not be having L . For things would not look, or seem, the same. And it is constitutive of L that to have it is for things to look a certain way. What awareness of all I am visually aware of in having L should do, then, is (under the right circumstances) count as visual awareness of all I am visually aware of in seeing the lemon as I do on some occasion. That is what I should also be visually aware of in having L^* .

The idea, then, is that there is something determinate one is visually aware of in having L , some determinate way things look (to one) in having that experience; and that one has L whenever what one experiences is (inter alia, perhaps) determinately that way. To think of L in this way as of something determinate, and in fact, I think, to think of it as a form of visual awareness at all, is to place what it is an experience of on one side of a line, on the other side of which is the responses one may or may not have to what is thus experienced. In having L , for example, I may or may not take myself to be seeing a lemon on the sideboard. To think in this way is thus to apply to L the model of outer experience—that is, to say, the model provided by perceiving in its being perceiving of (some of) what is to be perceived in the environment. There, soon enough, will be the rub.

If the argument is right so far, then L is the HCF experience I had, on a certain occasion, in seeing the lemon on the sideboard (given that the lemon was as it then was, and looked as it then looked). It is also the experience I would have had if the ringer soap had been substituted for the lemon. What, then, is it an experience of? No bit of a lemon, since no such bit would be present when the soap was on the sideboard. And no bit of the soap either, for the same reason. Might it nonetheless be something that is to be met with in the environment—a look, say? But suppose the soap looks to me just as the lemon would because I am misperceiving it (perhaps because of my defective vision): the dullness of the soap's surface makes it look, in fact, quite different from the lemon. To me, though, the surface of the soap looks just as a surface of a lemon would: some quirk in my brain makes it look to me waxy in the precise way a lemon looks waxy. Things look, as viewed by me, exactly as they would look if I were seeing the lemon. But there is, in fact, no such look to be met with in the environment. L is thus an experience I might be having even if what one would be visually aware of in having it is not something there is in the environment to be visually aware of. So, just as what L , as such, is of cannot be any bit of a lemon, so, too, it cannot be anything to be met with in the environment at all.

For me to have L , things must look a certain way as experienced by me; but for them to do that it is not required that anything in the environment should actually look that way. My having L is in that way independent of how things are in the environment. Correlatively, it is dependent on how things are with me. What I experience in having L would not be there to be experienced by me (on that occasion) unless things did look the right way to me; and could not fail to be there if they did. In that way, in having L I experience something mind-dependent. Still, for it to fill the bill, it must be something about which I can judge. It must thus be a part of things being as they are to whose presence (or absence) one may make oneself hostage in the way judgement demands. It must thus stand on one side of a line, separated, or separable, from my responses on the other side. Thus distinguished from my responses, it must be what it is independent of what those responses are. It must, that is, stand towards my responses in just the same way that objects of perception do. L is an experience of something inner; but it must fit the model of experience of something outer. The question is whether we can make sense of that idea.

5. Private Judgement: Suppose you know what it would be for a balloon, or a dress, or a teacup to be coloured red. That does not mean that you know what it would be for the number 2, or the incidence of recidivism in Ohio, or a tram's momentum to be coloured red. It does not even mean that there is anything it would be for a tram's momentum to be coloured red. So if someone spoke, say, of incidences of recidivism, or trams' momenta, as being (or not) coloured red, we would need to know what he meant by that, or, more properly, just what 'red', used as he was using it, said about these things. If, so used, it said anything about them, that could not be just by virtue of the fact that it was being used 'in its usual sense', or in the same sense as it has in those uses of it we grasp to speak of, say, dresses as coloured red or not. Indeed, if it did say anything about these things, that could only be because it had acquired some new sense—a sense it did not already have in those already familiar uses. The problem would then be to make out just what this new sense was. Only with such a new sense could it be contributing to words making themselves hostage to the world (as an expression of a judgement would) in some sufficiently determinate way—determinate enough to raise the question of their truth or falsity. Only if we grasped this new sense would we be in a position to see how such words made themselves hostage; only then would we be in a position to evaluate their truth or falsity. Frege expresses a variant on this idea:

The word 'red', if it does not indicate a property of things, but is meant to indicate marks of sense-impressions which are part of my consciousness, is applicable only in the domain of my consciousness.³

Suppose we conceive of a sense-impression, as Frege does here, as a mind-dependent object of awareness; the sort of thing certain particular sorts of experiences are of. (The usual term of art for these things is 'idea'; Frege's term is 'Vorstellung'.) Then if someone says anything (truth-evaluable) at all about these things in saying them to be (or not) 'coloured red', he cannot simply be speaking of being coloured red in the usual sense of the term—the sense in which we make sense in saying such things as dresses to be coloured red. In just the same way that one would have to attach an other, or further sense to the term in order to say something truth-evaluable about a tram's momentum in saying it to be coloured red, so one would have to attach a novel sense to the term in order to say something truth-evaluable about an idea in saying it to be coloured red. The problem then is to see what such a sense might be (and, perhaps, how it might be attached). That is Frege's point.

Why is this so? Here is sufficient reason. A balloon, say, or a dress, has a place within a network of factive meaning (the sort for which things being thus may mean that B, and, if it does, then B)—a causal network, for a start. Its being coloured red is not independent of the sort of place it occupies. Occupying a suitable place is part of what it is for it so to count. Of course, what is required for a dress to count as red depends on the occasion for so counting it. There is indefinite variety in what it might be for something to count as red. (Some sunsets count, for some purposes, as red even though their looks are much more observer-relative than, for many purposes, one would allow in a dress that was to count as red.) But, for example, for many purposes a dress would not count as coloured red if it only ever looked that way to one observer (unless there were a very good explanation of what was wrong with all the others). Nor would it—again, for many purposes—count as coloured red if its so looking were all too ephemeral. Again, for many purposes, if it is to count as actually coloured red, there are certain sorts of ways it should have come to be so coloured, and certain sorts of ways (and only those) in which it may cease to be so (which ways depending on the occasion of the counting). As it may be—again depending on the occasion for the counting—one may bleach it or re-dye it, but not simply change the lighting. An idea simply cannot have a place in such networks. By hypothesis, it is not part of our shared

³ Frege, *ibid.*, p. 67.

environment. So these are not the sorts of things it might be for an idea to count as coloured red. Whatever else it might be, if anything, for this to count as something's being red would be for the notion of being red to acquire a new sort of understanding—for the term 'red', applied to an idea, to be used in a new sense.

It may seem unproblematic to assign the term the wanted sense. The thought would be: in the new sense, causal networks do not matter; what does matter is just how an idea looks. What it must do to be coloured red is to look just the same way (or just the same colour) as an environmental object looks when it is coloured red (in the already familiar sense). Of course, since a particular idea coexists with a particular thinker's awareness of it, that would have to be how it looked to that thinker then. There could be no difference between how the idea looked, and how it looked as then viewed by that observer. That calls attention to a certain sleight-of-hand we must not allow. The lemon on the sideboard had a certain look before I smashed it with the hammer, and it has a certain look now, afterwards. Before, it was yellow, ovoid, waxy, etc. That is part of how it looked. But the lemon had a certain look, and it looked the way it did, on an understanding of (having) a look on which that notion makes sense as applied to environmental objects, and, so far, only to them. We can say, not just that the lemon was yellow, ovoid, and so on, but also that it looked yellow, waxy, and so on. But on that notion of a look, looking those ways is just as intimately related to having a suitable place in a causal network, or network of factive meaning, as being coloured red was in the first place. To explain our novel sense of being coloured red, we cannot just help ourselves to this notion of a look. For if an idea is to count as looking yellow or ovoid, that will just as much be thanks to a novel sense attaching to 'look' as its counting as being coloured red (or yellow) will be thanks to a novel sense of being coloured red (or yellow). We have, thus, so far made no progress in introducing any needed novel sense.

I may say that the lemon looks yellow, or I may say that it looks yellow viewed by me now—two independent matters. I may try to say that the idea I am now having looks yellow, or, again, that it looks yellow as viewed by me now. In this case, though, there is no way for the idea to look any way at all except as viewed by me now. There is nothing further its actually looking yellow might come to. That is a way of pointing out the present problem. An idea, as an object of visual awareness (experience), should have a phenomenal character. That is just to say that there should be such a thing as the way it looks. But the contrast points to a need for a special understanding here of the notion of having a look. To supply that understanding (restricted to colours) we seem to need to say things like this: the idea looks just the same in regard to colour as an object, such as the lemon, which is yellow in the familiar sense. But once again we cannot be dealing here with the familiar sense of 'same', or 'same colour' (even if there were a sense of those notions as such which on its own fixed something truth-evaluable to be judged). We understand well enough what it might be for the lemon and the soap to be just the same (or, again, indistinguishable) in colour. But that cannot be what is meant here. For the sameness of the lemon and the soap (in relevant respect) is again constituted in part by their places in causal networks, or networks of factive meaning. When the comparison is between a lemon and an idea, or between one idea and another, that is not what sameness (in point of colour) might be.

What, then, might it be? If I wanted to introduce the relevant notion to myself, at least, I might concentrate on the idea I am presently visually aware of, recall the lemon, with which I am familiar, and say to myself, 'Here we have an instance of being the same colour, on the relevant understanding of that notion.' Suppose that in this, or some other, way I succeed in fixing for myself a suitable understanding of being (coloured) the same colour. I am then in a position to judge that my present idea is the same in colour as that lemon, on that understanding of being same-coloured. But if there really is such an understanding, then it is one on which, say, future ideas of mine, or, again, environmental objects as encountered in the future are also the same colour as my present idea, or, again, differ in colour from it. That the things in question here

are, or are not, the same in colour (on that understanding) should be a feature of things being as they are; something for a judgement to be hostage to. I may certainly respond to future visual experiences by saying of their objects that they are, on this understanding, the same in colour as this idea I now have; or by doing what would be saying that if a suitable understanding of same colour had in fact been introduced. That would be a fact (of whatever sort) as to how these future visual experiences impressed me. But there is nothing further that a comparison between the objects of these other experiences (whether environmental objects or ideas) and the object of my present one might consist in. There is thus nothing it could be for my impressions in such matters to be right (or, again, wrong). That is a way of seeing that no suitable understanding of same colour actually has been introduced. Or, to put the same point a different way, it is a way of seeing that, in the general case, objects of (my) visual experiences looking the same colour or not, on whatever understanding of same colour has been introduced, is simply not part of things being as they are; not part of the resources available for making oneself hostage to whether things are thus and so or not.

That point can be put this way. When I have a future visual experience, that its object is, or looks, the same colour as the object of my present one (that particular idea) is not a judgement there is to be made; not, in that way at least, a stance there is to be taken. Reading that point back into my present visual experience, whose supposed object of awareness is the idea I now have, it becomes this: I say, or try to say, that the idea I now have is, or looks, yellow, on some special understanding of its doing that, or that it is, or looks, the same in colour as certain other things. But, whatever I thus say, I do not express a judgement that is suitable separable from my taking of it—something there is to be judged anyway, independent of my standing towards things as I then do. Which is to say that, whatever it is that I thus say, I do not express a judgement. With that outcome, the idea of an object of visual awareness, with a determinate visual (phenomenal) character, which I can respond to by judging it to be, in this or that respect, what it is (or what it is not) collapses. With its collapse the idea of HCF experiences collapses too.

This is a sketch of an argument which bears, and perhaps needs, more elaboration. The key move with which it ends is one Frege puts, shortly after the above citation, as follows:

I said that the word ‘red’ would only have application in the domain of my consciousness, if they didn’t indicate a property of things, but only marks of my sense-impressions. So, too, the words ‘true’ and ‘false’, on the understanding I gave them, could only apply in the domain of my consciousness if [so understood] they didn’t concern something whose owner I am not, but were destined only to characterize, somehow or other, the content of my consciousness.⁴

The words ‘true’ and ‘false’, applied to mind-dependent thoughts, could not bear the same understanding as those words do, applied to stances towards the world of which I am not the owner. A mind-dependent thought is something there would not be to be thought—a stance there would not be to be taken—independent of some particular thinking of it by some particular thinker. Such is mind-dependence (at least for Frege). A mind-independent thought (one that does not have an owner) would be one for which there is a distinction to be made between what is thus thought (judged) and any particular thinking of it. Such a thought might be a judgement. On the other hand, ‘true’ and ‘false’, applied where no such distinction is to be drawn, on whatever understanding they might then bear, could not mark out, as they in fact do, any form of being hostage to things being as they are on which it is things being as they are, and nothing else, which ransoms one, or condemns one to (eternal) error. What they thus marked out would

⁴ Ibid, pp. 68-69

not be judgement. Our conclusion so far is that would-be judgements about the phenomenal character of mind-dependent objects of awareness (and thus of HCF experiences) are what ‘true’ and ‘false’ could apply to only on such an understanding; for the reasons Frege points to, they would not be judgements.

6. Indistinguishability Again: On the HCF story, when I see a lemon on the sideboard I am visually aware of something I might be aware of were there no lemon, but such that, if further conditions are satisfied, for me to be aware of that will be for me to be visually aware of that lemon on the sideboard, and thus to see it. My experience of being visually aware of that other thing (or those other things) is one I might have had without the lemon. It is one I would have in a certain range of further cases. On the story, a case is in that range where one could not distinguish what one was visually aware of from what I was visually aware of in seeing the lemon; or at least where I could not. Or, perhaps, where I could not distinguish my being visually aware of what I was aware of in that case from my being visually aware of what I was in seeing the lemon. ‘Could not distinguish’ cannot be understood here in terms of a comparison. The idea cannot be that my inability to distinguish a potential occurrence of the HCF experience from my visual experience in seeing the lemon consists in my holding the two cases up next to each other and seeing whether I can detect anything in the one that I do not detect in the other. There are no such comparisons to be made. (Certain peculiar science fiction cases present apparent exceptions to this rule. These cases ask for detailed examination. But they do not cancel the point here about what an HCF experience is to be.)

For purposes of the story, indistinguishability cannot be cashed in terms of what I would be able to detect if faced with some actual task of distinguishing two cases. That is one reason why it requires a positive conception of an HCF experience. Such an experience needs to be taken as having a determinate phenomenal character: what one is visually aware of in having it is something with such-and-such visual features; to be aware of that is to be aware of those features, or of what has them. There are the visual features that belong to the object of visual awareness here just as there are the visual features belonging to the lemon, and those belonging to the soap. If the lemon and soap are indistinguishable, that is because there is no visual feature that the one has and the other lacks. So it is to be, too, with the HCF experience I have in seeing the lemon, and anything else that would be a case of having it. What we have now seen, though, is that that notion of indistinguishability cannot be made to fit an HCF experience. For an HCF experience needs to be something inner, and that notion of indistinguishability is part of the picture of the outer that does not fit there. This is to say that the HCF story cannot have the notion of indistinguishability that it needs.

7. Conclusion: The main point is that an experience of an inner object of awareness does not factor into, on the one side, what one is thus in contact with, with the features that it determinately has, independent of the experiencer’s responses to it, and, on the other side, the experiencer’s responses, consisting notably, so far as judgement is concerned, in making out what he is presented with for what it is. In that point, experiencing the inner does not follow the pattern of perception. We cannot conceive our special forms of access to ourselves, not even our access to our inner selves, like that.

This leaves various possibilities open. One might think of an inner experience as an unfactorable fusion of presentation and response: there is something it is like to be hot, or to be sad; but its being like what it is in a particular instance is not independent of one’s responding to it as one does; nor one’s responses independent of what it is like. (That, perhaps, is the sort of thing a Pyrrhonian seeming is meant to be.) Or one might exploit the fact that when I am aware of being sad, it is my sadness I am aware of. I am the one who has the feature of being sad. That is unlike the case where it is some inner surrogate for a lemon (at least qua bearer of the feature of

being (or looking) yellow) that I am to recognize, or at least take, as yellow or not. My feeling sad gives me special access to a state of affairs that consists in my being sad; one that you, too, will, undoubtedly, observe if you get too close. We need to attach no special sense to 'sad' to grasp what state of affairs that is. Frege's point has no application here.

Either way, one might exploit the idea that what I express in saying 'I am hot' need not be a judgement. In any case, it cannot be one about some inner object with which I am presented in experience. One must deal with special access case by case. The preceding makes only the last negative point about this. If I feel myself falling over backwards, that may consist in my perceiving a condition of myself, which I make out for what it is. If I have a sensation of falling over, that, not requiring me to be falling over, does not similarly consist in my awareness of some object of experience, which I may then respond to by making it out for what it is.

The HCF story has it that when I see a lemon I am visually aware of something such that there need be no lemon for there to be that to be visually aware of, but also such that my awareness of that may be, if conditions are right, my current visual awareness of the lemon. In my awareness of this further thing (the object of the HCF experience), I am aware of all I am aware of in seeing the lemon, other than the lemon and its bits. For otherwise this object of awareness would not do its appointed work. This object of awareness must be inner, because of the range of cases in which it is meant to be present. In my awareness of it I am, e.g., aware of something looking yellow, or at least of a yellow look—since I am aware of that much when I see the lemon. So it must be something with definite visual features to be recognized in it by me in my encounter with it. The main point of the above exercise is that, for reasons Frege gives us, there is no such object of experience. The HCF story thus collapses.

That point may be put another way. In a case of perception—a case, say, of my seeing a lemon—the phenomenal character of my experience is grounded in the phenomenal character of what it is that I experience—some parts of my environment which are there to be experienced. Those parts of the environment each have their own phenomenal character, which is what it is independent of me; a phenomenal character grounded in their place in networks of causation, or of factive meaning. The phenomenal character of my experience is, with a bit of embroidery, their phenomenal character. Frege's point does not apply. Perception may thus be what it must be: confronting something to which one may respond, rightly or wrongly, in judgement. That is one kind of case. There are then cases which are not cases of perception, but which are cases of visual experience. I suffer an illusion of a lemon on the sideboard (the light, my fatigue) when there is no lemon there. In these cases the phenomenal character of the experience cannot be grounded in the phenomenal character of the objects of one's experience as it can for objects of perceivings. For that would require special understandings of having the features which make up a phenomenal character. And no such understanding is to be had. That is Frege's point. So we cannot model this kind of case on the first kind. We cannot factor it into presentation and response in the way that perception factors. It is just another kind of case. That is the point of disjunctivism.⁵

⁵ This essay originated as comments (at a conference on disjunctivism held at the Goethe Universität, Frankfurt, March 2004) on an essay by M. G. F. Martin, forthcoming as "On Being Alienated", in *Perceptual Experience*, Gendler and Hawthorne, eds., Oxford: Oxford University Press. Martin's essay contains just the right views about indistinguishability, and about the presumption in favour of disjunctivism about perception. The present essay simply endorses the core of Martin's position by presenting it from a different point of view.