

Disjunctivism in Action - A Workshop

Center for Subjectivity Research
University of Copenhagen
25th and 26th of September 2012
Lecture room 25-5-11

To participate please contact Rasmus Thybo Jensen (rtj@hum.ku.dk). Space is limited so please sign up as soon as possible.

Can we exploit the basic idea of a disjunctive approach developed in the philosophy of perception to tackle problems in the philosophy of action? We will focus on the working out of analogies and disanalogies between problems concerning perception and problems concerning action that might invite or discourage such exploitation.

Program (changes may occur)

Tuesday 25th of September

10.00-11.15: Rasmus Thybo Jensen (University of Copenhagen): Disjunctivism in Action

11.15-11.30: Coffee Break

11.30-12.45: Adrian Haddock (University of Stirling): Disjunctivism about Movement

Abstract

In this paper, I shall do three things: first, draw on the work of Anton Ford to distinguish two forms of disjunctivism in the philosophy of action, and suggest that the disjunctive conception of bodily movement which I have defended in previous work exemplifies the second of these forms; second, defend this conception from a prominent objection due to Maria Alvarez and John Hyman; and finally, argue that—contrary to a recent suggestion of Jennifer Hornsby's—there is no reason not to extend this conception beyond bodily movement to encompass movement (*kinesis*) as such.

12.45-14.00: Lunch

14.00-15.15: Jennifer Hornsby (Birkbeck, University of London): *Wittgenstein's question and Disjunctivism*

Abstract

Wittgenstein asked (whether or not he intended an answer): "What is left over when I subtract the fact that my arm goes up from the fact that I raise my arm?" I argue that to have a proper understanding of what's at issue here, one does well to take it into account that one might ask EITHER about the subtraction of *one's arm's going up* from *one's raising one's arm* [imperfective nominal] OR about the subtraction of *one's arm's going up* from *one's raising of one's arm* [perfective nominal]. Taking this into account helps one to see that events of fundamentally different sorts may satisfy the description 'her arm's going up'; and thus to reach a certain "disjunctivism".

15.15-15.45: Coffee Break

15.45-17.00:

Søren Overgaard (University of Copenhagen): *Other Minds and Disjunctivism about Behaviour*

Abstract

Drawing on McDowell's neoclassical paper 'Criteria, Defeasibility and Knowledge' as well as more recent literature on the possibility of perceiving the mental states of others, I want to discuss some parallels between a disjunctive response to a certain kind of external-world skepticism, and a similar response to a certain kind of skepticism with respect to other minds.

19.00: Dinner

Wednesday 26th of September

10.00-11.15: Rowland Stout (University College Dublin): *Direct Perception and Direct Action*

Abstract

A central motive for favouring a disjunctive approach to perception is to avoid a 2-component view – a view according to which perception involves the world doing its part in making impressions and then the subject working with this to make knowledge. To avoid this, the mental component in the successful cases must not be identified with the mental component in the unsuccessful cases, even though the subject in the unsuccessful cases may not be able to tell the difference. I defend the same approach for action. The picture is confused here because some 'indirect' actions – e.g. murders – very often do have two components – the agent initiating a process and then nature taking its course. But there are also 'direct' actions which do not have two components. For example in trying to write a word on a blackboard the mental component either involves the word actually being written on the board or it is a mere trying – and these are not the same.

11.15-11.30: Coffee Break

11.30-12.45: Thor Grünbaum (University of Copenhagen): *Conscious proximal intentions*

Abstract

Some causal theorists of action (Mele 2009, Clarke 2010) claim that often an agent's proximal intentions are non-conscious. They claim that if we define proximal intentions by their characteristic functions in triggering, guiding, and sustaining action, then there is no reason to think consciousness is part of the equation. Some causal theorists thus argue that with respect to proximal intentions consciousness has no genuine causal role to play in the explanation of the action. Besides putting pressure on our common-sense notion of intention and intentional action, this claim is in tension with one prominent theory of agent's knowledge according to which an agent knows her own action by grasping the content of her proximal intention as a description of her action. In this paper, I argue that proximal intentions with demonstrative content, e.g. an intention to grasp this cup now, have their characteristic functions only because they are conscious intentions. I present a number of reasons for accepting that proximal demonstrative intentions can play an explanatory role only qua conscious.

12.45-14.00: Lunch

14.00-15.15: Jérôme Dokic (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociale, Paris) & Jean-Rémy Martin (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociale, Paris): *The dual Phenomenology of Perception and Action*

Abstract

In our view, most recent discussions of Disjunctivism have neglected that fact that perceptual phenomenology is dual; it has both sensory and affective aspects. Perceptual experience has a (broadly) sensory content, but it also involves various cognitive feelings, including the feeling of presence or what Husserl called "Leibhaftigkeit". Each aspect of perceptual phenomenology can vary independently of the other, at least to some extent. The duality of

perceptual phenomenology has implications for the correct interpretation of Disjunctivism about perception. For instance, we argue that although perception and hallucination cannot share a sensory content, they can share cognitive feelings such as the feeling of presence. In this talk, we would like to explore whether the phenomenology of action is also dual, and what implications such duality would have for the correct interpretation of Disjunctivism about action. In particular, the question is whether there is any dissociation between the content of the agent's intention in action and the "feeling of success", i.e. the feeling that one has changed the world as intended.

15.15-15.45: Coffee Break

15.45-17.00: Uriah Kriegel (Jean Nicod Institute and University of Arizona): *Failure and Adverbialism*

Abstract

Support for disjunctivism about perception typically begins with reflection on the possibility of perceptual failure (especially hallucination) subjectively indistinguishable from perceptual success. A less radical reaction to this possibility, however, is to go adverbialist rather than disjunctivist: to hallucinate a dragon is to perceive dragon-wise. The reason adverbialism has fallen out of favor in the philosophy of perception of the last generation has to do primarily with two objections commonly taken to be fatal. Here I offer responses to both objections, formulate a version of adverbialism about perception that I think can accommodate the possibility of perceptual failure, and proceed to formulate a parallel adverbialist position about action, according to which failing to walk from A to B is trying A-to-B-walk-wise.

17.00-17.30: Concluding remarks and discussion

Acknowledgments: The organizer thanks **The Danish Council for Independent Research** for supporting this workshop.