

24.500/Phil253 topics in philosophy of mind/perceptual experience



Figure by MIT OCW.

plan

- leftovers
- crane, “is there a perceptual relation?”
- experience and content
- n.b. next class april 2 @ MIT



Figure by MIT OCW.

crane, “is there a perceptual relation?”

- representationalism: introspection of a perceptual experience never reveals awareness of any properties of the experience itself (127)
- not the usual way representationalism is defined
 - phenomenal character determined by representational content (see block 1996)
 - not a thesis about introspection



Figure by MIT OCW.

- a puzzle: how can one ‘introspect’ an experience and not be aware of any of its properties?
- perhaps crane meant to say that (according to representationalism), one is only aware of the experience’s representational properties
 - see 130



Figure by MIT OCW.

When Eloise sees a tree before her, the colors she experiences are all experienced as features of the tree and its surroundings. None of them are experienced as intrinsic features of her experience. Nor does she experience any features of anything as intrinsic features of her experience. And that is true of you too. There is nothing special about Eloise's visual experience. When you see a tree, you do not experience any features as intrinsic features of your experience. Look at a tree and try to turn your attention to intrinsic features of your visual experience. I predict you will find that the only features there to turn your attention to will be features of the presented tree...

harman, 'the intrinsic quality of experience'

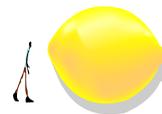


Figure by MIT OCW.



- presumably 'turning your attention to your visual experience' uncovers extrinsic features of your visual experience—the property of representing the tree as green, e.g.
- if it doesn't, then there's no such thing as 'turning your attention to your visual experience'

Figure by MIT OCW.

transparency



Figure by MIT OCW.

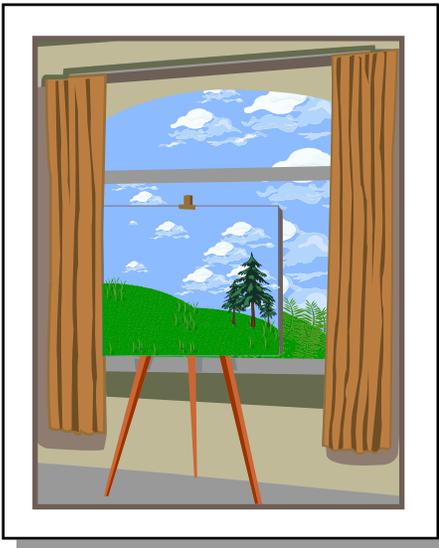


Figure by MIT OCW.

+ve: (when experiencing) we are aware of qualities of external things

- or, qualities that appear to be of external things (see crane's fn. 3)

-ve: we are not (directly?) aware of qualities of experience

it is easy to show [these] are not true (129)



Figure by MIT OCW.

against **-ve**: blurry vision

- I remove my glasses and things seem blurry...blurriness...seem[s] to be instantiated somewhere...it need not seem as if [the familiar objects of experience] are themselves blurry (130)

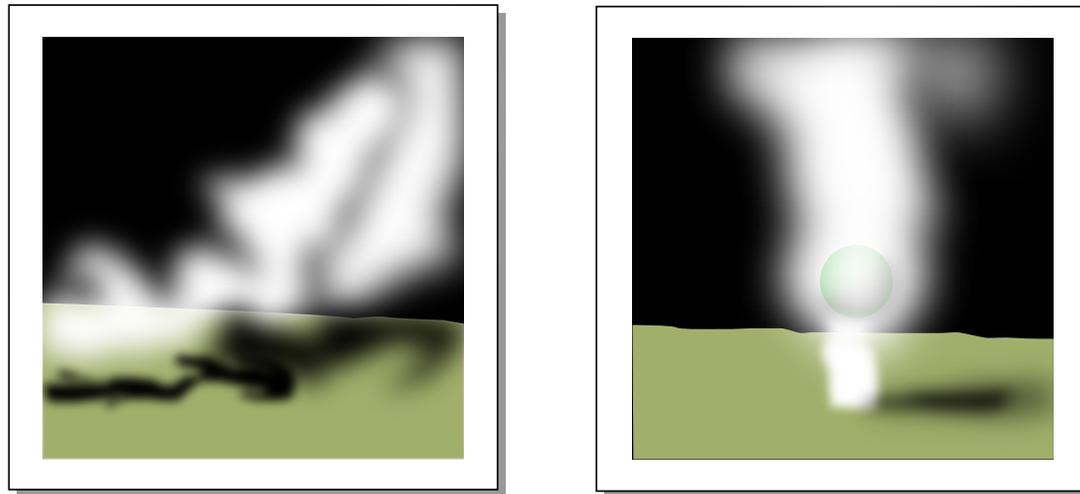
Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

A photograph of camera men taking a shot of a blurry Robin Williams.



Figure by MIT OCW.

- seeing something as blurry
 - one sees it as having indistinct contours and boundaries (tye 2000, 80)



Figures by MIT OCW.



Figure by MIT OCW.

- seeing something blurrily
 - in these cases, one simply loses information [about] where the boundaries and contours lie (tye, 80)
- but is that right?
 - losing information is not necessarily to see blurrily

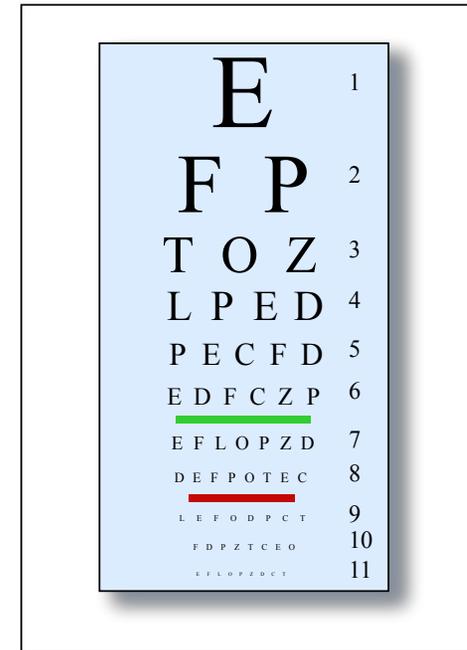


Figure by MIT OCW.



Figure by MIT OCW.

- crane's response: concede tye is right, but insist that when one sees blurrily blurriness is 'instantiated somewhere', and since it's not instantiated by the object it must be 'instantiated (in some way) in the experience itself' (131)
- it's very hard to see how both tye and crane could be right!
- put another way: if tye is right, there should be no temptation to ascribe blurriness to anything

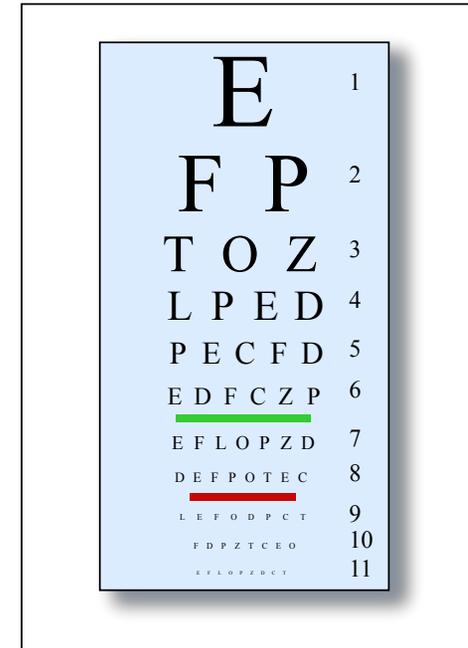


Figure by MIT OCW.



Figure by MIT OCW.

- tye is wrong
 - foveal vs. peripheral vision is another counterexample
- in the case of blurry vision the retinal image is blurry (unfocussed)
 - contrast the eye chart or peripheral case—sharp image, but not enough receptors
- and isn't crane wrong too?
 - he seems to concede (130) that sometimes external objects can look blurry
 - but how can that be, if blurriness is a property of experience?

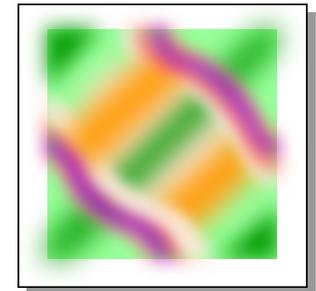


Figure by MIT OCW.



Figure by MIT OCW.

- distinguish: having “smoky” boundaries, from being blurry
- ordinary objects and scenes are never blurry
 - arguably, that’s why we don’t take the appearance of blurriness seriously
- but some unordinary objects are blurry

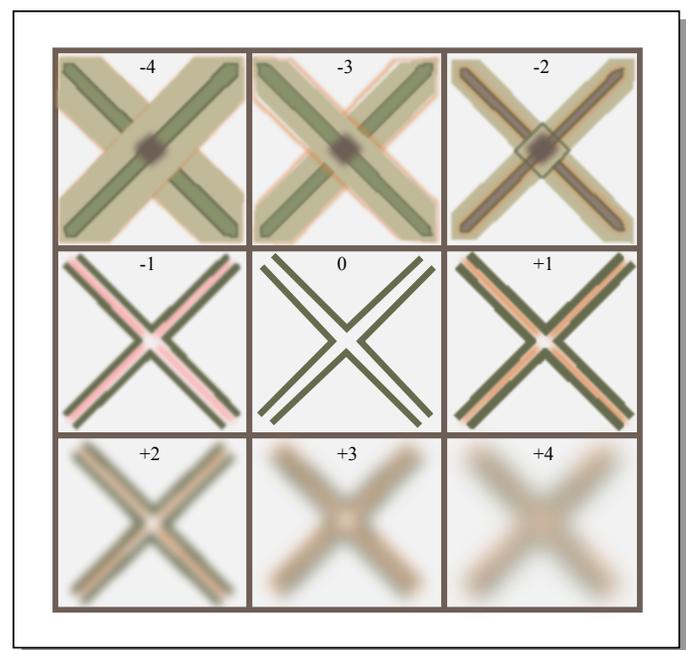


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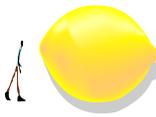


Figure by MIT OCW.

experience and content

- A. the content view (CV) introduced
- B. 'experience'
- C. CV explicated
- D. travis's argument against CV
- E. travis's model of illusion
- F. CV as the best explanation of illusions
- G. matters arising



Figure by MIT OCW.

A the content view introduced

- A visual perceptual experience enjoyed by someone sitting at a desk may represent various writing implements and items of furniture as having particular spatial relations to one another and to the experiencer, and as themselves as having various qualities... The representational content of a perceptual experience has to be given by a proposition, or set of propositions, which specifies the way the experience represents the world to be.

peacocke, Sense and Content

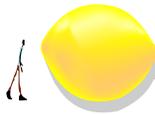


Figure by MIT OCW.

- ...perceptual experience represents. My experience as of a round, red object in front of me represents that there is a round, red object in front of me. (jackson)
- A perceptual experience has representational properties; it presents the world as being a certain way. (davies)
- A perceptual state might have the content that there is a green object in front of me. (chalmers)



Figure by MIT OCW.

the **C**ontent **V**iew

CV: perceptual experience is to be characterized, at least in part, by its representational content, roughly, by the way it represents things as being in the world around the perceiver

brewer, 'Perception and content'



Figure by MIT OCW.

B 'experience'

- 'a very special notion' (hinton)
- when one sees a galah, one has a '(visual) experience'



Figure by MIT OCW.

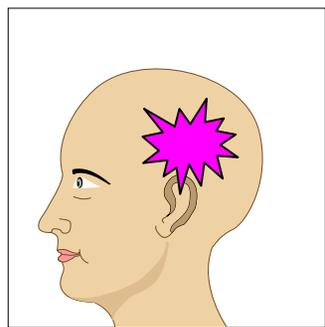


Figure by MIT OCW.

experience of the galah

the galah

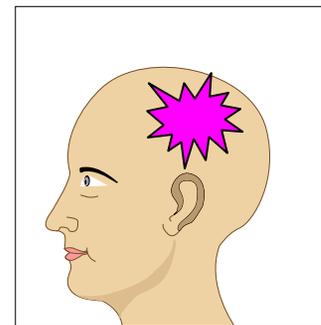


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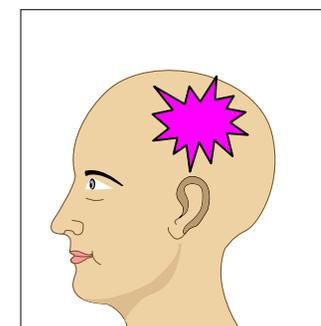
- if you and I both see a galah, there are two ('token') experiences of the galah



token
experience e_1



token
experience e_2



Figures by MIT OCW.



Figure by MIT OCW.

- if one sees a galah and hears the screech of a cockatoo, one has a visual experience and a (presumably different) auditory experience
- experiences are particulars
- they are events—events occurring (at least partly) in one's brain
 - they are like flashes, bangs, conferences, cricket matches, parties, and races
 - they occur or happen; they are extended in time; they have a beginning, a middle, and an end



Figure by MIT OCW.

- one has introspective access to properties of one's experience

...introspection does represent our experiences as having properties. In particular, it classifies them; it assigns them to kinds. We are indeed 'made aware of them, as we are of beer bottles, as objects having properties that serve to identify them' [quoting from Dretske], though of course experiences are events, not physical objects like bottles.

lycan, 'Dretske's ways of introspecting'

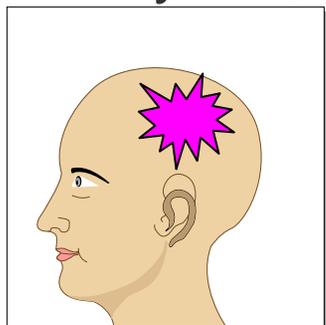


Figure by MIT OCW.

Figure by MIT OCW.



Figure by MIT OCW.

‘a very general notion’ (hinton)

- ‘the experience of being a refractive surgeon’

This is a real ad that appeared recently looking for refractive surgeons with no prior experience. This worries consumer groups who want to know who is running the laser, and what experience do they have at your local discount center?

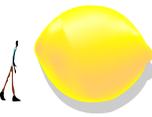
Classifieds

Refractive Associate

The laser Eye Center has an opening for a new associate in a refractive practice environment. The Laser Eye Center is a refractive practice that has multiple locations in both Southern and Northern California.

We are seeking a BE/BC, motivated, skilled and personable physician who will work well in a group environment. **No refractive experience is required.** Please fax CVs to...

Figure by MIT OCW.



- ‘I had the experience of swimming the bosphorus’ (hinton)
- ‘seeing harvard square was an unforgettable experience’
- ‘I have not had the experience of tasting vegemite’
- ‘I had many strange experiences today’ (tye)

- ordinary talk of ‘experiences’ is (roughly) talk of what happened to one, what one did, what one encountered or witnessed
- it is not the ‘very special notion’



Figure by MIT OCW.

- the simplest hypothesis compatible with what is revealed by introspection is that, for each period of consciousness, there is only a single experience—an experience that represents everything experienced within the period of consciousness as a whole (the period, that is, between one state of unconsciousness and the next).

tye, *Consciousness and Persons*



Figure by MIT OCW.

- Here is a parallel...there is just one movie, not many movies unified together into one encompassing movie.

tye, *Consciousness
and Persons*

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.
Poster for the movie Trainspotting.

- one experience too many



Figure by MIT OCW.

- we are not aware of our alleged ‘experiences’ (as we are aware of events in our environment)
 - an analogy: we are aware of events represented by the movie (environmental events) and the movie (the experience)
 - the duration of represented events and the duration of the movie are often different
 - access to our ‘experiences’ is not like this
-
- it is not a phenomenological datum that we have ‘experiences’

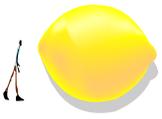
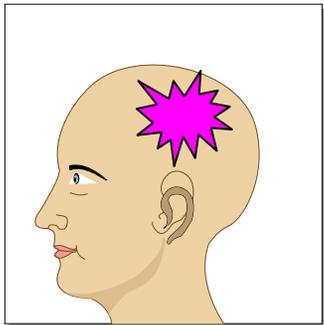


Figure by MIT OCW

- one knows (by ‘introspection’) that one sees the galah
- so doesn’t one know that one is undergoing ‘an experience of seeing the galah’?
 - that does not follow
- seeing is not an event
- it’s a state, like belief
 - I was eating mushy peas/staring at the galah this morning
 - *I was seeing the galah/believing cambridge is sunny this morning



Figures by MIT OCW.



Figure by MIT OCW.

- in the 'very special' sense, there are no experiences

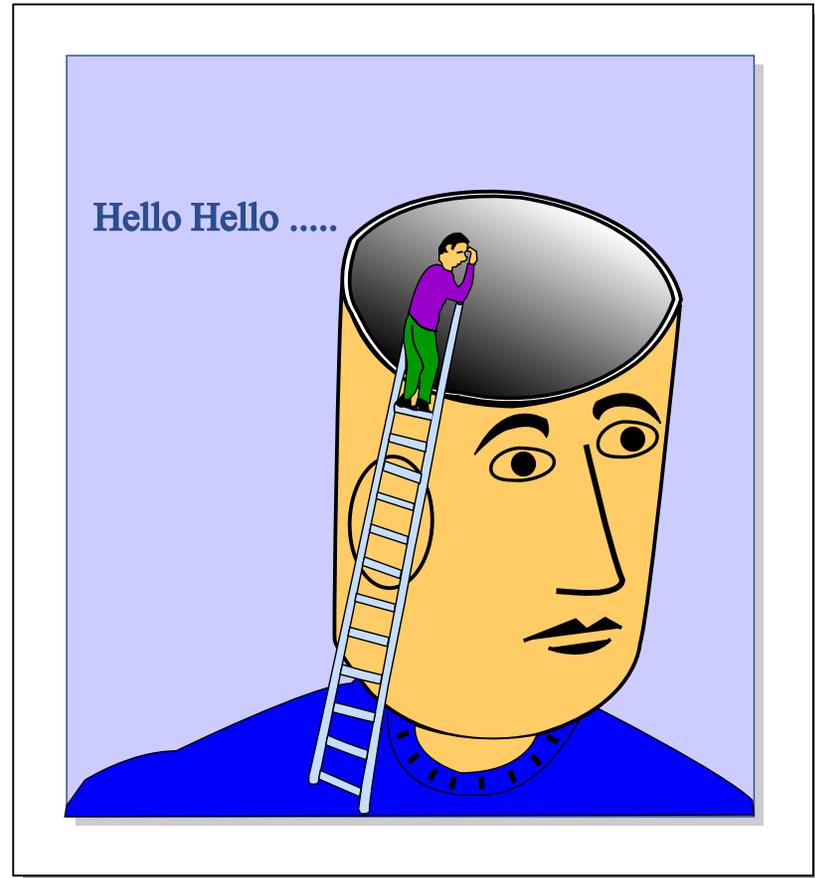


Figure by MIT OCW.



Figure by MIT OCW.

C CV explicated

1. there is a stative propositional attitude (call it 'experiencing')
 - not a tendency to believe, etc.
2. it is non-factive, and has a mind-to-world direction of fit
 - in these respects like belief
3. it is present in ordinary cases of perception
4. it is typically accessible to the subject
5. the relevant content is (sometimes and roughly) conveyed (in the visual case) by 'the way things look', etc.



Figure by MIT OCW.

- is CV (as elaborated) true?
 - unobvious, because we don't have an appropriate propositional attitude verb

In no case I am aware of is this view argued for. Rather it is assumed from the outset.

travis, 'The silence of the senses'



Figure by MIT OCW.

- an alternative ('naïve realist') view

The intuitive idea is that, in perceptual experience, a person is simply presented with the actual constituents of the physical world themselves. Any errors in her world view which result are the product of the subject's responses to this experience, however automatic, natural, or understandable in retrospect these responses may be. Error, strictly speaking, given how the world actually is, is never an essential feature of experience itself.

brewer, 'Perception and content'

D travis's argument against CV

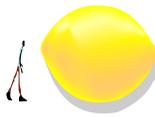


Figure by MIT OCW.

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2. 'looks' statements are either:
 - comparative (pia looks like her sister, it looks as though it were a vermeer)
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3. the comparative kind gives us content, but too much
4. the epistemic kind is a matter of factive meaning, and so 'collapses representation into indicating'
5. hence, no 'looks-indexing'
 - that is, there's no 'looks'-construction which is exclusively used to report the (alleged) content of experience
6. CV is not needed to account for illusion, and 'looks'-statements do not help, so CV is without support

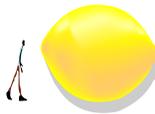


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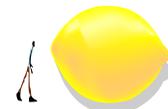
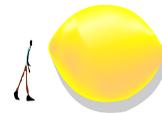


Figure by MIT OCW.

epistemic and comparative 'uses' (chisholm, jackson)

epistemic

- it looks as if p
 - I have visual evidence for the proposition that p
- comparative (travis prefers 'non-epistemic')
- it looks as though p, x looks like an F
 - things looks like they normally look when p, x looks like an F normally does
 - n.b.: the comparative 'use' is explained using 'looks'



against 'looks-indexing' (cf. Jackson)

- something can look like a blue thing (comparative)
 - or
- look as if it's blue (epistemic)
- even though
 - it looks black
- and if so the (alleged) content of one's experience is that the object is black

- obvious next question: what about the 'phenomenal use' of 'looks', which Travis does not discuss?

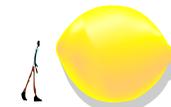


Figure by MIT OCW.

- proposal: x looks_p F to S iff S 's experience represents x as F
- but that isn't right
- it looks_p yellow, fast, and expensive (see thau, *Consciousness and Cognition*)

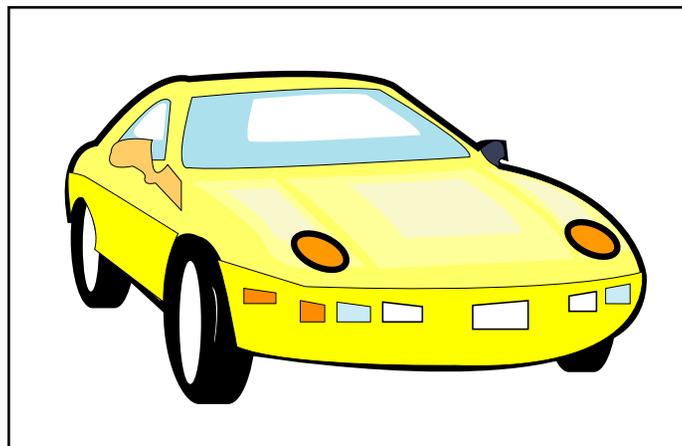


Figure by MIT OCW.

- and it can't be that easy to show that experience can represent something as fast and expensive



Figure by MIT OCW.

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- 5 is correct, although not exactly for travis's reasons

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Figure by MIT OCW.

E travis's model of illusion

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24.500/Phil253 S07

- anderson, *nature* 3 march 2005

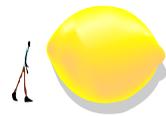


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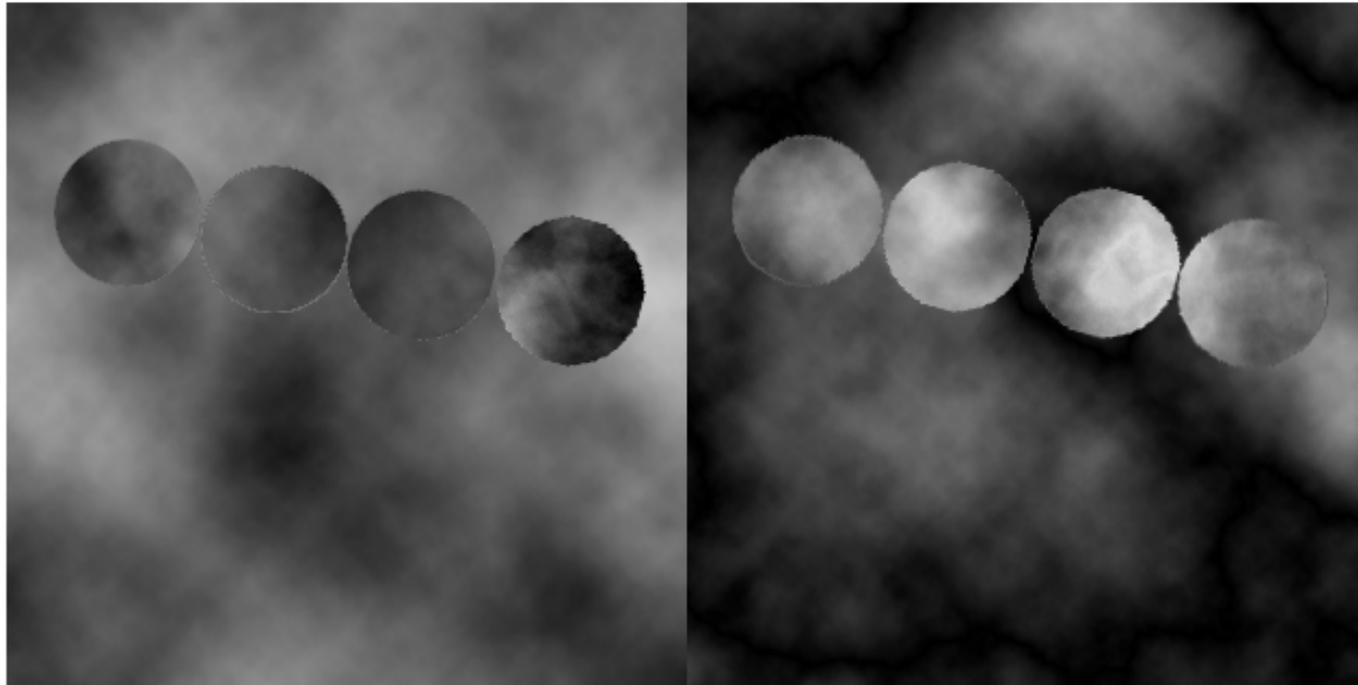


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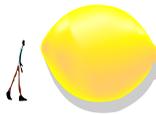


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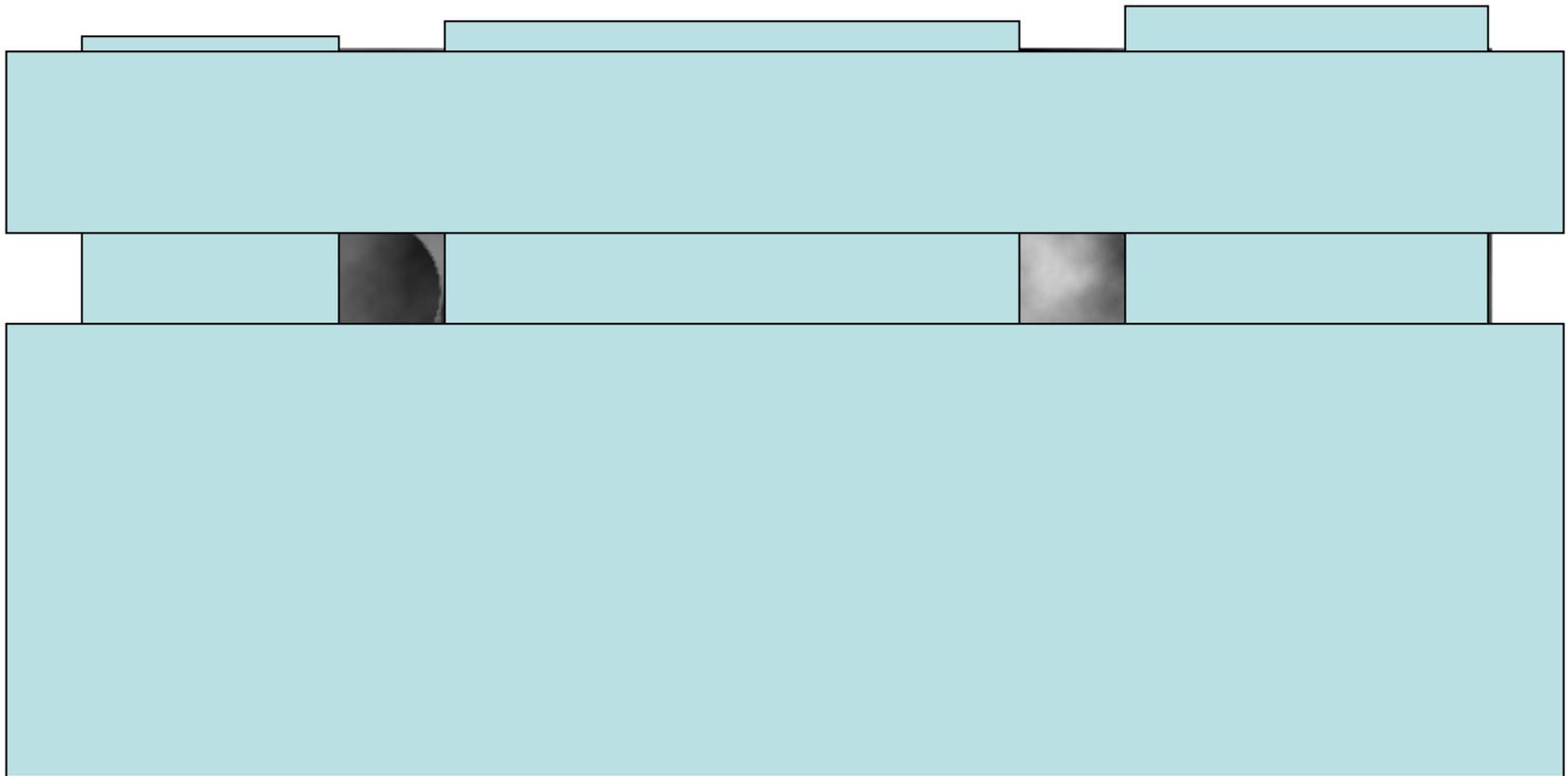


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Figure by MIT OCW.

- the 'moons' rotated

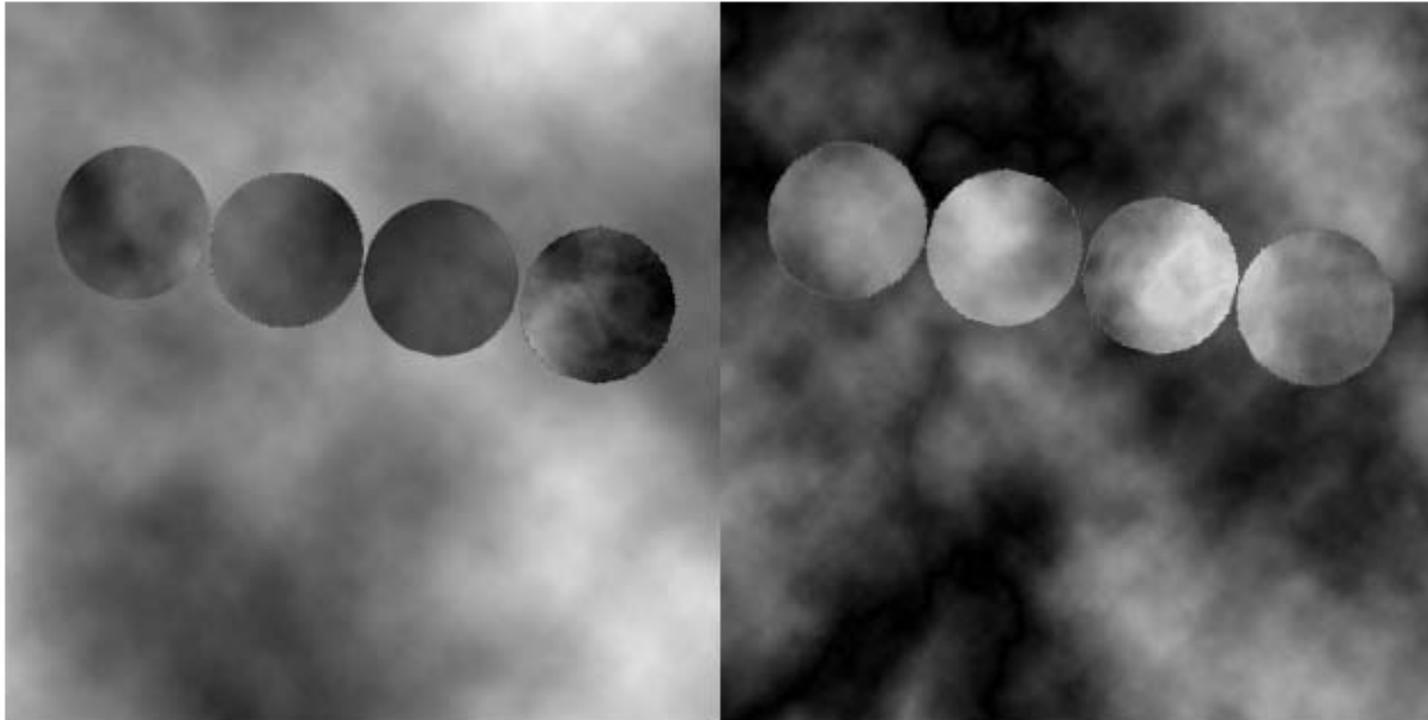


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Figure by MIT OCW.

- the phi phenomenon

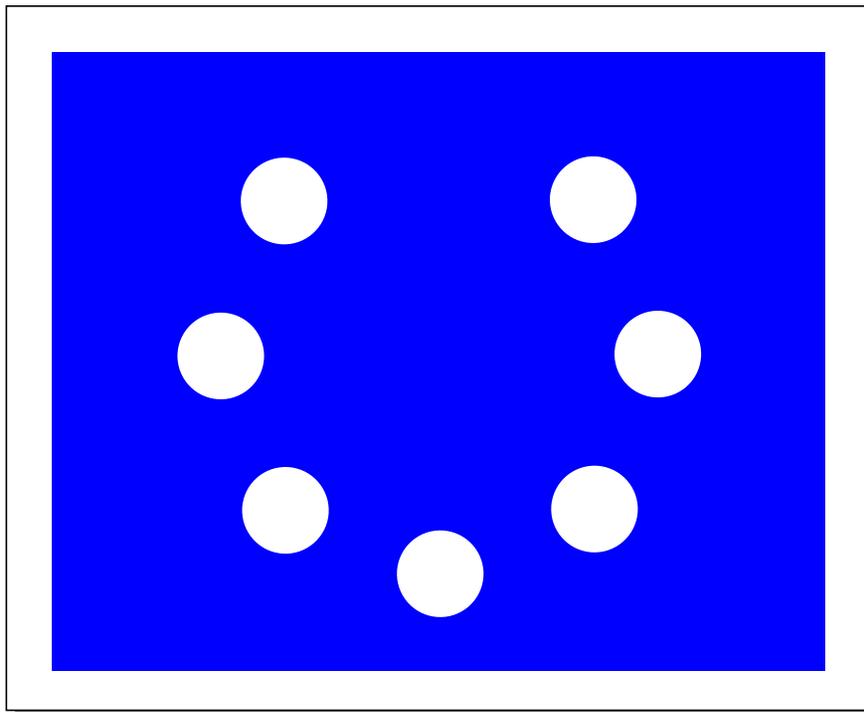


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Figure by MIT OCW.

- müller-lyer

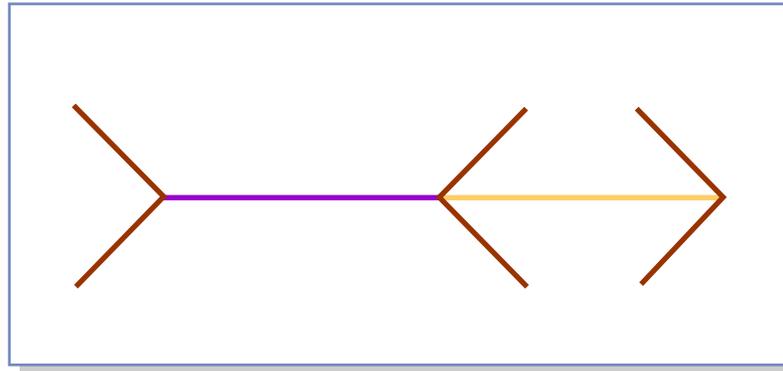


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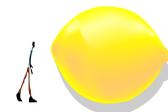


Figure by MIT OCW.

- In the Müller-Lyer, two lines are contrived...to have a certain look. They do not just seem to have that look; that is actually the way they look...Two lines may well have that look because one is longer than the other...that look may thus indicate that it is two lines of unequal length that one confronts...Thus may someone be misled by a Müller-Lyer...What one gets wrong is the arrangement of the world: how the misleading seen thing relates to other things. That mistake neither requires, nor suggests, that in this illusion one line is represented to us as being longer than the other...

travis, 'The silence of the senses'

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Figure by MIT OCW.



Figure by MIT OCW.

upshot

- travis doesn't give us a convincing model of illusion
- but he's right that perceptual content is not 'looks-indexed'
 - that is, there's no 'looks'-construction which is exclusively used to report the (alleged) content of experience

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F CV as the best explanation of illusions



Figure by MIT OCW.

- back to naïve realism:

The intuitive idea is that, in perceptual experience, a person is simply presented with the actual constituents of the physical world themselves.

(brewer)

- but what is it to have a ‘perceptual experience’ that ‘simply presents’ a portion of one’s environment?



Figure by MIT OCW.

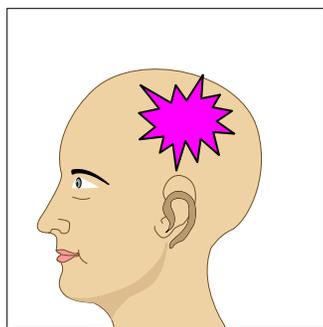


Figure by MIT OCW.

- one sees the galah, but that's not all
- the galah is 'simply presented' as pink (etc.), not as having been born in canberra, or as being > 1 mile from jupiter, or as having a heart
- the fact that that (the galah) is pink has got to get into the story somehow
- 'one sees that the galah is pink' won't do it
- one can see that the galah is pink even if it looks crimson



Figure by MIT OCW.

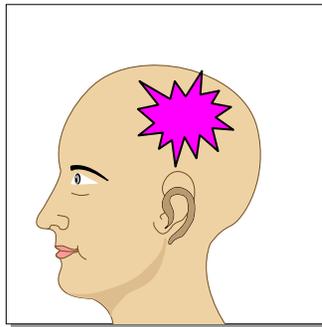


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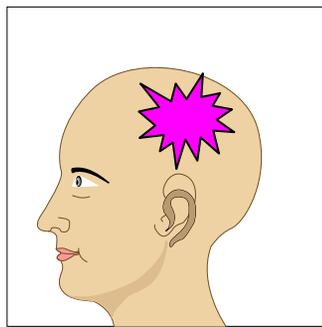


Figure by MIT OCW.

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Figure by MIT OCW.

- if this much is granted, then the dispute is between the choice of

the non-factive attitude experiencing that p

- or

the factive attitude perceiving that p

- and given travis's problem with accounting for illusions, the choice is clear



Figure by MIT OCW.

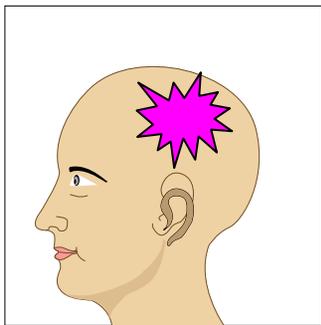


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Figure by MIT OCW.

G matters arising

- there are no galah-illusions
- so, pending some other argument, the content of experience is quite thin (not, e.g., that there is a galah before me)
- hence ‘the content of experience’ has little significance for epistemology
- and it’s no surprise that we have no corresponding propositional attitude verb



Figure by MIT OCW.

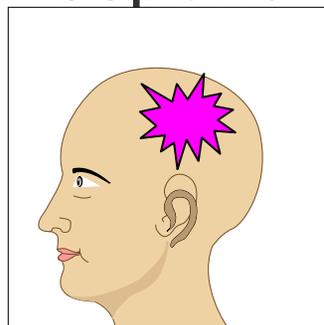


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