

# 24.500/Phil253 topics in philosophy of mind/perceptual experience



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# plan

- leftovers: thought insertion
- Eden

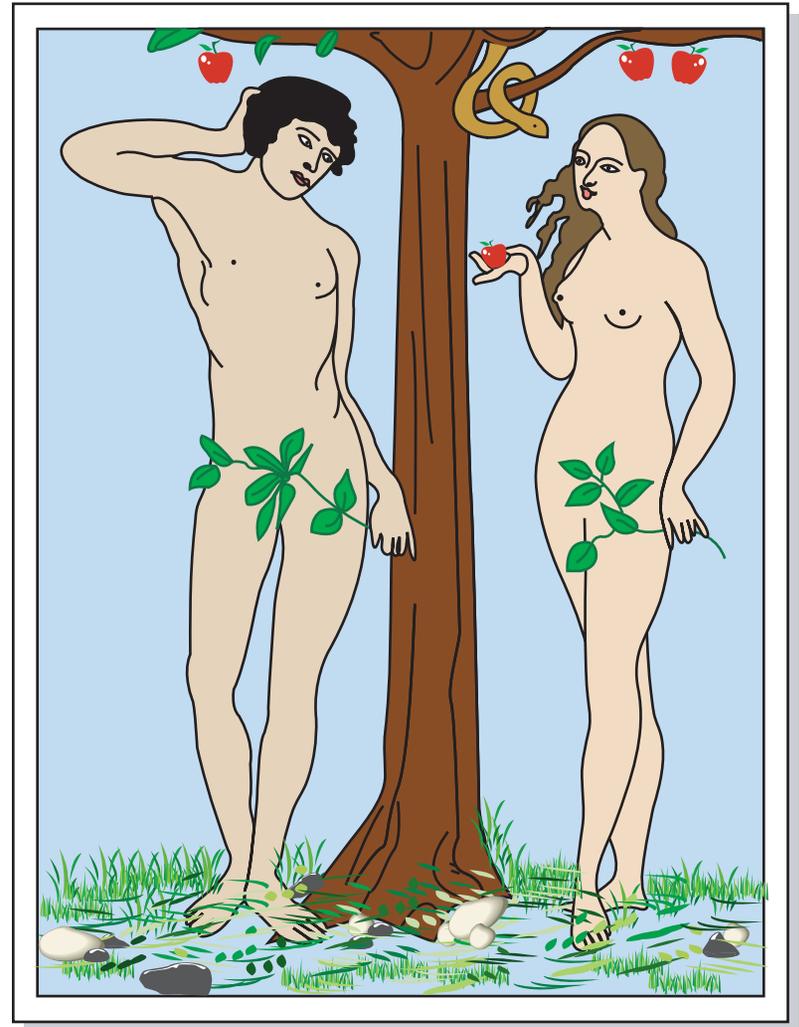


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classic thought insertion:

- a thought of x is ‘in’ my mind, but I am not thinking that thought/you are thinking it

less puzzling variants:

- I have introspective access to the fact that you are thinking of x
- I have introspective access (only) to the fact that someone is thinking of x

thought influence:

- someone has ‘implanted a thought in my mind’; that is, has caused me, in some unusually direct way, to think about x
  - process version: someone is controlling my train of thought about x
- exercise: why is there no ‘belief/desire insertion’?



## the real problem about coherence...

- Use of the first person in one's talk and thought requires that there be a causal unity, an object, for the term to refer to. The rule fixing the reference of ['I'] is..."Any token of 'I' refers to whoever produced it"...If we really thought that occurrent thoughts in one person's stream of consciousness were being produced by the beliefs and desires of another person, we really would have some uncertainty over how to interpret these uses of the first person. Since the schizophrenic does take himself to be in that situation, he cannot but experience some uncertainty over the interpretation of his own uses of 'I'

# 'perception and the fall from eden'



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# background: color



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- objects appear colored; lemons appear yellow, etc.
  - sometimes things aren't the way they appear
  - the straight oar in water, etc.
- are objects like lemons colored?
- relatedly, what are these features (properties, attributes) that lemons appear to have?

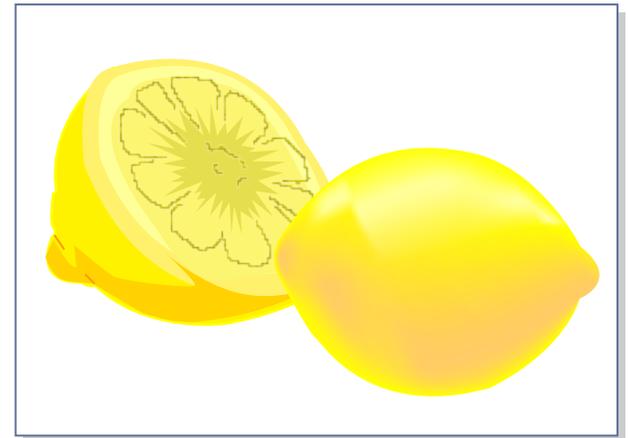


Figure by MIT OCW.



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- color realism: objects are colored
- color eliminativism: objects are not colored
- dispositionalism: colors are dispositions to produce color experiences/sensations
- physicalism: colors are physical properties (e.g. ways of changing the light)
- primitivism: colors are sui generis properties

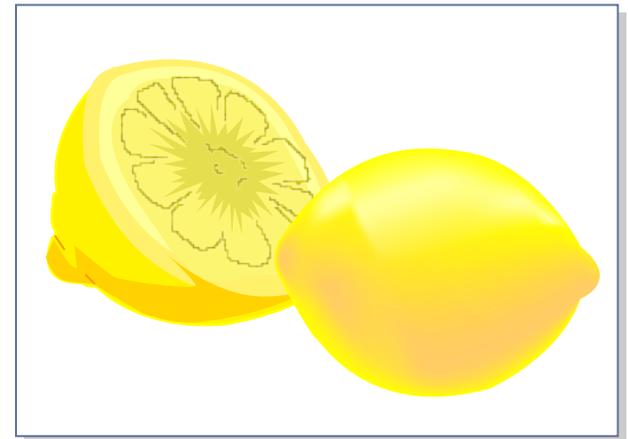


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## another issue: relativism

- is being yellow like being poisonous, or is it like being triangular?
- unlike being triangular, there is no such property as being poisonous
- rather, there is a family of properties: poisonous-for-rats, poisonous-for-humans, poisonous-for-me, poisonous-for-you,...
- relativism: no such property as being yellow
- rather, there is a family of properties: yellow-for-Joylene-in-circumstances- $C_1$ , yellow-for-Raylene-in-circumstances- $C_2$ ,...

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# realism: relativist or non-relativist?

- relativism may be combined with either physicalism, dispositionalism, or primitivism
- however, relativism naturally fits with dispositionalism

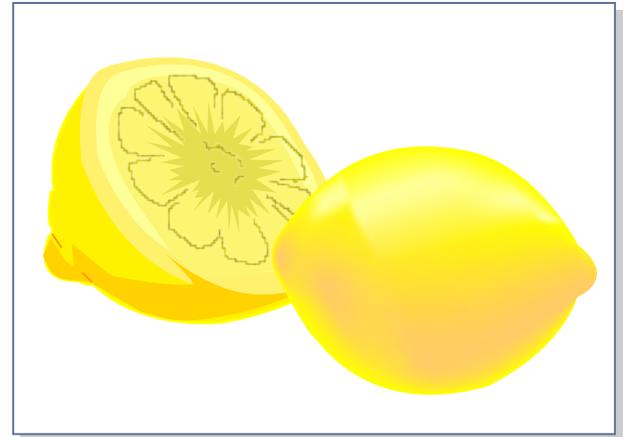


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- The fundamental principle of [the “modern philosophy”] is the opinion concerning colours, sounds, tastes, smells, heat and cold; which it asserts to be nothing but impressions in the mind, derived from the operation of external objects, and without any resemblance to the qualities of the objects. (Hume, Treatise)

- ...grass looks green because it is green, and blood looks red because it is red.

As surprising as it may seem, these beliefs are fundamentally mistaken. Neither objects nor lights are actually “colored” in anything like the way we experience them...color is a psychological property of our visual experiences... (Palmer, Vision Science)



- Upon examination, I find only one of the reasons commonly produced for this opinion to be satisfactory, viz. that derived from the variations of those impressions, even while the external object, to all appearance, continues the same. These variations depend upon several circumstances. Upon the different situations of our health: A man in a malady feels a disagreeable taste in meats, which before pleased him the most... Colours reflected from the clouds change according to the distance of the clouds, and according to the angle they make with the eye and luminous body... Instances of this kind are very numerous and frequent. (Hume)



Figure by MIT OCW.

## a verbal dispute?

- “But isn’t this just playing with words? There is the disposition of the tomato to produce color sensations. There are the physical properties of tomatoes that are responsible for it’s having such a disposition. And there are the distinctive qualities of color sensations themselves. These are the facts. Who cares whether ‘red’ names the disposition, one of the physical properties, or the distinctive quality of the sensation?”

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Figure by MIT OCW.

Common sense holds—though not very explicitly—that perception reveals external objects to us directly: when we “see the tomato,” it is the tomato that we see. Science has adopted a different view, though without always realizing its implications. Science holds that, when we “see the tomato,” there is a process, starting from the tomato, traversing the space between the tomato and the eye, changing its character when it reaches the eye, changing its character again in the optic nerve and the brain, and finally producing the event which we call “seeing the tomato.” Our knowledge of the tomato thus becomes inferential; our direct knowledge is of an event which is, in some sense, “in us.”

Russell, *The Analysis of Matter*  
[replacing ‘the sun’ by ‘the tomato’]

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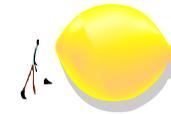


Figure by MIT OCW.

# the Russellian picture

sensation/sense datum/percept/...

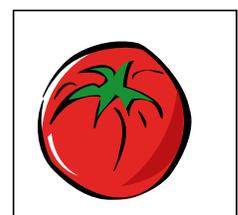
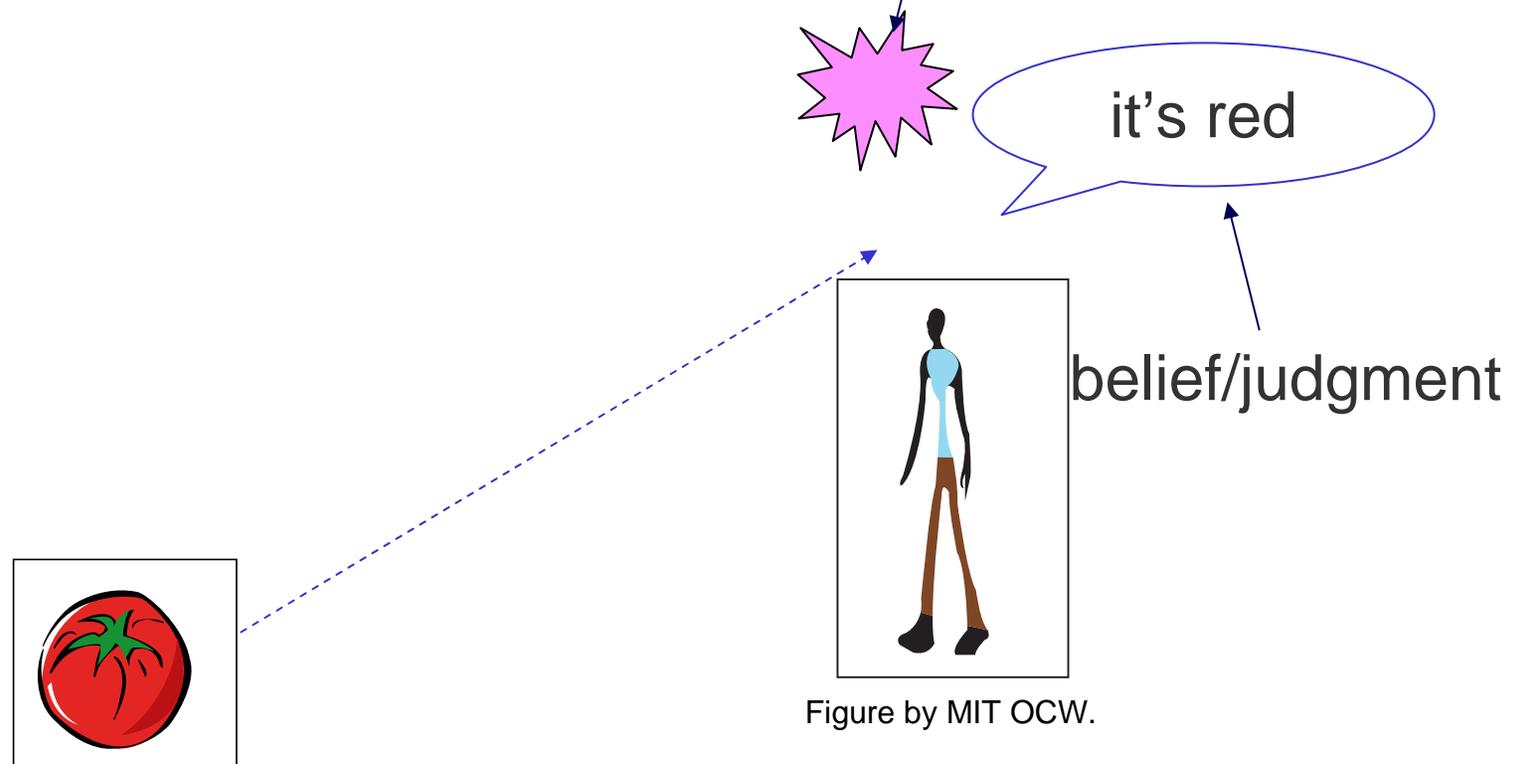


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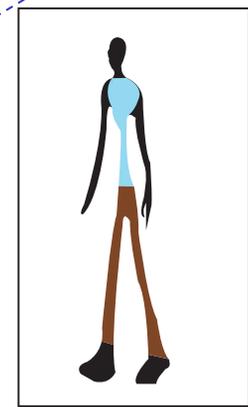


Figure by MIT OCW.

belief/judgment

it's red

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# the Russellian picture and color realism

- on the Russellian picture, the problem of color realism doesn't seem particularly interesting
- the tomato has:
  - a certain microphysical structure, such-and-such reflectance, etc.
  - a disposition to produce certain sensations in normal perceivers
- the sensations produced by tomatoes have:
  - distinctive qualities (“qualia”)
- if you choose to call the quale ‘red’, and I choose to call the reflectance ‘red’, our “dispute” seems “purely verbal”

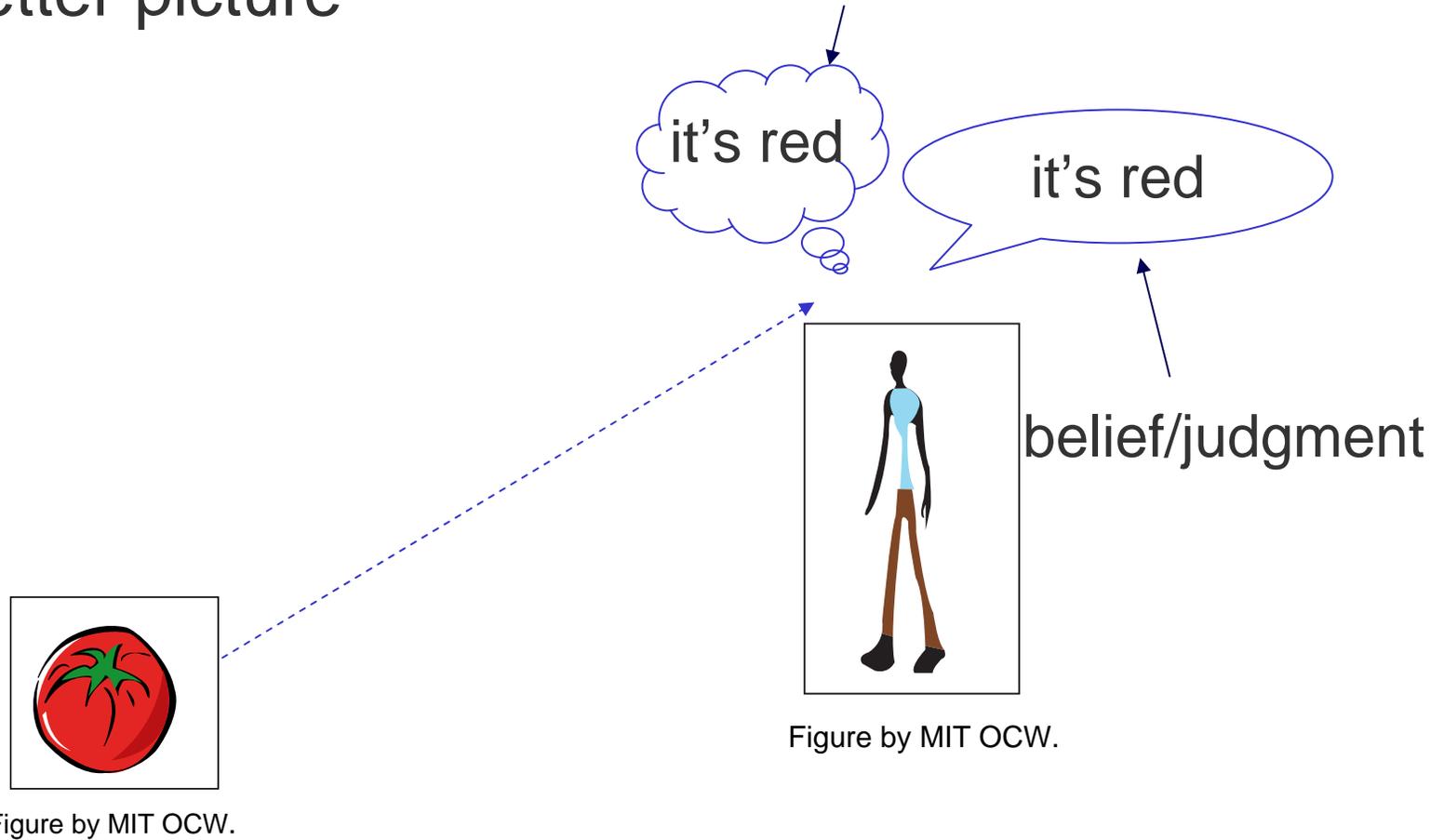


Figure by MIT OCW.

- right: if the Russellian picture is adopted, then the issue is not very interesting
- one way to make the issue interesting is to adopt the view that experience has content
  - exercise: what's wrong with Russell's argument?

# a better picture

perceptual experience



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Figure by MIT OCW.

# DJC on Eden

- DJC accepts the better picture, or near-enough
- the colors are
  - primitive properties
  - that nothing possesses
- so he is an eliminativist primitivist
- but the picture is more complicated...
  - DJC's view is actually rather like Russell's, with the event "in us" being, not a nonintentional sensation, but an experience that represents primitive redness

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Figure by MIT OCW.

## the “Russellian” hypothesis

- not to be confused with Russell’s view
- necessarily, a phenomenally red experience attributes a certain property C (presumably redness) to external objects
  - assume C = redness, for simplicity



Figure by MIT OCW.

# the argument against the Russellian hypothesis

- 1) some phred experiences are veridical
- 2) necessarily, a phred experience is veridical iff its object instantiates the property it attributes
- 3) redness is nonrelational
- 4) for any veridical phred experience there is a possible falsidical phred experience of the same object, with the same nonrelational properties, hence:
- 5) redness is not attributed by all possible phred experiences



Figure by MIT OCW.

- 1) some phred experiences are veridical
- 2) necessarily, a phred experience is veridical iff its object is instantiates the property it attributes
- 3) redness is nonrelational
- 4) for any veridical phred experience there is a possible falsidical phred experience of the same object, with the same nonrelational properties

Accepting 1-4 amounts to this: Color experiences attribute colors to ordinary objects, and these objects sometimes have colors. Plausibly, the colors are physical properties of some sort. But the color content of experience is not phenomenal content.



Figure by MIT OCW.

# the Fregean hypothesis

- necessarily, a phenomenally red experience attributes the property that in fact meets condition R to external objects
  - condition R (plausibly): being the property that normally causes phred experiences (in normal conditions for the perceiver)
    - the tomato has the property that actually causes phred experiences



Figure by MIT OCW.

# problems with the Fregean hypothesis

- relationality
  - in spectrum inversion, the tomato looks to have the same property (a color) to Jack as the cucumber looks to Jill
- simplicity
  - overintellectualizing
- internal unity
  - an internal connection between tactile and visual representation of shape, etc.

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## back to primitivism

- taking “the phenomenology of perceptual experience at face value...object[s] are simply, primitively, *red*”

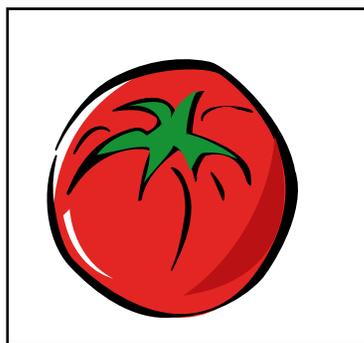


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# perfect and imperfect veridicality

- a phred experience is veridical iff its object has perfect redness
- a phred experience is imperfectly veridical iff its object has a property that matches perfect redness
  - that is, has property that roughly plays the role that perfect redness plays in Eden

## the two-stage picture

- Edenic content...
  - x is primitively red
- ...which determines ordinary Fregean content
  - x has the property that causes experiences of primitive redness
- ...which determines ordinary Russellian content
  - x has  $SSR_R$  (= the property that causes primitive redness)