Recap

The argument from hallucination seems to force on us the conclusion that perceptual experiences consist in a relation to mind-dependent objects.

A radical way to live with this conclusion is to accept idealism or phenomenalism. A less radical way to do so is to endorse 'indirect' realism.

We begin this lecture by considering some objections to the idea that perceptual experience involves awareness of mind-dependent sense data. We then consider the adverbialist and intentionalist theories of experience.

Arguments against sense data

(1) It is often said that the sense datum view conflicts with physicalism, i.e. the view that all facts are physical facts.

1. If physicalism is true, there are no sense data.
2. Physicalism is true.
Therefore:
3. There are no sense data.

If physical facts are just facts about ordinary material objects—tables, apples, mountains, and so on—then premise 2 just seems question begging.

If physical facts are just the facts of fundamental physics, then 2. seems false.

Supervenience physicalism: All facts are either physical facts, or supervene on physical facts. That is: every physical duplicate of our world is a duplicate of our world simpliciter. (Fix the physical facts, and you fix all of the facts.)

But now it is not clear why premise 1. is true. Why couldn’t the sense data facts be determined by, and so supervene on, the physical facts?

(2) A related argument is this. Every fact can in principle be known about through scientific investigation. But if there are sense data, then this is not the case; facts about sense data can be known just on the basis of experience.

However, plenty of facts can be known only on the basis of experience, e.g. facts about what the colours are like. So what is the problem?
The worry might be that sense data seem to be ‘private entities’, in the sense that only I can know about my sense data. But is this even true? (Not obviously). And even if it is true: what exactly is the problem meant to be?

(3) Sometimes it is said that sense data are just too spooky to be believed in. But if sense data can be known about, and are not obviously incompatible with a moderate physicalist picture, then why should we think this?

(4) Here is an argument due to Armstrong, which is a bit more troubling:

SPECKLED HEN:
I see the speckled hen as having an indeterminate number of speckles. So if the sense datum theory is true, I see a sense datum with an indeterminate amount of speckles. But nothing has indeterminate characteristics. Therefore, the sense datum theory is false. (Armstrong: 1968, p. 138). [Premise: sense data must have whatever features they seem to have.]

Options: (1) Accept that sense data can be indeterminate. (2) Insist that whilst the sense datum does have a determinate number of speckles one sees it as having an indeterminate number. (There may be further options.)

A similar argument is this:

WATERFALL ILLUSION:
With the waterfall illusion, I see something which (a) seems to move, but which (b) seems to stay still. So given the sense datum theory, I see something which both moves and which stays still, namely a sense datum. But it is not possible for any object to have contradictory properties! So the sense datum theory is false.

If you stare for a period of time at a scene which contains movement in one direction and then turn your attention to an object in a scene which contains no movement, this object will appear to move in the opposite direction to that of the original movement...The illusion of movement can also occur when looking at a waterfall...hence its name... (Crane: 1998, p. 142)

Yet: ‘although the after-effect gives a very clear illusion of movement, the apparently moving features nevertheless seem to stay still! That is, we are still aware of features remaining in their ‘proper’ locations even though they are seen as moving. What we see is logically impossible! (Frisby: 1979, p. 101)

We again have the same two options. The sense datum moves, but also stays still. Or: the sense datum simply looks to be both of these ways. (Does the sense datum really move? Does it really stay still? Is there an answer?)
It is often said that experience is transparent to the world, in the sense that it *seems only* to present ordinary things in the mind-independent world.

The idea is that *perceptual experiences do not seem to present mind-dependent sense data*, so that reflection on what such experience is like does not support the sense datum theory (Martin: 2003).

However, this does not show that the sense datum theory is false. Moreover, it can be said that we ‘mistake our sense data for external things’.

Perhaps best argument is just this: the *sense datum view misrepresents the nature of our perceptual contact with the world*. Intuitively, it is ordinary, mind-independent things that are directly present to the mind, rather than mind-dependent sense data (cf. Johnston: 2004, Martin: 2000).

**Verdict:** There are no knock-down arguments against sense data, *contra* established philosophical wisdom (cf. Maund: 2003). However, we should hold out for a naïve realist view, so that we do not have to think of our access to the external world as being indirect (i.e. mediated by mental objects).

### 3 Adverbialism

At the heart of the adverbialist view is the idea that in its nature, perceptual experience may not be a relation to anything at all. To have an experience, on an adverbialist view, is to *instantiate a monadic property*, rather than to stand in any kind of relation. **So there is no need for sense data after all.**

Compare these states of affairs. *<Tom is hungry>, <Sally loves Jane>*. The first is monadic, it consists in the exemplification of a monadic property. The second is relational: it consists in the exemplification of a relation.

It seems that having an experience is to stand in a relation of awareness. So experiences seem to be relational. But for the adverbialist, they are not. Experiences are monadic states of the subject, rather than relational events.

What happens when you dance a waltz? This may seem to involve standing in the *dancing* relation to an object called a *waltz*. But an alternative analysis is possible. We can just say that dancing a waltz involves instantiating a monadic property, namely, that of *dancing in a certain manner*. So we do not need two things and a relation (person, waltz, dancing). Instead, we need one thing and one monadic property (person, dancing-thusly). The same thing may be said of experience. To experience a red thin is not to stand in some relation to a red thing. Instead, it is to be in a monadic state, namely, that of experiencing in a certain way e.g. ‘redly’ (cf. Ducasse: 1942).
Now recall the argument from hallucination:

1. The hallucinatory experience consists in the presentation of a mind-dependent object (rather than a mind-independent one).

2. The perceptual and the hallucinatory experience have the same nature.

Hence:

(C) The perceptual experience consists in the presentation of a mind-dependent object (rather than a mind-independent one).

Adverbialists will reject the first premise. They typically accept the second.

This raises the question: what is it, on adverbialism, to perceive something?

To **genuinely perceive** external object x is to have an adverbialist experience that is caused (in the right way) by x itself.

To **merely hallucinate** is to have an adverbialist experience that is not caused (in the right way) by an external object.

### 3.1 Problems with rejecting premise (1)

The adverbialist rejects (1), emphasising the possibility that experience seems relational without actually being so. But this raises several questions:

1. We said that even in hallucination, one seems to be presented with **something**. Adverbialists deny this. However, they offer no account of why it seems to one as if something is presented. (Similarly, no account is offered of why it seems as if one can attend to, and concentrate on, something.) This seems totally unsatisfactory.

2. We noted that hallucination, like perception, can provide a distinctive type of knowledge of the sensible qualities. But the adverbialist has no account of this either. (Unless she says, implausibly, that the experience itself is red. This would be to endorse a qualia view (see Crane: 2001b).

### 3.2 The Multi-Property Objection

Smith perceives a red round thing and a green square thing. Jones perceives a green round thing and a red square thing. The two experiences differ. But the adverbialist cannot account for this, since both will be analysed as cases of experiencing-redly&roundly&greenly&squarely (Jackson: 1977, Tye: 1984)
Intentionalism

Intentionalism is another theory of sensory experience which tries to do without sense data. Like adverbialism, it rejects premise (1) of the argument from hallucination, whilst accepting premise (2). And like adverbialism, it denies that a perceptual experience is, in its nature, a relation of awareness or presentation between a subject and a suitable object.

Intentionalism is sometimes described as the view that experiences have, or are directed upon, objects. Here they take inspiration from Franz Brentano:

> Every mental phenomenon is characterised by what the scholastics of the Middle Ages referred to as the intentional inexistence [directedness] of the mental, and what we would call relation to a content, direction upon an object or immanent objectivity...Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. (1874, p. 88)

However, it is unclear whether this defines a distinctive view. Naïve realists and sense data theorists will allow that experiences are directed on objects. Even adverbialists will allow that perceptions are directed on their causes.

What is really fundamental to the theory is the idea that experiences represent the world as being certain ways, and are hence akin to beliefs or thoughts. In other words, what is fundamental is the idea that sensory experiences are representational states.

When I believe that $a$ is F, then I am in a mental state which represents the world as being a certain way, viz. such that $a$ is F. This mental state represents things correctly just in case $a$ really is F. Otherwise, my mental state misrepresents how things really are.

When I believe e.g. that $a$ is F, my belief has as its intentional content the proposition that $a$ is F. The intentional mode, attitude, or relation that is involved is the relation of belief itself. Thus, intentional states like beliefs are typically called propositional attitudes (B. Russell’s term).

To have the belief $a$ is F is for me to stand in the belief relation to the proposition that $a$ is F. The belief-state itself thus consists in my bearing the relation of belief to a proposition. The intentionalist offers a similar analysis of perceptual experience. To have a perceptual experience is to stand in some intentional relation to some appropriate intentional content, which, as in the case of belief, is usually take to be a proposition.
In one sense, then, intentionalists think of experiences as relational events: i.e. events constituted by the holding of a relation. However—and this is important—the intentionalist denies that experiences consist in the relation of awareness holding between a subject and some experienced item. In this sense—the sense that is usually relevant to the philosophy of perception—intentionalists deny that experience is relational. In older terminology, they deny that experience has act-object structure.

(A different way to think of intentionalism: experiences are really monadic states of subjects, which can be modelled as relations to propositions. See Crane: 2013 for this suggestion.)

What is the intentional content involved in experiencing? The standard view is that experiential content is propositional (Searle: 1983, Byrne: 2009, Crane: 2009a). If you experience a red round object, then the content of your experience will be the proposition that some x is red and round.

What is the intentional mode involved in experiencing? Early views used to say that this was belief (Armstrong: 1968, Pitcher: 1971). But it is possible to have an experience without believing. Consider the Müller-Lyer illusion:

![Fig. 1](image)

You experience the lines as different lengths. You do not believe that the lines are different lengths. Therefore: experience is not belief.

Contemporary intentionalists take the intentional mode (relation, attitude) involved in experiencing to be a theoretical posit. (Byrne: 2009, Pautz: 2010). It is not a relation we have a name for in English. But we can call it ‘Ex-ing’.

4.1 Virtues of intentionalism

We get a nice account of illusory experience in terms of misrepresentation. The lines are equal, but they are experienced as being different in length.
The intentionalist can explain this as follows: to have the experience involved in the Müller-Lyer illusion is to misrepresent one’s environment. One ‘visually says’ that line A is shorter than line B, but this is not in fact so.

It is also often said that we get a nice account of hallucinations—one that is ontologically conservative in that it does not require postulating sense data. It is a well known feature of representation that one can represent what does not exist. One can believe that the Fountain of Youth is nearby even if the Fountain of Youth does not exist. So intentionalists can say that hallucination is just the familiar case of representing what does not exist.

(Note that this may not represent any genuine advance if, as some philosophers think, there is a substantive question as to how mental representation of the non-existent is possible (see here Crane: 2001b))

It is also often said that intentionalism is an improvement on adverbialism, in that it explains why experience seems to be relational (in the act-object sense) despite not really being so. The basic idea is that an intentional state, unlike an adverbial state, is essentially directed upon its objects.

4.2 Objections

(1) How do we account for the seeming presentation of an object in hallucination, and for the seeming possibility of attending to something?

The intentionalist needs to say a bit more about the fact that experiences seem to involve the sensory presentation of an object. Being ‘directed’ at an object is not enough: after all, beliefs are also ‘directed’ at objects in this way.

(2) How do we account for the special kind of knowledge that hallucinatory experience can provide of sensible qualities?

One natural way to explain this is in terms of objects with those qualities being presented in hallucination. What can an intentionalist say instead?

Adam Pautz (2010) says that we can answer this question by saying that the relevant qualities are part of the content of the experience. But these qualities are also part of the content of belief. (Perhaps we can appeal to the intentional mode as well as the content. But remember that the mode is just a theoretical posit, which we had never heard of before doing philosophy.)

(3) Belief and perception seem to be radically different states. Can the intentionalist account for this?
Not obviously, since all that differs is the intentional mode involved. So a hitherto unheard of theoretical posit is being made to do an awful lot of work! (Those who deny that the intentional content of belief is propositional may have more options here. See Crane: 2009b for this type of view.)

5 Against Factorization

Every view of experience which accepts premise (2) of the argument from hallucination—i.e. that the perceptual and the hallucinatory experience have the same nature—has to factorize genuinely perceptual experience into two components: the experience part, and the perceiving part. We have the experience which is a common factor across ‘good’ and ‘bad’ cases. And then we have that which makes the experience a perception of some object.

An intentionalist might appeal to the difference between satisfied and unsatisfied content to explain the difference. (That is, she could appeal to the representation vs. misrepresentation distinction.) But this won’t do, due to the possibility of veridical hallucination. Here, we have an experience whose content is satisfied, but which is not a genuine perception.

Another option is to appeal to causation. But there are counter-examples:

1. My brain state at t1 causes a hallucinatory experience at t2. Yet I do not see my brain!

2. The perceptual experience of the statue is caused by the atoms that compose the statue acting together. But it is also caused by the entire statue (Merricks: 2001). But whilst I see the statue, I do not see the atoms.

(Cf. Grice: 1961 and Johnston: 2007.) At this point, we might appeal to ‘appropriate causation’. But it notoriously hard to pin down this idea.

Our question is: What possible relation could make the difference between a perception and a hallucination? Do ‘common factor theorists’ have to say that the difference is brute or inexplicable? This seems rather implausible.

1. There has to be an explanation as to why e1 is a perception of x, whilst e2 is not.

2. But, given the common factor view, there is no explanation as to why e1 is a perception of x, whilst e2 is not.

Therefore

3. The common factor view is false.
Bibliography