

1. What are the objects of perception?

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Perception lies at the root of all of our empirical knowledge. Most of what we know about the world is through the testimony of others or from direct experience through our senses. Thus perception is key to empirical knowledge as almost everything that we know about we first know through perceiving objects. Perceptual realism is the common sense view that tables, cups, chairs books are independent objects and exist independently from any other outside factors. Though this is the view most commonly held it is definitely not the only view. To many different people there are many different objects of perception and they do not believe that they exist independently of perceivers.

When talking about perception and the objects one claims to perceive, one has to talk about the different kinds of things one looks at when perceiving things. If there is a cup of coffee in front of me what is it about that cup that I focus my attention on? What about it do I perceive? There are two main kinds of answers to that question, there is direct realism and indirect realism. Direct Realism states in a broad sense that such broad things like needs, cups, and tables are all objects of perception. Things which you can

smell, see, touch and listen too are all part of direct realism. However there are two different kinds of direct realism naïve realism and scientific realism. These differ in the properties they claim perceived objects have when not being perceived. Naïve realism states that objects have the same properties independently of their perceivers, while scientific realism says that properties of perceived objects depend on the perceivers. For example to a scientific realist, a yellow cup of coffee is not an object of perception since it is also dependant on the perceiver. Yellow the colour of the cup depends crucially on the light that is present on the time and the angle from which the perceiver is looking. Scientific direct realism is often discussed in terms of Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Locke maintained that primary qualities are those qualities whose existence is independent of the existence of the perceiver.

In contrast, the theory of indirect realism questions the whole basis for direct realism. This concept of indirect realism maintains that though the yellow cup of coffee does exist independently. We perceive it through a set of intermediaries that come between it and me. As Dancy put it, "examples of indirect perception might be ones perception of oneself in a mirror and ones perception of an actor on television" (Dancy, Contemporary Epistemology, 1985. pp144) The indirect realist claims that all things are perceived in this way through an intermediary. There are some arguments that support this stance, for example you may look out your window at distant stars, however it is a fact that the star that one may be looking at may have already been destroyed reached supernova and burst. So how can one be having a direct perception of an object that has ceased to exist. You are looking at the star through an intermediary in your brain. This can be applied to other cases when looking at steam rising from a hot bowl of water by

the time I perceive it, the steam is not in the exact place it was when I first visualized it. However this argument seem rather weak to me. It is not true that an object of perception has to exist at the point we become aware of it. One may see an object which has ceased to exist but still since you become aware of it perceptually that is when you have the direct experience with it.

Thus objects of perception are all those objects that one is aware of ones that exist independently of the perceiver. Direct Realism in my view thus takes precedence over indirect realism. All objects that are perceived are perceived directly and not through any intermediary as indirect realism points out.