

Presentation

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The articles included in this monographic section on epistemology are elaborations of papers previously submitted, accepted and presented in the IV Conference of the Spanish Society for Analytic Philosophy (Sociedad Española de Filosofía Analítica, SEFA), which took place at the University of Murcia (Spain), 16th through 18th of December, 2004. This philosophical event, which included many contributions from abroad, showed, once again, the high level of quality and the remarkable degree of normalization reached by the analytic way of conceiving philosophy in our country. But it also made evident something that is of special interest to us, namely the excellent health and liveliness that epistemology enjoys nowadays. After some decades in which naturalization programs and the heyday of Cognitive Science had tended to deprive the epistemological production of its intensity, and even of the readers' interest and favour, epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, as is more usually known in our country, has come to occupy again the central place it used to keep within philosophy since Descartes' times.

In fact, it is not difficult to appreciate the deep and intense process of revival that epistemology has been going through for the last years. An increasing number of philosophers have come to write on epistemological topics, and a good deal of this production has a remarkable quality. Moreover, as is also the case with other philosophical areas, epistemology has benefited from a large variety of philosophical contributions, which have helped to enrich and enlarge the scope and interest of its own discussions. Through this process, epistemology has modified its focus: new subjects, and new ways of facing the traditional ones, have become an integral part of it. The search for a definition of knowledge, in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, that did not fall prey to counterexamples, which was the central task of epistemology in the sixties' and seventies' of the last century, has been progressively replaced by the analysis of the nature and structure of epistemic justification. Concerning this problem, the debate between internalists and externalists has been prominent in recent times. Another focus of interest has been *a priori* knowledge, a traditional problem that has been faced from new perspectives.

Together with these general issues, many epistemologists have focused on another traditional array of questions, which concern the sources or forms of empirical knowledge. These questions have been addressed for different reasons and from different points of view, which range from an interest in defeating scepticism to the elaboration of a plausible ontology or an adequate semantic analysis. During the aforementioned conference, several papers dealt with questions of this sort. Some of them, which are



included in this monographic section, made, in our opinion, real contributions to answering these questions. If perception and memory are forms of empirical knowledge, it is an important task to determine exactly which knowledge they can afford. Two of the papers collected here deal with issues closely related to this problem. So, in her “Particularity and Reflexivity in the Intentional Content of Perception”, Olga Fernández Prat attempts to establish what the intentional content of perception is, while in his “Memory and Perception: Remembering Snowflake”, Jordi Fernández addresses the same problem concerning episodic memories, that is, memories that involve prior perceptual experiences. What we know when we have veridical perceptions and what we know in remembering a perceived event or situation are undoubtedly important questions, and each of these two authors makes a valuable contribution to answering them.

Perception as a source of our knowledge of the surrounding world is also the central focus of Manuel Liz’s “Camouflaged Physical Objects. The Intentionality of Perception”, though on this occasion the issue is addressed having in view the choice of a theory. On the one hand, and contrary to idealism, this theory should not lose the world. On the other hand, and unlike some versions of direct realism, it should not be at odds with scientific findings. Liz goes through the main theories of perception in order to disclose their respective ontological implications: while indirect realism hides the objects, idealism makes them disappear. In order to build up a stable version of direct realism that can sail safely between these two undesirable alternatives, which either hide or lose the objects, Liz’s original proposal is to camouflage them instead.

In his “How Believing Can Fail to Be Knowing”, Murali Ramachandran deals with the issue that, as we have pointed out above, was the main focus of the epistemologists’ attention during the sixties’ and seventies’ of the last century, namely the search for a definition of knowledge that was immune to Gettier-style and other counterexamples. Though the so-called Gettier problem gave rise to an enormous literature, which at the end was a cause of boredom for both publishers and readers, the problem remains still unsolved. However, Ramachandran’s contribution is not only valuable as an attempt to solve it, but also as a defence of the thesis that the problem itself is a genuine one, against Timothy Williamson’s recent contention that knowing is a basic and non-analyzable attitude, so that trying to analyse it would be a vain and unrealizable task.

Let us now proceed to introducing and commenting in more detail the articles we have just alluded to in general terms.

In her essay “Particularity and Reflexivity in the Intentional Content of Perception”, Olga Fernández addresses a central question in the theory of perception, namely what the intentional content of perception is and how we should best understand it. Fernández discusses this issue on the assumption that perceptual experiences should be taken to have a propositional content of sorts, to the effect that things are thus and so. Depending on whether things are actually thus and so, the content is correct or incorrect, and the experience veridical or non-veridical. Beyond this general assumption, however, an important intuition is that, at least in some central cases, per-

ceptual experience is an experience *of* particular objects. This is what Fernández calls “the intuition of particularity”. It seems that an adequate theory of the intentional content of perception should accommodate this intuition.

The intuition of particularity can be captured in at least two different ways. According to one of them, which can be called “Searle’s Assumption”, in order for a perceptual experience to be veridical, it is required that a particular object is indeed perceived, an object that is thereby, in a sense, part of the experience’s content. According to a second way, which can be dubbed the “Object Dependency Thesis” (ODT, for short), what the intentional content of a perceptual experience is depends on the particular object that causes the experience. It is central to the ODT approach the recognition of a demonstrative element directed to the particular object. It would have been instructive if Fernández had addressed what seems to be a problem for ODT, namely cases where no object is there to be perceived, such as hallucinations. In these cases, ODT would seem to imply that the perceptual-like experience, even if subjectively indistinguishable from a corresponding veridical experience, has no intentional content, which certainly sounds highly counterintuitive. A related problem is that this view appears to undermine self-knowledge, at least of a comparative kind: the subject would judge that a veridical and a corresponding indistinguishable hallucinatory perceptual experience do not differ in content, but (on the ODT view) this judgement would be false, for the latter, unlike the former, would have no content.

Though Fernández does not consider these problems —maybe because they are problems in the philosophy of mind rather than in epistemology, which is the field she apparently intends to remain in— she none the less points to a different difficulty of the ODT conceptions of perceptual content, namely that they (at least the most elaborated ones) do not take into account the reflexive element (i.e., the reference to an object that causes the very same experience the subject is having) which, however inadequately, is included in Searle’s assumption.

In the constructive part of her essay, Fernández develops her own proposal, a compromise of sorts between the alternatives discussed. One thing she wants to capture is the presence of a demonstrative element (demonstrative modes of presentation) in some important kinds of perception, correctly emphasized by the ODT view. However, she intends to capture this idea without abandoning the reflexive aspect included in Searle’s assumption. She then proposes to convey the content of a perceptual experience naturally associated with the utterance “that’s a tree” as follows: “The object attended to in *this* act of attention is a tree”. Attention is essentially involved in this kind of perception and, at the same time, it plays a similar role as demonstratives or deictic expressions in linguistic acts of ostension. The proposal includes both the reflexive element of Searle’s assumption, in that there is identification of an object in a token-reflexive way, and the demonstrative element characteristic of the ODT view. One interesting and original aspect of Fernández’s proposal is that the demonstrative element is introduced by means of an act of attention that makes an object salient to the perceiver, while the reflexive element, the reference of the act of attention to itself, is captured instead by the linguistic demonstrative “this”. Let us point out, on behalf

of Fernández, that her view would seem to be able to overcome the problem that, as we indicated above, arises for the ODT account when there is no object out there pointed to by a demonstrative, as may happen in cases of hallucination. This problem does not need to arise for Fernández's proposal, since in it the demonstrative points to an act of attention that is certainly there, and not to an external object that might not be. Hallucinatory experiences, where no object corresponds to the definite description "the object attended to...", would then have a content, even if it is not veridical, and the implausible consequence of the ODT view is nicely avoided. We are not sure, however, that this advantage of the account would remain if, as Fernández suggests herself, the description "the object attended to..." should be read in a referential, rather than in an attributive way. But we shall leave this question open.

Jordi Fernández's paper "Memory and perception: Remembering Snowflake" is tightly and rigorously constructed; it is a sample of good analytic philosophical reflection, a piece of work with a clear and elegant architecture. If Olga Fernández's central concern is the content of perceptual experiences, Jordi Fernández deals instead with the content of memories, though he restricts his investigation to what he calls "episodic memory", where remembering involves a quasi-perceptual experience. He leaves aside what he calls "semantic memory", which does not necessarily involve such an experience.

A correct view of the content of episodic memories should satisfy some reasonable requirements. Two of them are related to certain characteristic beliefs elicited by such memories, namely the belief that what one remembers happened in the past and the belief that one perceptually experienced what one remembers. We may call them "Attribution of Pastness" (AP, for short) and "Attribution of Experience" (AE, for short), respectively. So, a correct proposal about the content of episodic memories should satisfy both AP and AE.

Fernández holds a truth-conditional view of the content of (episodic) memories. To know what the content of a given memory is involves knowing what should be the case for this memory to be true. He proposes to represent truth-conditions by means of propositions, which he understands, in turn, as ordered pairs of properties and objects. So, if we represent the content of a given memory experience M as the ordered pair (proposition) " $\langle P, o \rangle$ ", this indicates that what it takes for M to be true is that the object o has property P . On this basis, a third condition on a correct proposal concerning the content of memories is that it should assign to the memory truth-conditions such that our pre-theoretical intuitions as to whether a given memory experience is true or false (veridical or not) of a certain possible situation are respected. Fernández calls this condition the "right amount of information" test, or RAI.

Fernández examines several theoretical proposals on the basis of whether, and how, they account for the aforementioned requirements. Concerning AE, he considers two different proposals: the causally self-referential view, defended by Searle for the intentional content of perception and extended by him to memory, and the neutral view, associated with W. von Leyden, among others. Both proposals accommodate reasonably well the AE principle, but they find it hard to pass the RAI test, though for

opposed reasons. By confronting each proposal with some problematic cases, such as veridical hallucinations and false perceptual experiences, it can be seen that, while the causally self-referential view is too demanding in stating the truth-conditions of memories, the neutral view is too permissive in that respect.

Concerning attribution of pastness (AP), Fernández considers what he calls the “temporal approach”, which includes a temporal position of (putatively) remembered events in the content of memories, so that this position becomes a constituent of the proposition that captures this content. He examines two different ways of specifying the time of the remembered events, which lead to two versions of the temporal approach: the absolutist and the relativist views. After confronting both positions with some test cases, Fernández concludes that, concerning the RAI test, the absolutist view ascribes too little information to memory experiences, so that, on this view, they can be made true too easily, so to speak. The relativist view, in turn, ascribes too much information to such experiences, so that the view becomes too demanding in specifying their content (truth-conditions).

Fernández’s positive proposal is what he calls the “veridically self-referential” view. This is a new version of a reflexive approach to mnemonic content. He builds into the content of memories a reflexive element, a reference of the memory experience to itself. Interestingly enough, this brings his proposal rather close to that which Olga Fernández puts forward about perceptual content, for remember that she includes a reference of acts of attention to themselves as part and parcel of such a content. According to Jordi Fernández’s view, a memory experience M , which a subject would express by saying that she remembers that p , has as its content the following ordered pair: <being caused by a veridical perceptual experience of p being the case, M >. This view, Fernández contends, can account for both AE and AP while at the same time passing the RAI test reasonably well. Note only that the temporal dimension figures in the mnemonic content only indirectly, by means of the succession order implicit in the causation relation between M and (what the subject conceives as) a veridical experience of p . Since, as a matter of nomological (though not logical) necessity, this perceptual experience precedes the memory experience M , this allows the view to accommodate the AP principle.

We leave to the reader to go through the details of Fernández’s proposal and to judge whether it actually honours the indicated requirements for correctness better than rival views.

In *The Analysis of Matter*, Bertrand Russell wrote that “what the physiologist sees when he looks at a brain is part of his own brain, not part of the brain he is examining”. In “Camouflaged Physical Objects. The Intentionality of Perception”, Manuel Liz proposes to rewrite Russell’s statement in the following way: “What the physiologist sees when he looks at a brain is the very brain he is examining, because part of that brain (just when he looks at it) is his own brain”. According to Liz, distal physical objects take appearances (present in our subjective experience) as a “second skin” or camouflage when they are perceived: “The immediate ‘proximal’ perceptual objects are a constitutive part of the distal physical objects when we are perceiving them”.

This is the way, he thinks, that we can get a stable direct realism in the theory of perception. If idealism has to commit itself to “absent objects” and indirect realism to “hidden objects”, a viable direct realism has to postulate “camouflaged objects”. The notion of camouflage, he thinks, is a promising alternative in order to explain the nature of the intentional objects of perception.

He puts forward this original proposal in the wider context of a close examination of the different theories in the philosophy of perception. Liz’s paper is first of all a very suggesting and exhaustive panoramic view of the different problems and options in the philosophy of perception, with special attention devoted to their respective ontological consequences. The paper draws very insightful connections among views of perception and of ontology. He begins with an exposition of the different ways of conceiving the external world and the intentional objects of perception as part (or not) of it. We conceive of the external world as both public and empirical. The intentional objects of perception constitute that external world, a world that is *public*, a world of common reference, and *empirical*, the source of justification for our empirical knowledge. In contrast to this world there is both the subjective (or internal) world and the physical world, “the world that our basic sciences try to understand and describe”. And the problem is that “the position of the external, public and empirical world given to us in perception is highly *unstable*. It is very difficult to conceive [of it] as not belonging to the subjective or to the physical in the narrow sense, the world constituted by the theoretical entities and properties postulated by our most basic theories”.

Liz characterizes the different theories of perception in terms of which of these worlds they take to constitute the real world. According to direct realism, the intentional objects of veridical perception would include elements of the public, external and empirical world, which are also part of the physical world. Indirect realists deny that these perceptual objects belong to the physical world. The physical world exists and is external, but the objects it contains are very different from the intentional objects of perception; the latter are *absent objects* in the physical world. In this world, real objects are *hidden objects*. We go (in cases of veridical perception) from the intentional objects to the hidden physical objects. According to the idealist, these physical objects are also *absent objects*, but the reason why they are so is more straightforward: the physical world simply does not exist. The supposed externality, public nature and empirical value of the world of perceived objects are projections of us.

So, it is in order to get a stability against the narrow physicalism of indirect realism and its hidden objects on one side and the subjectivism of phenomenalism or idealism and its absent objects on the other that Liz postulates the camouflaged objects as a new way to articulate the central thesis of direct realism.

Ramachandran’s paper is to be understood in the context of the debate opened by Timothy Williamson’s book *Knowledge and its Limits* (Oxford University Press, 2000). This book gave a severe challenge to one of the tasks that epistemology had set itself for the almost forty years that preceded its publication. Since 1963, when Gettier published the famous paper in which he attacked the traditional definition of knowledge as justified true belief, a significant part of epistemological research had been devoted

to finding a definition of knowledge in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions that was free of counterexamples. According to Williamson, however, this endeavour was vain, as it was the result of a deep error: *knowing* is not analyzable, for it is a mental state, a propositional attitude as basic and primitive as belief, though different from it. As far as knowing is a propositional attitude of its own, it cannot possibly be treated as a special kind of belief, as a belief that meets some additional conditions.

One of Williamson's main reasons for this contention is an analogy with certain consequences of semantic externalism. Our beliefs about water do not cease to be the mental states they actually are just because, as semantic externalism contends, our having such beliefs depends on external conditions, such as the existence of water in our surroundings and our causal interaction with it. Analogously, knowing that *p* does not cease to be a mental state (if, as Williamson contends, it actually is) just because our knowing that *p* depends on the truth of *p*, which is an "external" condition as well. The dependence of knowledge on external conditions does nothing to show that knowing is not a mental state or a propositional attitude.

Clearly, if Williamson were right, the enormous amount of literature about the Gettier problem, written in the hope of finding definitions of knowledge in terms of beliefs that meet certain requirements, would have been a shameful and recalcitrant error, an error that would go back to Plato himself.

In his paper in this volume, Murali Ramachandran disputes this thesis of Williamson's by offering a number of quite plausible reasons. For what concerns belief, a change in the environment I interact with, provided that I am fully ignorant of it, may affect the belief's content, but not the attitude itself. Owing to a change in external circumstances, I may come to believe different things, but still I *believe* them. However, and contrary to what semantic externalism implies for beliefs and other mental states, such as desires, knowledge may change to mere belief even if there is no causal interaction with the environment that could explain this change. If Lincoln has been assassinated and someone is still ignorant of that fact, then her (presumptive) propositional attitude towards "Lincoln is the president" stops being knowledge and begins to be mere believing. However, no causal interaction between the subject and the external world has taken place that could plausibly account for this change. Moreover, the (presumptive) change in her mental state is not accompanied by any change in her other propositional attitudes.

On this basis, Ramachandran contends that knowledge is not a mental state or a propositional attitude, so that an analysis of it in terms of conditions that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for it is possible after all. Consistently with this contention, he offers an analysis of his own. The clauses of this analysis, as he himself points out, are not original. Each of them has been previously proposed. What is original, instead, and is meant to be effective against objections, is the way the clauses are combined. Ramachandran holds that, combined in this way, the clauses provide a correct analysis of knowledge that can account both for normal cases and for the more famous, Gettier-style examples. By offering this analysis, Ramachandran intends to put to light some connections between knowledge and other concepts, as well as to

show the ways (three, in his view) in which one may not know in spite of having a true belief.

We are confident that any reader seriously interested in epistemological problems will find much to learn and to think about in the articles that follow.