

The background of the slide is an abstract, colorful image with a dark grey overlay. The colors are primarily warm, including reds, oranges, and yellows, with some cooler tones like blues and greens visible in the upper right. The dark grey overlay covers the majority of the slide, providing a high-contrast background for the title text.

The Fregean Content of Perception

Varieties of Representationalism

- Representationalism:

Phenomenal property = representing content C in manner M

- Pure [manner = phenomenal] vs. impure [manner = phenomenal+]
 - Reductive [manner functionally reducible] vs nonreductive [not]
 - Extensional [content is Millian] vs intensional [content is Fregean]
 - Externalist [content is wide] vs internalist [content is narrow]
 - Nonreductive [content is phenomenal-involving] vs reductive [not]
-

Fregean Experiential Content

- Q: How can we analyze/explicate the Fregean content of perceptual experience?
 - Especially tricky if perceptual experience is nonconceptual: “nonconceptual senses”?
- Strategy: Take a model for understanding the Fregean content of belief, and extend to the content of perception, by appealing to quasi-inferential relations between perception and belief.

Senses as Intensions

- Intensional model of sense: the Fregean sense of a concept = a condition on extension, tied to cognitive significance.
 - *Hesperus*: sense picks out bright evening object, extension = Venus
 - *Water*: sense picks out watery stuff, extension = H₂O
 - Sense can be seen as an intension: function from possibilities (of some sort) to extensions.
 - Sense of a thought (i.e. a belief, etc) = function from possibilities to truth-values.
-

Epistemic Content

- Epistemic model: senses = epistemic intensions
 - Possibilities = points in epistemic space, or *scenarios*
 - First approximation: scenarios = centered worlds
 - Second approximation: scenarios = maximal epistemic possibilities
 - For any scenario W , there corresponds the hypothesis that W is actual.
 - Epistemic intension of a thought = function from scenarios to truth-values
 - Corresponds to a belief's epistemic content: how it divides epistemic space
 - N.B. Need a basic notion of epistemic necessity
 - Here, epistemic necessity = apriority
 - A thought is epistemically necessary iff it is conclusively justifiable independently of experience
-

Defining Epistemic Intensions

- The epistemic intension of a thought T is true at a scenario W iff W verifies T .
 - W verifies T iff the hypothesis that W is actual epistemically necessitates T
 - Heuristic: if one conditionally accepts that W is actual, one should rationally accept T .
 - Formally: ' $D \rightarrow S$ ' is epistemically necessary, where D is a canonical description of W and S expresses T .
-

Examples

- The epistemic intension of my thought *I am a philosopher* is true at those scenarios where the subject at the center is a philosopher.
 - The epistemic intension of my thought *there is water in my pool* is
 - true in an “Earth” scenario with H₂O in the center subject’s pool
 - true in a “Twin Earth” scenario with XYZ in the environment and XYZ in the subject’s pool
 - false in a “Twin Earth” scenario with XYZ in the environment and H₂O in the subject’s pool
 - true (roughly) iff the subject’s pool contains the dominant watery stuff in the subject’s historical environment
-

From Thought to Perception

- The epistemic content of a thought is tied to its (idealized) cognitive significance: explicated using epistemic notions such as rational inference, or a priori entailment.
 - Q: How can we extend to the case of perception?
 - Do the relevant cognitive/epistemic notions apply in the perceptual domain, especially if it is nonconceptual?
 - Strategy: rely on quasi-inferential rational relations between perception and belief.
-

Endorsement I

- **Endorsement**: a relation between perceptual experiences and beliefs.
 - A belief endorses a perceptual experience when it takes that experience “at face value”. (Peacocke)
 - When B endorses P, it is impossible for P to be veridical and B to be false.
 - B may lose information in P, so that it is possible for P to be falsidical and B to be true.
 - When B **perfectly endorses** P, it is impossible for B and P to differ in truth-value.
 - Endorsement is a cognitive/epistemic relation, akin in some respects to inference, but between perception and belief.
 - We have an intuitive grasp on this relation, though it raises numerous theoretical questions:
-

Endorsement II

- If perceptual content is **conceptual**, endorsement is straightforward (belief invokes same concepts as perceptual state)
 - If perceptual content is **nonconceptual**, things are trickier.
 - But even nonconceptual contents can plausibly be endorsed with conceptual contents, if a subject has relevant concepts (Peacocke)
 - My view: the basic case of endorsement involves **direct perceptual concepts**, directly constituted by perceptual experiences (c.f. direct phenomenal concepts)
 - The question of whether pain, orgasm, anxiety are representational is reflected in the question of whether these states can be endorsed.
-

Epistemic Content for Perception

- The epistemic intension of perceptual experience P is true at a scenario W iff
for all possible beliefs B such that B endorses P , W verifies B .
 - Alternatively: the epistemic intension of P is the epistemic intension of B , where B is a perfect endorsement of P
 - The former requires only that all intuitive aspects of the content of a perceptual state can be reflected in the content of an endorsing belief
 - The latter requires (more arguably) that all these aspects can be reflected in the content of a single belief
 - This is the **epistemic content** of a perceptual experience: a sort of narrow Fregean content.
-

Content of Experience

- Q: What is the character of the epistemic content of a perceptual experience?
 - For a simple experience, involving perceptual attribution of a property to an object, the experience can plausibly be perfectly endorsed by a perceptual belief.
 - Then: what is the epistemic content of the corresponding perceptual belief?
-

Content of Color Experience

- Experience as of a red object
 - First pass: epistemic intension is true at those centered worlds where the object at which the subject is looking has a property that stands in relation M to red experiences
 - (strictly: the object standing in relation C to the subject, or to a marked experience of the subject)
 - Here relation M = *matching*. First approximation: disposed to cause in normal conditions?
 - Arguably, any perceptual phenomenal state with this epistemic intension is an instance of phenomenal redness.
 - If so: phenomenal redness = perceptually phenomenally representing this epistemic intension.
-

Generalization

- Let Q be a simple phenomenal property, instantiated as a simple experience P , where P is perfectly endorsed by belief B .
 - The epistemic intension of P (and of B) is true at those scenarios where the object standing in relation C to the center has a property that stands in relation M to Q .
 - Call this intension $E(Q)$.
 - Nonreductive representationalism: Q = perceptually phenomenally representing $E(Q)$ [as epistemic content]
-

Further Questions

- Which is more basic: the Fregean content of perception, of belief, or neither?
 - We've analyzed perceptual content using an analysis of belief content, but this need not reflect the deeper relations between them two.
 - For all we've said here, belief content may be grounded in perceptual content (which is itself grounded in phenomenology?).
 - What is the relationship between direct perceptual belief and perceptual experience?
 - Attractive suggestion: direct perceptual concepts are partly constituted by perceptual experiences, and inherit their representational content.
 - If so, then in this case, perceptual content is more basic than belief content.
-