

wise his own metametaphysical discussion seems to be significantly incomplete. More positively, the correlationist account of the mind-world relation might also be established without assuming the totality of the world.

« 5 » Concerning Werner's correlationist version of the mind-world relation, I wonder whether he intends to defend a "weak" or a "strong" version of it (Meillasoux 2009). On the one hand, to argue that perception is the actualisation of reality seems to imply strong (idealistic) correlationism, insofar as reality is deemed to be nothing but an experiential category. On the other hand, the Aristotelian analysis of perception as actualisation of reality, to which Werner refers (§54), seems rather to imply weak correlationism, insofar as the actualisation of reality in perception is not meant to be an ontological production of reality. My impression is that the correlationist account put forward by Werner reveals at this point a deep ambiguity, which is not solved by his reference to traditional PL-metaphysics. To put emphasis on the *intelligibility* of reality, on its potential of being perceived, is one thing (§28); it is another thing to argue that reality is nothing unless it is *actually* perceived, that "reality without cognitive lighting" (§59) is *sheer* potentiality, as Werner's "restored" PL-metaphysics seems to hold. This means that the actual-potential dichotomy is used at different levels (this might be spelled out as a "horizontal" ontic use and a "vertical" ontological use) and that there is a shift of meaning at play, which appears clearly in the author's reference to the ancient metaphor of light (§§36–39). When traditional PL-metaphysics refers to the mysterious intelligibility of reality, it is not, in the fashion of constructivism, the "lighting" of the perceiving subject that offers an adequate solution, but only the immemorial "light" that conditions the perceiving subject as well as the perceived reality. By contrast, I do not see how Werner's metaphysical (therefore strong) correlationism offers an answer to the conundrum of intelligibility at all – unless the "lighting" of the perceiving subject is conceived of as the *production* of the "light" present in reality, which would be an unequivocally constructivist claim that requires specific justification on its own.

« 6 » But what sort of justification would this be: metaphysical justification? My general point is that metaphysics does not offer the *appropriate level* of analysis and explanation of the problem of perception. To prevent metaphysical claims and the decision between metaphysical systems (DL-metaphysics vs. PL-metaphysics) from being arbitrary, they must be grounded in the *Kleingeld* ("small change") of phenomenological analysis, as emphasized by Edmund Husserl (Zahavi 2010: 17; Vörös 2014: 99; Gaitsch 2014). It is only at this level that we might be able to decide rationally how to conceptualise perception adequately (T1). By contrast, the article does not give any indication of how to decide rationally between PL- and DL-metaphysical claims. In this sense, metaphysics, as conceived of by Werner, reveals to be an overly generic and overly abstract way of approaching the problem at stake. This lack of a phenomenological level of analysis manifests itself not only methodically (at the level of justification), but also thematically: for how could it be permitted to identify perception with *vision* on a phenomenological basis? That a sort of tacit identification of perception with vision – characteristic of, but also ruinous for, Western philosophy (Jonas 1966: 135ff.) – is still at play in Werner's analysis is shown in his aim to conceptualise the perceived reality as unequivocally transcendent (as simply being not "in the head," §58). This might be true for the *seen* reality; but if *other modes of perception*, especially touch, are taken into consideration, the aim to establish the unequivocal transcendence of the perceived reality becomes more questionable. This is a classical topic of phenomenological analysis, since Husserl offered his first analysis of the constitution of the lived body by the "double apprehension" of touch (Husserl 1989: 151ff; Merleau-Ponty 1968; Henry 2015).

« 7 » For my final critical remark, I turn to T2 and T3: RC has a metaphysical grounding (T2), which should be elaborated in PL-metaphysical terms (T3). Concerning T3, I do not see why RC should rationally opt for PL-metaphysics rather than for any other metaphysical view – *unless* this option is justifiable by a (hidden) phenomenological analysis, of course. Why can RC not stick with an explicitly *metaphysical version* of the evolutionary adaptational approach to per-

ception instead (§§16f, 66f)? Are there any objections against such a "procedural" metaphysical theory of perception other than phenomenological? What is more, I suppose that a sheer *methodological* understanding is still feasible – this goes against T2. To explain, we are not obliged to conceive the "separation thesis" (§21) metaphysically, but we can still read it as a methodological abstention from any ontological claims about how reality has to be conceived. However, due to Werner's metametaphysical approach to RC, there is an important lesson to be learned by a RC adherent: she should *either* fully embrace her adaptational model of perception as a (but how justifiable?) metaphysical theory *or* simply be more careful in avoiding any ontological claims.

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## Do We Need a Metaphysics for Perception? Some Enactive, Phenomenological Reservations

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> **Upshot** • I disclaim the need for a metaphysics for perception, in the sense of a general metaphysics, and suggest that the motivations for embarking on that project can be satisfied in an interesting way without any general metaphysical stock-taking, by appeal to phenomenological and enactive accounts of perception.

« 1 » In an attempt to open up the possibility for a reconciliation of constructivism and realism, Konrad Werner suggests the

need for a general metaphysical inquiry into the world *as perceived*. My present aim is to suggest that such a metaphysics of perception is explanatorily unnecessary, especially so for enactive and epistemically innocent approaches to perception, and that there are other routes toward a constructivist-friendly realism of sorts.

« 2 » Werner presents two broad camps into which a metaphysics of the world as perceived might fall, the Plato-Leibniz (PL) camp and the Descartes-Locke (DL) camp. The DL camp is known for its internalist leanings, stemming from its prioritization of the inside/outside distinction. Perception might thus be understood as some sort of information transfer between two orders of reality. The PL camp, which Werner prefers and where he suggests we might find a happy union of constructivism and realism, uses the more venerable being/becoming and actual/potential distinctions to do the same, i.e., explaining how the world becomes accessible for a subject in perception.

« 3 » The advantage of the PL camp's approach is that it stipulates no occult metaphysical transaction between mind and world. Rather, in making the world accessible, perception facilitates a transformation in the perceived from having the potential to appear thus and so to a perceiver to really appearing thus and so to some perceiver. The perceiving subject thereby participates in the engendering of a perceived world, which is ontologically distinct from the world *simpliciter* in that it contains "looks," "presentations," or "appearances," understood here to be identical to certain novel features in the world, and not as intramental items.

« 4 » I think it is worth observing, first, that one's broader (i.e., not simply metaphysical) outlook on perception will determine just *how* a metaphysics of perception might be explanatorily salient. Werner's framing of the discussion bears traces of a familiar approach in the philosophy of perception that seeks to understand how perception could ever put a perceiving subject in a position to know truly about the world. It would be of interest for philosophy of perception if a metaphysics of perception could shed light on the epistemological problem of how (and perhaps whether) the claims of perception, i.e., its contents, mea-

sure up to the way things stand in the world external to and independent of the perceiving subject. Naïve realism, constructivism, and other approaches to the philosophy of perception are typically committed to offering just such a theory. These views seemingly stand to gain from certain of the possible forms that a metaphysics of perception might take, if Werner is right in correlating these views with either the metaphysical DL or the PL camp. DL metaphysics supports the epistemological projects of broadly Cartesian and naïve realist views of perception, while PL metaphysics speaks in favor of a more Aristotelian or, perhaps, constructivist view of the matter.

« 5 » Yet, this epistemological desideratum is not shared by all. It is not shared by any view of perception on which perception is epistemically innocent, i.e., on which perception simply makes no claims about the world or lacks (semantic) content. Disjunctivists about perception hold this view (e.g., Travis 2013), and so do proponents of radical enactivism (Hutto & Myin 2013) and radical embodiment (Chemero 2009). If all perceptual experiences or some large subset of perceptual experiences are non-representational or lack semantic content, the inside/outside distinction will lose relevance, and so will the actual/potential distinction as Werner explains it. For Werner, these two distinctions have the same explanatory function, i.e., of clarifying how the world is accessible to a perceiving subject. If accessibility is an epistemic notion, as seems to be the case (see, e.g., Werner's remarks in §55), then the actual/potential distinction will lack salience for anyone maintaining that perception is epistemically innocent. So, to reiterate, the explanatory value of these metaphysical distinctions may depend on one's core theoretical commitments about perception.

« 6 » Let me press the worry one step further. It would be an even graver difficulty for the project of a metaphysics of perception if one's non-metaphysical commitments about perception also determined *whether* a metaphysics of perception were necessary at all for an adequate understanding of perception. The task of a metaphysics of perception, as Werner describes it (§§9–11), is to understand the perceived world as such, in the broadest and most ab-

stract terms possible – in the style of general metaphysics – and to leave aside the issue of how to carve up and categorize the entities that populate the world (i.e., a topic for some area of special metaphysics).

« 7 » So the issue of the metaphysics of perception is not quite the same as that of the contents of perception, concerning whether we perceive, e.g., other minds, causation, or perhaps only simpler things such as, *inter alia*, color and shape as such (Siegel 2010). That said, the only apparent reason that a metaphysics of perception would be necessary is if there were some general metaphysical characteristic of the world that was uniquely pertinent to perception. And for Werner's preferred variant of PL-style metaphysics, this is indeed so, because on that view any item in the world is potentially an item bearing a look or appearance to some perceiver.

« 8 » On other views, there may be nothing unique to gain from general metaphysics and hence no need for a metaphysics of perception. Even those metaphysically dubious views in the DL camp that make much of the inside/outside distinction may not need any special recourse to general metaphysics. What is interesting about the inside/outside distinction is the *inside* member of the conceptual pair, not the *outside*. One invokes the inside/outside distinction primarily because the mental interior is conceived in some metaphysically interesting way, e.g., as non-physical. But that is a local or special metaphysical question about the metaphysics of mind, not the sort of question Werner really wants to engage with in pursuing the metaphysics of perception. A DL-type view need not (and probably does not) say anything about the *outside* member of the conceptual pair that would call for any revisions to one's general metaphysical picture, or for which a general metaphysical analysis would be illuminating.

« 9 » Very few approaches to the philosophy of perception will require the kind of metaphysics of perception for which Werner calls. The PL metaphysics he favors needs it because it denies the existence of a "ready-made world" (§§57, 61). For the world to be ready made is for it to be fully determinate and identical in all metaphysically fundamental (i.e., general metaphysi-

cal) respects before and after an act, or any act whatsoever, of perception. George Berkeley's view of perception (namely, the *esse est percipi* thesis) resembles Werner's view in denying that the world is ready-made in this sense. The idea has some affinity with mutualist views of perception as well, such as those of phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and enactivists such as Francisco Varela. On the other hand, as Werner notes (§53), at least some versions of DL metaphysics maintain that there *is* a ready-made world. Interestingly, that is yet another reason to think, as I have already said, that they do not need a metaphysics of perception that takes special recourse to general metaphysics.

« 10 » We should not deny that the world is ready-made – not in *this* (general metaphysical) sense, anyway. (I am sympathetic to some renderings of the denial that the world is ready-made, e.g., as one finds in Merleau-Ponty, Varela, and perhaps theorists of cognitive niche construction. But the productive character of perception on such views can likely be cashed out in terms of biological, psychological, and socio-cultural categories without any need for fundamental metaphysical tinkering.) We will not likely derive, then, any special explanatory benefit by embarking on a metaphysics of perception.

« 11 » Werner is tempted to deny that the world is ready-made for two reasons, which together lend credence to his hypothesis of realist constructivism. First, he wants to do justice to the mutualistic character of perception (§61), i.e., that the perceiving subject and the perceived world both actively contribute in producing an episode of perception. Perception is not the product of the unilateral agency of the perceiving subject, nor does it result from the unqualified patency of the perceiving subject as a passive recipient of sensory information. Second, Werner wants to give a realist theory of perception.

« 12 » The first and the second claim may seem to constitute a paradoxical pairing, to the extent that a mutualist account of perception attributes a productive, if not creative, function to the perceiver. The idea, perhaps, is that if our perceptual capacities generate their own content or part thereof, and if they are our only means of accessing

reality directly, it will be difficult if not impossible to discern whether the contribution of the perceiving subject is fictitious or reflects how things really are in the world. The worry is supposed to disappear on Werner's view, since the achievement of the subject's productive activity is not an internal simulacrum of the world, but a change in the world itself, which the perceiver now has access to as such.

« 13 » Interpreting the second claim in that way would at least open up the possibility of a constructivist view that keeps its mutualist commitment and unhesitatingly embraces a version of realism at the same time. But the price of making this move is high, and, by my lights, too high. There is simply no compelling warrant for introducing a new, fundamental metaphysical category, i.e., reality as perceived, and without that, we would do well to heed Occam's wisdom and opt for the sparser metaphysical framework.

« 14 » The category "reality as perceived" designates appearances as *properties or features of things in the world*. Werner does not present any sustained explanation of what he takes an appearance to be. From a mutualist perspective, though, it seems more natural to understand such notions as picking out instead *features of the perceptual process as a mind-world interaction*. Phenomenologically, too, talk of looks and appearances refers to structural features of the intentionality of perception, spanning perceiving subject and perceived object alike. To apply the terms "look" and "appearance" to the object is a mistake, since we do not see looks or appearances, but we see objects (or whatever it is perception may target) *in* looks and appearances, features of perception as an activity or mind-world interaction.

« 15 » Indeed, while Werner's thesis is that looks and appearances belong to the world (whether as potential or actual) (§§55, 60), he, too, occasionally slips into speaking of them more narrowly as features of mind-world interactions. For instance, he describes potential appearances as "potential ways of making it [i.e., what is perceived] ready" (§61). He adds, further, that appearances are "appearances of reality" (§61), i.e., suggesting they are inherently embedded in intentional states, assuming that "of-ness"

or aboutness is inherently a feature, even the defining feature, of intentional states. If, as such talk recommends, we attribute looks and appearances to world-involving perceptual activities, then these will obviously not figure in any scheme of general metaphysical categories.

« 16 » Finally, I think there is no need for the perceptual process to engender fundamental metaphysical categories in order to fit mutualism (and, so, perhaps constructivism) and realism together. Realism, though, will not be an epistemological thesis, but one concerning the intentionality of perception. (The epistemological issue may thus dissolve, or simply be relocated elsewhere, but, in any event, its resolution will not be necessary to explain perception.) The idea here is not that there are claims about the world, content of some sort, within the perceptual process that, if things go well, accurately reflect or make apparent to the subject how things stand in the world. That is not the basic task of perception, as Werner (§17) also intimates. Rather, perception is fundamentally action-oriented, and also epistemically innocent (Hutto & Myin 2013). This is a form of realism inasmuch as its conception of perceptual processes takes them to be constitutively world-involving, and one that is in no way at odds with a mutualistic view denying that either mind or world unilaterally governs perception and affirming its synergistic character.

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