Philosophical Investigations
Duck-rabbits

Owen Griffiths
oeg21@cam.ac.uk

Churchill and Newnham, Cambridge

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Last week

- We can be certain of our first-personal pain ascriptions.
- But what’s going on in the third-personal case?
- We may think something like *transference*.
- Wittgenstein argued, using the 5 o’clock argument, that this is not so.
- Rather, certain behaviour correlates with pain.
- But this is *criterial* and *a priori*.
- This whole picture is highly non-Cartesian.
Talk outline

The paradox of aspect perception

Solutions
Aspect perception
Necker cube (PPF 135)
Letter (PPF 234)
Duck-rabbit (PPF 118)
The examples need not be visual.

E.g. I hear a 6/8 theme as three pairs of quavers to the bar; then I hear the same theme as two triplets to the bar. (PPF 178)

E.g. Consider ‘Cato killed Cato’.
I can think of it as ‘x killed Cato’ applying to Cato.
Or I can think of it as ‘x killed x’ applying to Cato.
This example is from Frege’s *Begriffsschrift* (1879, §9).
Wittgenstein takes all of these as evidence of aspectual ‘lighting up’.

We cannot see the two aspects simultaneously.

And yet nothing changes of the object.

What do all these examples have in common?

Nothing: ‘lighting up’ is a family resemblance concept.
The paradox

- Wittgenstein’s best statement of this is:
  
  *I observe a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I see that it has not changed; and yet I see differently. I call this experience “noticing an aspect”.* (PPF 113)

- In all of the examples considered, there seems to be change and constancy.
- A very natural way to express this thought is:
  
  *I see differently and yet I see the same.*

- This appears paradoxical.
The paradox

- A resolution here must satisfy what Ahmed (2017) calls the Adequacy and Continuity conditions.
- First, and most obviously, we must resolve the paradox.
- That is, we must offer an interpretation of

  \[ I \text{ see differently and yet I see the same.} \]

  that is not contradictory.

- Thus:

  Adequacy It must not be contradictory to assert ‘I see differently and yet I see the same’.
The paradox

- But the interpretation given that removes the paradox must be *plausible*.

- That is, it must make it clear that there is *something* importantly similar between the senses in which we see the same and differently.

- In particular, they must both be senses of *seeing*, without stretching that concept too far.

- Thus:

  **Continuity**  The senses in which we ‘see differently’ and ‘see the same’ must be plausible senses of *seeing*. 
The paradox

To Ahmed’s criteria, it is reasonable to add:

Generalisation  The resolution must not be limited to the case of visual perception.

Much of the literature is focussed on the visual cases.

But not all cases of aspectual lighting up – not even all of Wittgenstein’s – are of this sort.

So we want our solution to meet:

- Adequacy - solve the paradox
- Continuity - do so in a way that’s plausible
- Generalisation - do so in a way not limited to the visual
Talk outline

The paradox of aspect perception

Solutions
Gestaltism

- The Berlin school of gestalt psychology held that, in addition to colour and shape, the visual field has an aspect of *organisation*.
- In cases of aspectual lighting up, something does *not* change: colours and shapes.
- But something *does* change: organisation.
- Immediately, we may worry about Generalisation.
Gestaltism

- There is also a problem for Continuity.
- The problem here is apparent when we ask: 
  
  *Do we see organisation in the same sense that we see colour and shape?*

- If we do, then we meet Continuity: we see no change in colour and shape; we see a change in organisation.
- But now I do straightforwardly see differently and yet the same.
- This solution fails to meet Adequacy.
The problem is the claim that we see organisation just as we see colour and shape.

If this is true, then our claim

\[ I \text{ see differently and yet I see the same.} \]

is still contradictory.

We could resolve this by saying:

\[ I \text{ see}_O \text{ differently and yet I see}_SC \text{ the same.} \]

But now we lose Continuity.

Hence, Gestaltism faces a dilemma.
Wittgenstein considers a different resolution:

*Imagine a physiological explanation of the experience. Let it be this: When we look at the figure, our eyes scan it repeatedly, always following a particular path. The path corresponds to a particular pattern of oscillation of the eyeballs in looking. It can happen that one such pattern switches to another, and that the two alternate. ... Certain patterns of movement are physiologically impossible; so, for example, I cannot see the schematic cube as two interpenetrating prisms. And so on. Let this be the explanation.* (PPF 236)
Physiology

- Here, we seem to meet Adequacy.
- The optical act of *looking* has changed.
- But the static picture obtained from composing these hasn’t changed.
- So I see the same in that the overall image is the same.
- But I see differently because there is a change in *how* I am looking.
Physiology

- Plausibly, Continuity is also satisfied.
- The act of looking is clearly *visual*.
- And the act of composing these also seems *visual*.
- So what changes seems to be *seeing*.
- So Adequacy is satisfied by we distinguish two senses of seeing, but Continuity is satisfied because they fall under the umbrella *seeing*. 
Physiology

- One clear limitation is Generalisation.
- But worse, Wittgenstein thinks that we don’t really meet Continuity.
- The claim is empirical, which he doesn’t like:
  
  *You have now introduced a new, a physiological, criterion of seeing. And this can conceal the old problem, but not solve it.* (PPF 236)

- Remember Wittgenstein’s notion of *a priori* criteria.
- This cannot be what moved us to say ‘I see differently and yet I see the same’.
- We may be ignorant of the mechanism and yet want to say this.
To understand Wittgenstein’s solution, we need to note some Wittgensteinian themes:

1. Many psychological concepts do not admit of necessary and sufficient conditions. We must make do with *family resemblance*.

2. The referents of psychological terms cannot be pinned down by introspection. We know this from the rule-following considerations, and from consideration of first- and third-personal ascription.

3. We must distinguish the *criteria* from the *symptoms* of psychological states.

   In keeping with 2 and 3, Wittgenstein focusses on behaviour and criteria.

   In keeping with 1, he doesn’t offer definitions.
Wittgenstein’s solution

- Wittgenstein distinguishes *what we see* (optical) from *how we see* (synoptical).
- It is criterial of optical perception that we acknowledge an exact copy of the object as such.
- Contrast this with synoptical perception.
- This has various components, including:
  - What you consider to be *approximate* copies (PPF 234)
  - How you would go about *copying* it (PPF 151)
  - The comparisons you would make (PPF 120)
  - The forms of expression you would make (PPF 148)
- These aren’t necessary and sufficient but, of course, Wittgenstein doesn’t want that.
Wittgenstein’s solution

- The solution, then, is that we *optically* see the same but *synoptically* see differently.
- No paradox there, so Adequacy is met.
- How about Continuity?
- Both sorts of *seeing* are intimately connected with *sight*.
- Also, the criteria are similar in each case.
- How about Generalisation? We are invited to imagine extensions to other domains.
Conclusion

- The phenomenon of aspectual lighting up suggests a paradox.
- Wittgenstein has objected to two possible solutions.
- *Gestaltism* fails to meet Adequacy: it remains paradoxical.
- *Physiology* fails to meet Continuity: we wanted something in common *a priori*.
- Rather, we should distinguish *optical* from *synoptical* seeing.
- This meets both criteria.