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Particularity and Reflexivity in the Intentional Content of Perception¹

Olga FERNÁNDEZ PRAT

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ABSTRACT: A significant part of perception, especially in visual perception, is characterized by particularity (roughly, the view that in such cases the perceiver is aware of particular objects in the environment). The intuition of particularity, however, can be made precise in at least two ways. One way (proposed by Searle) is consistent with the view that the content of perception is to be thought of as existentially quantified. Another way (the “demonstrative element” view championed by Evans, Campbell and others in diverse ways) is not. This paper reconstructs the argumentative context in which these views are put forward, and, after mentioning some drawbacks of both views, as these have been advanced to date, suggests a new view that may be regarded as a compromise between the contenders.

Key words: intentionality, perceptual content, perceptual attention.

In his influential posthumous book *Varieties of Reference*, Gareth Evans gave an interesting philosophical explanation for demonstrative intentional contents, both in perception and in memory. Recently, John Campbell has put forward an alternative explanation for the especially important case of perception in his work *Reference and Consciousness*. One purpose of this paper is to reconstruct in detail the argumentative *context* in which proposals such as those of Evans and Campbell are to be placed, in which both are seen as possessing a spirit opposed to John Searle’s proposal in *Intentionality*. Against the background of this reconstruction the drawback for them that I will mention will become clearer, although due to lack of space I will not be able to discuss their proposals in detail. I will then sketch an explanation of demonstrative content which tries to overcome the problem alluded to.

1. Introduction: Particularity and Generality in the Content of Perception

The *intuition of particularity* in the intentional content of perception is the intuition that, at least in some central cases, when the subject perceives her environment, her experience seems to be an experience of particular “items” or objects around her. In this paper I will focus primarily on visual perception. Moreover, I will take into account clari-

¹ I have benefited from long discussions on the issues treated in this paper with Daniel Quesada. I thank Manuel García-Carpintero for comments on previous versions of this material. I am also grateful for comments by (among others) Juan Acero and Fernando Broncano on a previous version presented orally at the IV Congress of the Spanish Society of Analytical Philosophy, which led me to introduce what I hope are improvements. I am indebted to Michael Maudsley for his grammatical revision. Research for his paper has received economic funding from the Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology, project HUM2005-07539-C02-02.



fication and explications of the intuition of particularity within (*weak*) *intentionalism*, according to which a visual experience is a mental state that represents the world (or more precisely, a scene in the world) as something which is of a certain way; the content of the experience can be correct or incorrect and accordingly the experience is veridical or non-veridical.

Some philosophers (most prominently David Lewis) have maintained the (conceptual) possibility of veridical hallucinations (cases in which the object is present but the experience of the subject is artificially caused by a neuroscientist's stimulation of the visual cortex). Allowing for this possibility implies endorsing the *Generality Thesis* (GT from now on) about the content of perception, that is, the thesis that the content of a perceptual episode is always an existentially quantified content; thus, (Davies 1992, p. 26): "...we can take perceptual content to be quantified existential content. A visual experience may represent the world as containing *an* object of a certain size and shape, in a certain direction, at a certain distance from the subject". Hence, for a perceptual episode to be veridical, it is sufficient that its content can be described in this existential way.² Obviously, those who hold GT do not accept the intuition of particularity.

In Soteriou (2000) the possibility of veridical hallucination is regarded as the main source of the acceptance of GT. I myself think that the main source is to be found elsewhere, that is, in the intuition (or alleged intuition) that the intentional contents of perceptions of objects which are indistinguishable for the subject are identical (*substitutability intuition*); Davies explains thus the reasons for holding this position:

The source of plausibility is the thought that the perceptual content of experience is a phenomenal notion: content is a matter of how the world *seems* to the experiences... If perceptual content is, in this sense, 'phenomenal content'... then, where there is no phenomenological difference for a subject, there is no difference in content. (Davies, *loc. cit.*)

If the substitutability intuition is indeed the source for GT, rather than the view that there are veridical hallucinations, so much the better for this thesis, since the view is dubious.

Be this as it may, I will concentrate next on the issue of the conflict between the intuitions of particularity and substitutability.

2. *Two senses of particularity*

There are at least two ways of capturing theoretically the intuition of particularity. One of them is Searle's Assumption (Soteriou 2000, p. 176; SA from now) according to which a necessary condition for a perceptual experience (of the relevant type) to be veridical is that a particular object is thereby indeed perceived. As a requirement, this assumption seems to have the intuition of particularity built in, to some degree for the following reason: Obviously, the veridicality of an experience depends on which the content of that experience is; now, an experience is veridical if the world (the envi-

² Taking "perception" to be a success-word, like the verb "perceive", I use "perceptual episode" in a broad way, so that the obtaining of a perceptual episode does not imply that it is really a case of perception.

ronment around the perceiver) corresponds to the content of the experience; hence, if the experience being veridical implies that a particular object is indeed being perceived, in a certain sense it is thereby accepted that that particular is involved in the content of the experience.

The intuition of particularity is also captured in the Object Dependency Thesis (ODT): the intentional content of a perceptual (visual) episode of the relevant type is individuated by the particular object which causes the perceptual experience. This implies that perceptual experiences of different objects are distinct, no matter how similar the objects are—even if they are qualitatively identical.

It is obvious that both Searle's Assumption and the Object Dependency Thesis are directly in contradiction with the possibility of veridical hallucination. However, they behave differently with respect to the Generality Thesis. ODT is totally incompatible with GT. As for SA, there certainly seems to be some sort of tension between it and GT, since GT is compatible with the possibility of veridical hallucination and SA is not. But this does not make them incompatible, for while the negation of such a possibility follows from SA, the possibility at stake does not follow from GT; in fact it is other way around, that is, GT follows from such a possibility. Indeed there is — as we will see below — a way of making the assumption compatible with the thesis.

It is not the contrast regarding the possibility of veridical hallucination which decisively helps to clarify the situation, but the contrast with regard to *veridical misperception*. A case of misperception occurs when a subject indeed perceives an object but perceives it as having some property or properties that in fact it lacks (the properties at issue may be qualitative, spatial or otherwise). Thus, suppose that for some reason (for instance, she may be wearing displacing glasses) the subject perceives an object as in front of her which in fact is to her left. In this case the subject misperceives the object in failing to place it at the correct location. But we can change the hypothetical situation to be able to speak of veridical misperception. Assume that there is indeed a second object qualitatively indistinguishable from the first one at the location in which it seems to the subject that the first object is located (in front of the subject), and that moreover, it seems to the subject as if the second object is located to her right where in fact a third qualitatively indistinguishable object is located, which in fact is too far to the right of the subject to be perceived by her.

This kind of example (borrowed from Martin (1997), as Soteriou says) is meant to make *prima facie* plausible the idea of veridical misperception, and indeed, veridical misperception would be a real possibility under the conception of perceptual content according to which the correctness conditions of an experience do not depend on whether a particular object is being perceived or not. It is used by Soteriou to argue against this view of content and thus in favor of SA which denies it (cf. Soteriou 2000, pp. 179-180). Explicitly reconstructed the argument is as follows:

Premise 1. If some part of a subject's experience is represented as being a certain way (in the subject's experience), and the relevant part of the environment is different from the way that it is represented as being, then at least one of the conditions required for the correctness of the experience is not satisfied.

Premise 2. If at least one of the conditions required for the correctness of the experience is not satisfied, the experience is not completely veridical.

Premise 3. If the correctness conditions of an experience do not depend on whether an object is being perceived, it does not depend on which object is being perceived, and if they do not depend on which object is perceived, then there can be completely veridical experiences in which at least one of the conditions required for the correctness of the experience is not satisfied (in other words, there can be veridical misperception).

Conclusion. The correctness conditions of an experience depend on whether an object is being perceived.

Now, this argument does not decide the particularity issue once and for all, as Searle's explanation of the intentional content of perception shows. According to this explanation the fact that an object causes a token perceptual experience is (part of) what individualizes the content of the experience; this sort of content finds a rough expression in a linguistic formulation of the sort "there is an object with such and such properties which causes *this* experience" (Searle 1983, p. 123). Clearly, this is an explanation within the framework of GT (in the general form in which this thesis has been characterized). Indeed, Searle's explanation of the intentional content of perceptual episodes is the way to make GT and SA compatible (even if SA captures an aspect of the intuition of particularity). Thus, accepting both GT and SA *implies* accepting Searle's explanation of perceptual content.

This implication provides *prima facie* an obvious way to criticize GT: rejecting Searle's explanation of perceptual content while accepting SA logically leads to the rejection of GT, as Soteriou stresses (*op.cit.*, p. 181). Now, since it is reasonable to accept SA due to the Martin-Soteriou argument, the rejection of GT through this route depends on whether there are good reasons to reject Searle's explanation of the intentional content of perception, in which some sort of demonstrative reference to the experience is part of the content of that very experience. However, the reasons which have been given against Searle's proposal until now are not conclusive. At worst they flagrantly beg the question (as when McDowell proposes to preserve the advantages of the sort of demonstrative reference in Searle's proposal by substituting demonstrative reference to the experience by demonstrative reference to the object; cf. McDowell 1991, p. 218). The accusation that Searle's explanation is implausibly complex (articulated in Burge 1991) seems initially to be more acceptable, but Searle answers it

forcefully arguing that the complexities of the intentional phenomena “may not be immediately available to the agent” (Searle 1991, p. 228; Burge’s objection is discussed in the next section). The strongest accusation is that Searle’s explanation is underdeveloped in several aspects, most prominently in the explanation of the sort of “demonstrative reference” to an experience postulated and in the analysis of the concept of experience involved (cf. McDowell 1991, p. 217; García-Carpintero 1999, pp. 37–38). Some critics of Searle’s explanation even make a positive appraisal of some elements in it, as when Burge maintains that allowing in some way for a reflexive element is essential for a good explanation (Burge 1991, p. 202; see below). I think we must conclude from this argumentative situation that opposition to Searle’s explanation of the intentional content of perception is not based on overwhelming argument, and therefore requires the development of a better alternative.

3. *A proposal about demonstrative individuation in perception*

The alternative to Searle’s explanation is an alternative which rejects GT totally, and thus implies the acceptance of ODT, the Object Dependency Thesis. However, this thesis appears to be unpromising because there seems to be a clear opposition between ODT and the substitutability intuition. But this opposition turns out to be merely apparent, since it is one thing to say that if two experiences have objects which to the subject seem indistinguishable the intentional content should reflect this fact, and another to say that (therefore) the particular objects at issue cannot partake of the content in any way, so that a different intentional content is assigned to those experiences. The first of these two requirements is satisfied if we allow that the contents are such that they represent the object at issue as objects which have exactly the same properties, and this is fully compatible with the respective contents being (in part) individualized by means of the respective objects (cf. Martin 1997).

Once the route for the acceptance of ODT is thus cleared, we may turn our attention to explanations of the intentional content of perception that take it into account. This leads us to the “demonstrative approach” favored by Evans, McDowell, Burge, Peacocke and Campbell, that is, the approach for which the key to that content lies in recognizing a “demonstrative element” directed to the particular object.

Only the first and last of the philosophers just mentioned have put forward relatively well-developed proposals to this effect, in which the “demonstrative element” materializes as *perceptual-demonstrative modes of presentation* which are explained in some detail. One might take issue with the fact that Evans’s *a priori* general theory of these modes of presentation, in which the (objective, holistically determined) spatial location of the object takes pride of place, purports to be applicable to all perceptual modalities (cf. Campbell 1997, p. 63), and one might also object to Evans’s argument and to the “substantial character” of the mode of presentation of particular objects in perception involved in his proposal (see footnote 7 below and the text corresponding to it). And one should definitely reject the decidedly empirical character of Campbell’s proposal, even more implausible for something which is regarded as a mode of presentation in

the broad Fregean tradition.³ But there is a common objection to both which to my mind obliges us to go on looking for a better proposal. It is that neither of them takes any account of the “reflexive element” which it seems should be recognized as part of the content (precisely the feature which Searle’s proposal tried, however inadequately, to capture). A version of the corresponding prerequisite is stated by Burge thus: “the intentional content must itself somehow reflect the causal condition of its satisfaction” (Burge 1991, p. 202). But perhaps it is not exactly the causal relation which must be reflected in the condition for the satisfaction of the content, but another relation between subject and object which is peculiar of perception.

I will now turn to my proposal for capturing the “reflexive element”. As I hope will be seen, it is not subject to the criticism that have been leveled at Searle’s proposal.

First of all, let me endorse explicitly the claim that there is a kind of perception which involves a distinctive sort of individuation of objects, which pre-theoretically we think of as demonstrative. Moreover, perception of this kind is linked (constitutively linked, I assume, but I will not defend this assumption here) to a certain sort of judgment or thought: perceptual demonstrative thoughts, which are distinguished by their involving perceptual demonstrative modes of presentation, or perceptual demonstratives for short. These perceptual demonstratives present the object in a sort of self-reflexive way.

Take as an example the very simple case of a perceptual judgment straightforwardly associated with the utterance “That is a tree”. With some important qualifications to be discussed presently, we could express its content in the following way:

- (1) The object attended to in *this* act of attention is a tree.

According to the proposal made with the help of the formulation in (1),⁴ the kind of perception at issue involves the sort of awareness of an object which consists in (perceptually) *attending* to it, so that a perceived object is primarily present to the mind of the perceiver as the object *currently attended to*. Hence, according to the proposal, the state or episode of attention itself, which is necessarily involved in (this kind of) perception of objects, plays an essential role in individuating the object being attended to.

³ I present a thorough analysis of Evans’s and Campbell’s positions and arguments in my dissertation, Fernández Prat (2002).

⁴ In a way this follows the lead of a Reichenbachian token-reflexive account of *linguistic* demonstratives (see García-Carpintero 1998). The way must be only heuristic, since the corresponding proposal for perceptual demonstratives must stand or fall on its own merits (I am not assuming that an account of the demonstrative element in perception must follow at all from one about linguistic demonstratives; nor for that matter the other way around). From this heuristic point of view, however, it seems to me that the rival approach in the analysis of linguistic demonstratives, which uses the idea of type-in-a-context (cf. Kaplan 1989), is not very promising: the Reichenbachian approach seems more in consonance with the kind of particularity which is present in perceptual experience and thought. Nevertheless, see Gertler (2001).

Hence, a state, event or act of attention identifies an object in a *token-reflexive* sort of way.⁵

Quite apart from this token-reflexive element, the proposal is based on two intuitive ideas. First, when one wants to think about an object in the field of perception and to comment on it with somebody else, one must draw his or her attention to it (as emphasized in Campbell 2002, p. 2). Moreover, and accordingly, attention seems to play in perception a role similar to deictic intentions in linguistic demonstration. If pointing to an object when informed by the right deictic intentions serves the function of making an object salient to an audience for the purposes of communication, analogously it would seem that *attending* to an object—visually, audibly or by means of touch—has the similar function of making an object salient to the perceiver.

It goes without saying that the proposal needs a great deal of clarification, refinement, development and defense. What is it exactly that is claimed by saying that the object is presented as attended to, and indeed, as *attended in the current act of attention*? What is the hypothesis about modes of presentation of objects in perception that is being advanced? What kind of awareness of the object is involved in (perceptually) attending to it? Does the proposal imply that we have some kind of awareness of attention in turn? Does it imply that the subject capable of perceptual demonstrative judgments has to possess the concept of attention? What is attention in general, and attention to objects in particular? What has attention exactly to do with the phenomenology of perception?⁶

We are here especially interested in the extension of a (neo-)Fregean framework beyond the domain of language. Instead of individuating conditions which an object must satisfy to be the *referent of expressions* and which, moreover, are epistemically accessible to the *competent speakers of a language*, we are interested in individuating conditions on objects which are epistemically accessible to subjects by virtue of another property they may have, here specifically, *by virtue of their being normal perceivers*. These are the conditions which constitute perceptual demonstrative modes of presentation. We are interested here in the conditions covering perceptual states (seeing a tree in front of one or seeing, say, that a particular tree is blooming), perceptual judgments or beliefs (linguistically expressible as, e. g., “That tree is already blooming”), or beliefs which might be called “partially perceptual” (“That tree was planted by my father”).

The account being developed here is meant to give a “purely perceptual” condition on the object, that is, a condition that does not involve any property of the object be-

⁵ Once this proposal for the simple kind of example at stake is stated, it is easy to see how it can be generalized to other more complex thoughts in the target area. For example, an explanation of the perceptual judgment that we may naturally express linguistically by uttering ‘That (tree) is blooming’ would be suggested by the sentence: ‘The object (object of the tree kind) attended to in *this* act of attention is blooming.’

⁶ I will deal with several of these questions in what follows. As for the rest—omitted here for reasons of space, especially those concerned with specifics about the notion of attention involved—they are discussed in my dissertation.

yond the fact that it is involved in a perceptual episode with a subject.⁷ According to my proposal the object is presented as *the object attended to in this (current) act of attention*. More exactly, the object is presented in a way that can be characterized by means of the following condition:

- (2) (being) attended to in *this* act of attention.

This may be *prima facie* regarded as a reasonably individuating property or condition, and also as epistemically accessible to the subject, as we will see. As such, it may be proposed tentatively as constitutive of the perceptual mode of presentation of the object in a perceptual state and/or a perceptual judgment, perceptual belief or partially perceptual belief.

The next issue is: how exactly should we understand the perceptual mode of presentation characterized by condition (2)? It will help here to make a comparison with the linguistic case. It has been proposed that senses of singular linguistic items be regarded as ingredients of certain presuppositions, namely, presuppositions of acquaintance with objects (cf. García-Carpintero 2000). Making use of this idea, one might propose the following as the “presupposition of acquaintance” in the cases of our interest:

- (3) There is a (unique) tree being attended to in *this* act of attention.

Apparently, it is straightforward to regard the defining condition of the mode of presentation as an “ingredient” in the presupposition expressed by (3). A sentence like (3) is used to express the existence and uniqueness of something (a particular tree in the case at hand). Hence, regarded as expressing a presupposition, it expresses the idea that the existence and uniqueness of something is presupposed. But is this *presupposition of existence and uniqueness* really an apt candidate for capturing the kind of acquaintance with the object that a perceiver enjoys in the relevant perceptual situation? As García-Carpintero says for the parallel linguistic case, associating mere presuppositions of existence and uniqueness to senses would give us a *descriptive* —narrowly or genuinely Fregean— theory of senses, just the sort of theory which has been discredited by the discussion ensuing from Kripke’s work on the reference of proper names and from Kaplan’s and Perry’s work on demonstratives (*op. cit.*, p. 132).

To understand what this rejection of presuppositions of existence and uniqueness amounts to in the case of perception, consider the example of the perceptual judgment in the presence of a particular tree, in full view, to the effect that *that* tree is (already) blooming. According to the proposal we are about to reject, the intentional content of this judgment might rather straightforwardly be given by the sentence:

⁷ In this respect my proposal has something of the spirit, if not the letter, of Searle’s and Peacocke’s (1983) approaches, and is rather in contrast with approaches such as those of Evans and McDowell which make conditions of individuation depend on more “substantial” properties of an object, such as its location. Of course, in a sense my account is closest to Campbell’s which is also based in the notion of attention, but his appeal to the subpersonal level is in stark contrast to all other approaches, including mine.

- (4) There is a (unique) tree being attended to in *this* act of attention, and that tree is blooming.

Focusing on this linguistic formulation as a model of the intentional content of a corresponding judgment, we see we can apply Russell's theory of descriptions (in reverse order) to obtain:

- (5) The tree being attended to in *this* act of attention is blooming.

As a model of the (intentional content of) the original perceptual judgment, which seems definitely to have a (perceptual) demonstrative character, it is immediately doubtful that it is on the right track. Admittedly, the demonstrative character is not completely lost since there is still a demonstrative expression in the formulation, but one might justifiably complain that in the judgment which is being modeled it is intuitively *the tree* which seems to be demonstratively individuated or "presented", while according to that formulation it is the *attention to the tree* that is modeled as being demonstratively presented.⁸

We make a step in the right direction if we propose a *referential* reading for the description in (1).⁹ It seems intuitively more acceptable to think that presuppositions of acquaintance with an object should be conceived as being akin to referentially interpreted descriptions of that object rather than to attributively interpreted descriptions of it. According to the second interpretation, in the linguistic case the speaker "presupposes of some *particular* someone or something that he or it fits the description" (Donnellan 1966, p. 288; Donnellan's italics). Applying the suggestion to our example of the perceptual case, the idea is that when we make the perceptual judgment at issue we are presupposing *of* a particular tree that it is currently being attended to, instead of presupposing *that* there is a unique tree that is currently being attended to.

According to the foregoing, a characterization of the perceptual mode of presentation with the help of the description in (1) is to be understood as a claim that what is constitutive of a demonstrative perceptual mode of presentation as being exercised in a perceptual judgment (perceptual belief, etc.) is the perceiver's *taking for granted* that the judgment is about a particular object, precisely *the very one which is currently the focus of attention*.¹⁰ Moreover, the characterization of the state of the perceiver as one of "tak-

⁸ The proposal being critically examined in the text can in this way be seen as patently similar to those in Searle (1983) and Peacocke (1983) (the latter one rejected by its author).

⁹ This is indeed the move suggested in García-Carpintero (2000): 133-135 for the parallel case of linguistic demonstratives.

¹⁰ To the extent that the mode of presentation, in being epistemically accessible to the subject, is meant to capture at least partially "how things are from within", the perspective of consciousness, the present proposal aligns itself with Eilan's requirement that "the existence and identity of spatio-temporal objects" is not "extrinsic" to the characterization of how things are from within such perspective (cf. Eilan 1997: 236). Such "existence and identity", however, are established more by way of an *individuation* than by way of an *identification* which, as in Evans's theory, involves fundamental properties of the object.

ing for granted” or “presupposing” aims at the very least to capture the idea that *the fact that the judgment is precisely about the object being attended to* does not in any way *occupy the attention* of the perceiver.¹¹ Still, the “token-reflexive” element in the formulation is there because, according to the proposal, some sort of awareness of the attention currently being paid to the object is involved, an awareness which should be mirrored in the actions of the subject *vis à vis* the object attended to.

The question is now how to characterize the kind of awareness of attention involved. A full characterization would require us to go deeper into the issue of the relation of attention to the phenomenology of perception, something that would take us beyond the reasonable limits of this paper. Nevertheless, something about the awareness at stake should and can be said to complete the proposal in a reasonable way.

An understanding of the awareness of attention involved in the cases of our interest can be gained from the psychological notions of a *schema* and a *perceptual cycle*, introduced in Neisser (1976). The general idea is that, in perception, information must be fitted into previously existing *schemata* in order to be made sense of, *schemata* which correspond to different *perceptual cycles*.¹² These notions are aptly summarized in Roessler (1999), p. 56 as follows:

A perceptual cycle, in Neisser’s sense, consists of three elements: an anticipatory schema, specifying what kind of information the perceiver aims, and expects, to acquire; exploratory activity guided by the schema, such as looking or listening; and finally, the information picked up as a result of this activity, which in turn modifies the schema.

According to Neisser, even newborn infants “know ... how to find out about their environment, and how to organize the information they obtain so it can help them obtain more ... [not] very well, but well enough to begin“ (Neisser 1976, p. 63). As we learn, of course, we are able to make more and more conjectures about our environment, and we tend to expect certain responses to our conjectures from it. In this way the information gathered *partially* depends on the abilities of the perceiver. We may then say that “We can see only what we know how to look for”, (*ibid.*: 20), at least if we give to the word “know” the weak interpretation needed to be able to apply it to newborn infants. Neisser’s notion of a perceptual cycle is, indeed, “relatively undemanding and inclusive” (Roessler 1999, p. 57), and so is the notion of a schema involved.

Schemata both *direct the activity of looking* and *prepare the subject for what can be found* (cf. Neisser, op. cit., pp. 20-21). Furthermore, “[t]he outcome of the explorations — the information picked up — modifies the original schema. Thus modified, it directs further exploration and becomes ready for more information” (*ibid.*).

¹¹ On this notion of occupying one’s attention see Peacocke (1998).

¹² Appeal to Neisser’s ideas should not be thought of, I believe, as an appeal to a fully empirical theory of scientific (cognitive) psychology. Even though those ideas come from an empirical psychologist, Neisser’s reflections about schemata and the perceptual cycle have much of the character of common sense psychology developed by philosophical reflection.

Neisser is thus effectively conceiving perception as involving “intentional elements”, and this means that *talking of achievement and failure in perception makes sense*. But it is not only that this talk makes sense. The key point is that the subject *must somehow be aware* of achievement (or failure) because only thus can it be detected that a perceptual cycle has been closed and a new one can be initiated. In Roessler’s words, there must be “some kind of monitoring, aimed at establishing whether the intention is fulfilled” (Roessler 1999, p. 59); the subject *needs to monitor the success, or otherwise, of her activity*.

Furthermore, it seems reasonable to assume that the “searching” activity at stake involves *attending* to the environment. Thus, I suggest that what I have called “acts or episodes of attending” in the presentation of my proposal for perceptual demonstrative modes of presentation, can be seen as being individuated by perceptual cycles, and hence, the need to monitor the success or otherwise of the subject’s activity is at the same time a *need to monitor when an act or episode of attending has been accomplished*, so that a new one may start.

For a better understanding of this claim, let us turn to an objection raised in Burge (1991) against Searle’s account of the intentional content of a perceptual experience, and which might likewise be thought to affect mine *mutatis mutandis*. Burge is objecting to the fact that Searle’s formulation, with its apparent reference to the experiences of the perceiver (cf. section 2 above), requires him to be aware of these experiences or to have some immediate cognitive access to them. There are, Burge admits, loose senses in which it can be said that perceivers are “aware of” their visual experiences. But, according to Burge, the sense in which Searle requires this to be so is a stronger one: “Reference to those experiences must be part of every visual experience of physical objects” (*op. cit.*, p. 204). This, however, would require that the subject, rather than a system within it, has “some means of distinguishing experiences from the objects they are experiences of” (*ibid.*). However “although visual experiences are manipulated within the visual system, they are not thereby referred to by the subject in visual experiences... [e]mpirical evidence and common sense both suggest that they are not supplied to visually based thoughts useable by the central cognitive system” (*ibid.*). Therefore, requiring something as strong as reference to the experience itself would not capture what “visual experience itself transmits to us” (210), and, because of this, Searle’s proposal “gives a misleading picture of mental ability” (209).

Burge is here presupposing that “[f]or the subject’s judgments to make reference to visual experiences, the subject himself, not merely a sub-system of the subject, must be capable of making discriminations between experiences and physical objects” (205). “I think,” he adds, “that these are what are ordinarily called ‘conceptual discriminations.’”

Transferring these remarks to the discussion of the view being advanced here, I think that we must agree that it is the subject himself and not merely a sub-system of his which must be said to be able to discriminate between the object attended to and the act of attention. What I do not see is why we should agree that it is a *conceptual* discrimination on the part of the subject that is required, so that the subject must possess the required concepts to make the discriminations.

Thus, when I base the awareness of acts of attention on the postulation of their “monitoring”, this is not done in the spirit of advancing a cognitive-psychological hypothesis about sub-systems of the perceiving subject (although it might lead to one). On the contrary, the sort of monitoring involved, like the perceptual cycle as a whole, is something in which the *person* himself engages. The postulation at issue is a claim at the personal rather than the subpersonal level. However, this does not imply that the perceiver can quite readily make it clear to herself that she is engaging in acts of attention.

What is rejected here is a view that sees only two possibilities for deciding about (representational) contents and about abilities. One is that we characterize such contents or abilities *exclusively* on the basis of what is immediately available or manifest to the subject. We, as theorists, decide what the relevant traits of contents or abilities are only on the basis of something like asking people (or indeed ourselves), or more or less casual introspections. In any case, *in a way that we can easily recover*. The other possibility is that such contents or abilities are characterized by appealing to empirical cognitive science or neuroscience in terms of which the subject has “no inkling”, to use Campbell’s expression. I think that there is room for a third possibility: briefly, in what appears to be just thus and so on the basis of more or less casual introspection there is actually ample room for discussion, for rational reconstruction, or for theory overriding first-hand intuitions. Nevertheless, the discussion proceeds always within the boundaries of what subjects of experience and action are able to recognize, if they are brought to think of it in the right way. I cannot hope to substantiate this sort of intermediate position here, but it is fair to say that the work of theorists like Searle, Peacocke, Shoemaker or indeed Burge himself, lends some strong plausibility to it.

Thus, I side with Searle when, in his reply to Burge’s criticism, he rejects the view that “the description of a conscious [i]ntentional content should be given in terms which are part of the immediate consciousness of the agent” (Searle 1991, p. 231). This is not to say that Searle is justified in defending his position against Burge’s criticism. The heart of the matter is that, as Burge says, it seems unavoidable to interpret Searle’s proposal as postulating *reference* to an experience on the part of a normal act of perception, which on the face of it, seems an implausibly strong claim, certainly in need of a specific explanation and defense which goes beyond Searle’s general standpoint and which, unfortunately, he does not provide. In contrast, no *reference* to any internal (or indeed external) event or process is postulated in my proposal of a perceptual demonstrative mode of presentation. Moreover, the reflexive element contained in it is certainly not left unexplained. The demonstrative expression in its linguistic formulation (“*this* act of attention”) only aims to signal that, according to such a proposal, there is an awareness of sorts of the current act of attention, an awareness which has been explained in terms of the perceptual cycle. Furthermore, there is no “indirection” here, the cause of worry expressed by theorists like Burge (1991) or McDowell (1991) about Searle’s proposal. Attention is on the (physical) object; there is no attention to (acts of) attention: the kind of awareness of attention, which cer-

tainly allows for a sort of reflexive consciousness in perception, is altogether of a different sort.

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