

24.09 Minds and Machines

Fall 11 HASS-D CI

perception

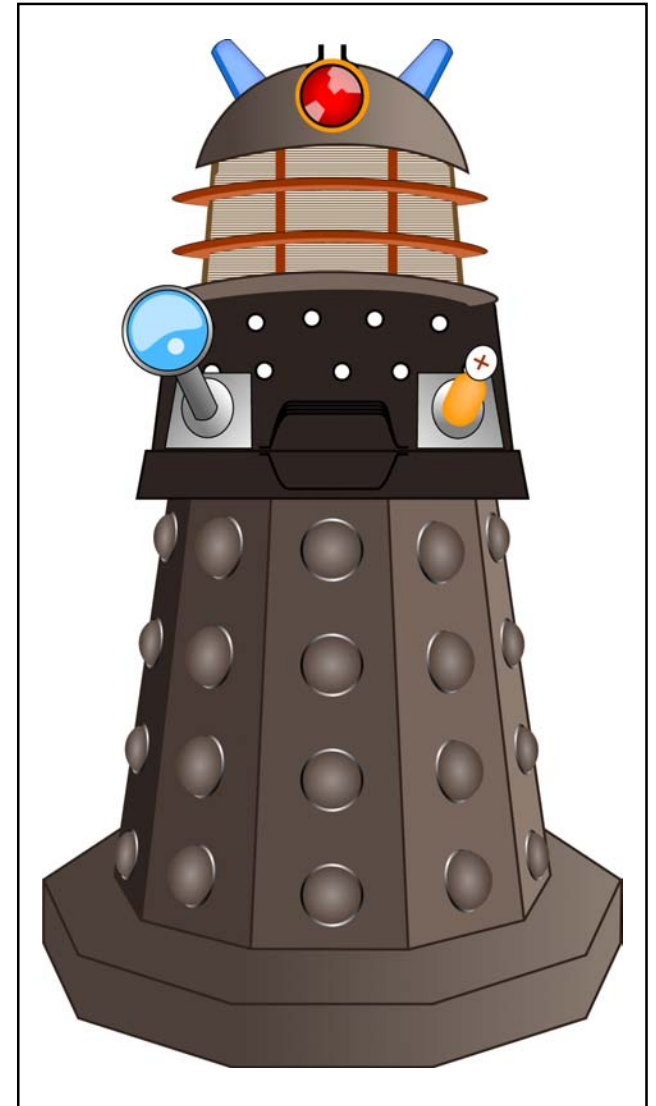



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reminder from first lecture: course overview

1. can computers think?
2. from dualism to functionalism
a survey of theories of mind
3. externalism
is the mind in the head?
4. perception 
5. consciousness and the mind-body problem

first, we will examine this question

do we perceive mind-independent physical objects like roses and rubies?

‘My perception is not of the world, but of my brain’s model of the world’ (Frith, *Making Up The Mind*)

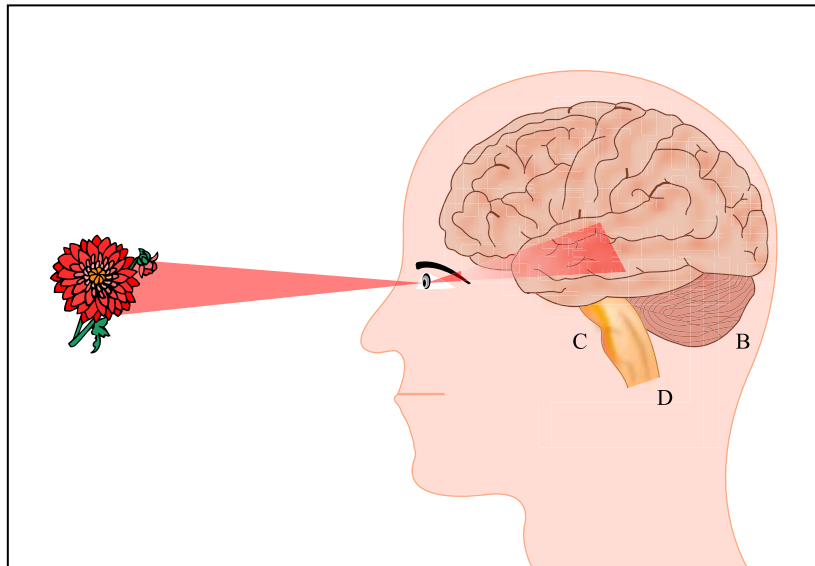


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one reason why the question is important

one can know some things without relying on perception or sense experience (or so it seems)

in other words: presumably some things are knowable a priori (logic, math, 'analytic' truths like 'vixens are female foxes')

but many important things we know (e.g. facts about our environment) are knowable only a posteriori (knowable only on the basis of perception)

and if we don't perceive objects like roses and rubies, then how can perception give us knowledge of our environment?

recall Putnam on 'methodological solipsism'

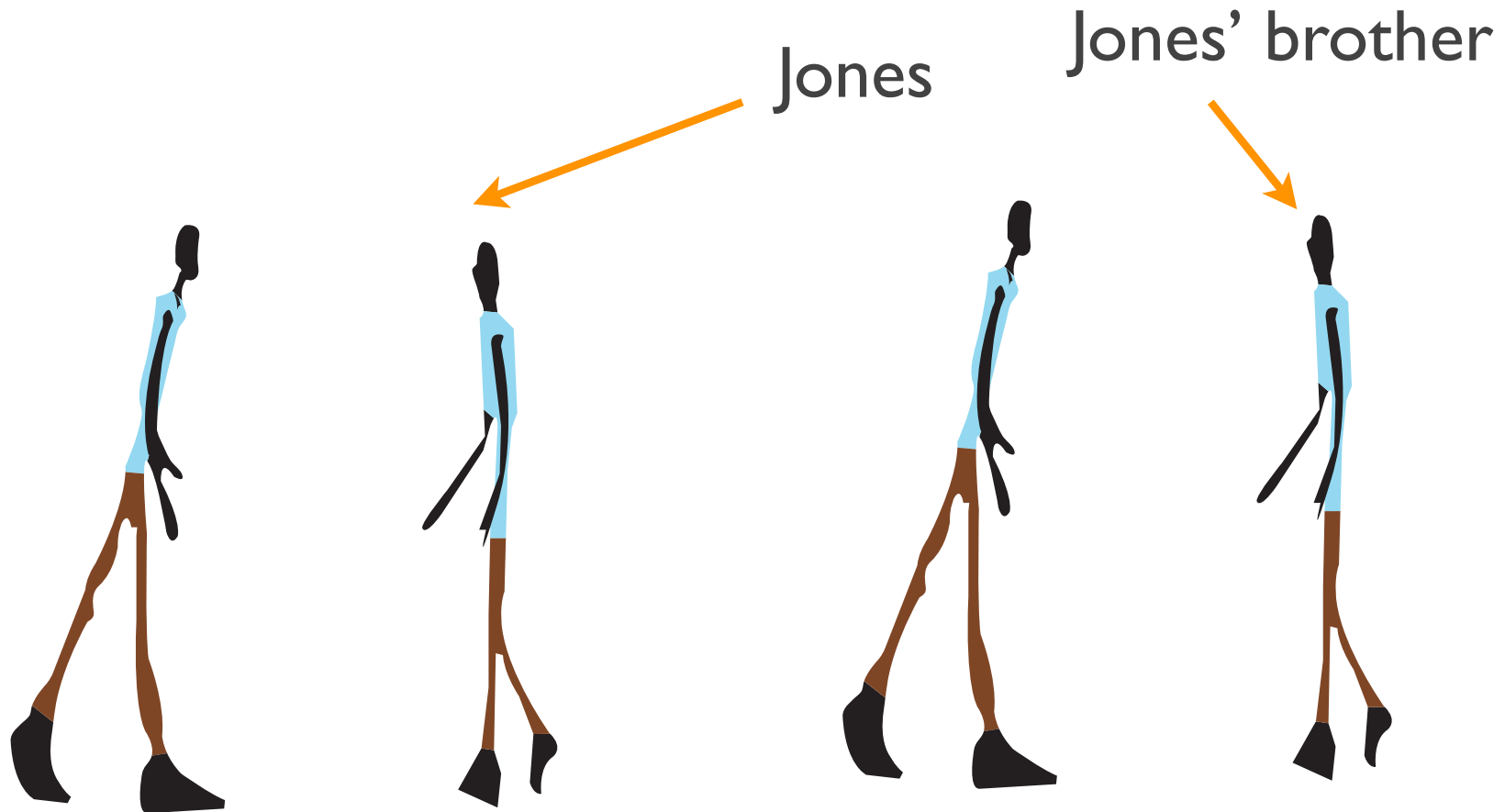
'no psychological state, properly so-called, presupposes the existence of any individual other than the subject to whom that state is ascribed' (note: Putnam is not endorsing m.s.)

m.s. is basically the view that internalism about all psychological states is true

if m.s. is right, then **seeing Jones** is not a psychological state, properly so-called

one can only see Jones if Jones is there in one's environment, and this implies that the property of seeing Jones is extrinsic

the property of seeing Jones is extrinsic

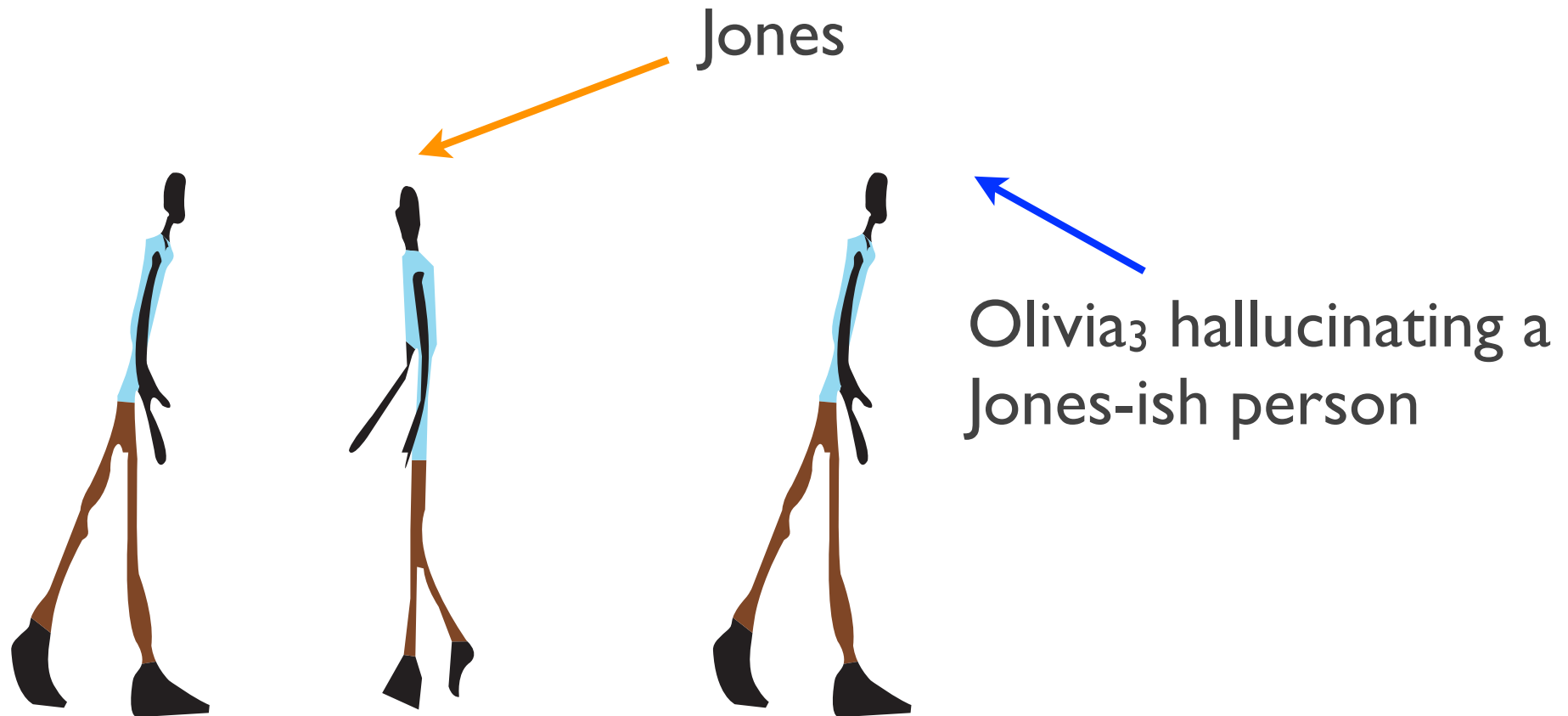


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Olivia₁ sees Jones

Olivia₂, a perfect duplicate of Olivia₁, sees Jones' twin brother

another example



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Olivia₁ sees Jones

Olivia₃, a perfect duplicate of Olivia₁, sees nothing

perception and externalism

if seeing Jones (hearing a shot, smelling a skunk, etc.) are genuine psychological states, contra m.s., then externalism is true of states of this kind

Putnam, Burge, and Clark & Chalmers all argued (in different ways) that beliefs ain't in the head

their arguments are controversial, but it seems much easier to argue that perceptions ain't in the head

one way to resist externalism about perception

one could admit that we do see physical objects, and that seeing Jones (e.g.) is extrinsic, but deny that it is a genuine psychological state

analogy: having a headache caused by Jones's boring lecture is extrinsic, but it is not a genuine psychological state

rather, the genuine psychological state is having a headache, which is (apparently) intrinsic

maybe seeing Jones is like that: Olivia sees Jones iff Jones causes Olivia to be in an intrinsic psychological state of a certain kind

but spelling out the details is very difficult

another more radical way

one could deny that we ever see material objects
'such great philosophers as Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant [believe] that we do not see the real world...In the past century philosophers usually put this point by saying 'We do not perceive material objects, we perceive only **sense data**' (Searle, 180)

as a historical claim about Descartes et al., there's at least some truth to it

we have already (briefly) met 'sense data': see Smart, 65

the mighty dead

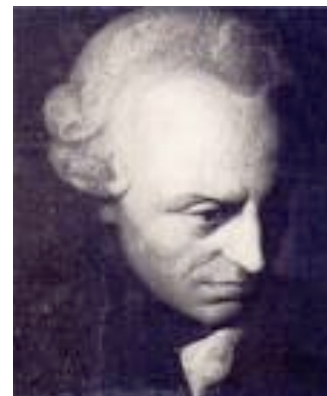
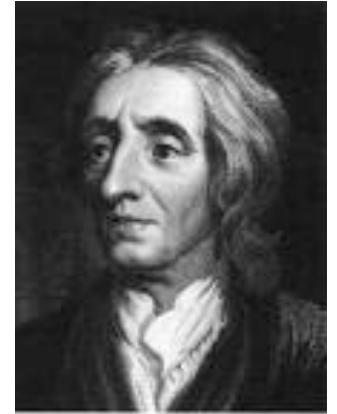
we've already met Descartes (1596-1650)

Locke (1632-1704)

Berkeley (1685-1753)

Hume (1711-1776)

Kant (1724-1804)



recall: the identity theory and the object of experience

such-and-such brain process
= the experience of seeing
something orange

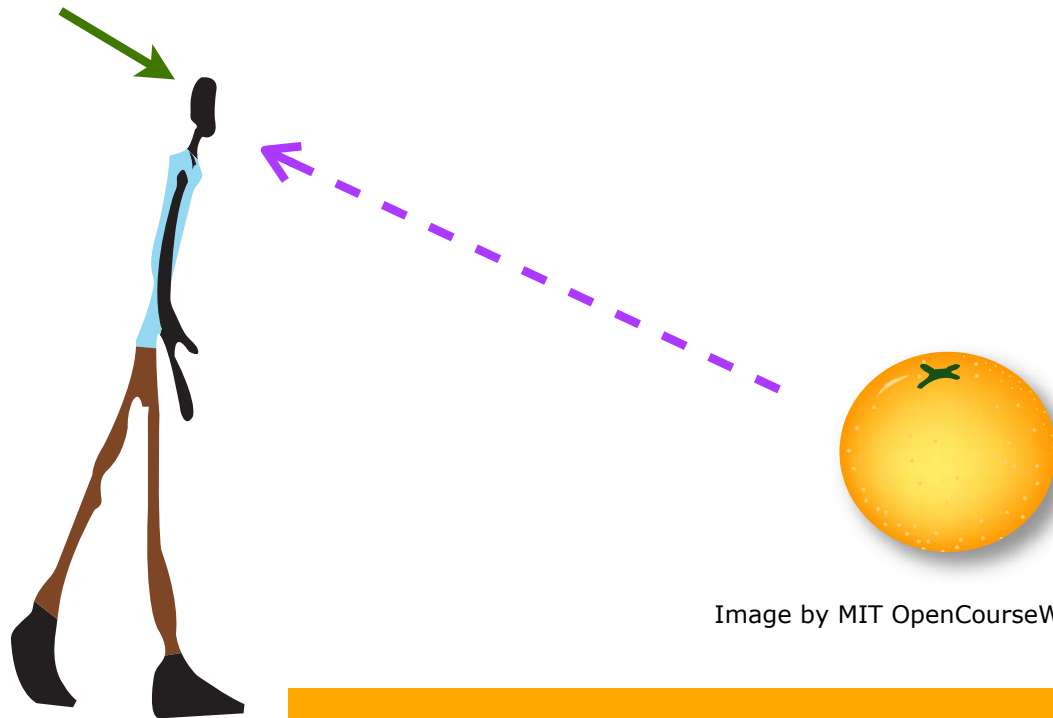


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the identity theory does not identify
the object of the experience with a
brain process

recall our discussion of afterimages

the identity theory identifies the experience of having an afterimage with a brain process

but what about the afterimages themselves—aren't they non-physical things?

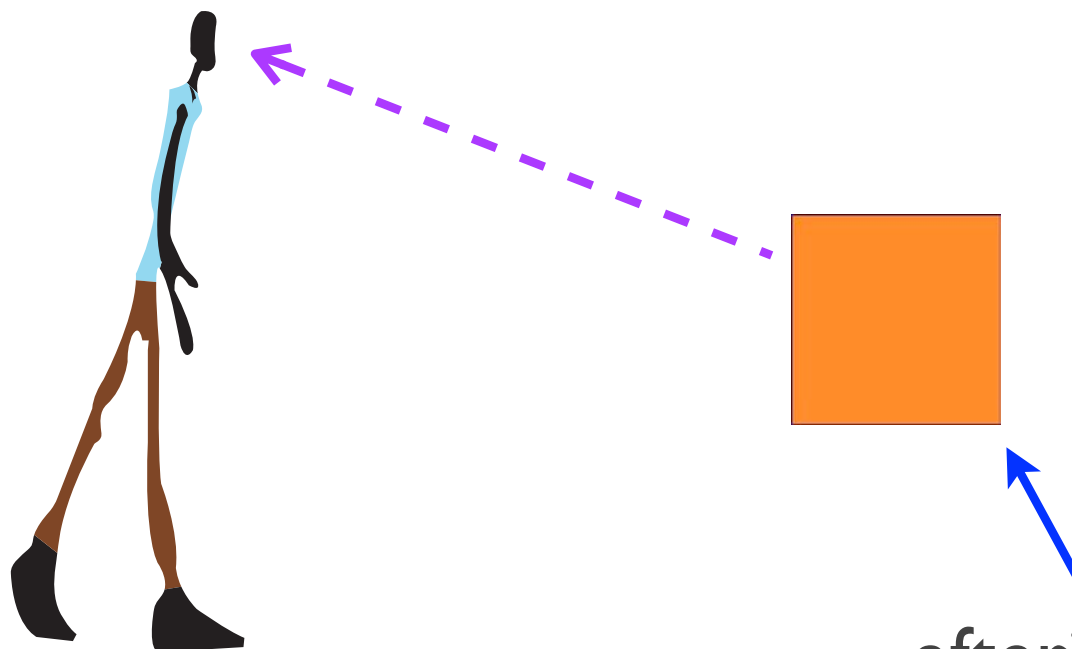


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afterimage

according Smart, there are no afterimages

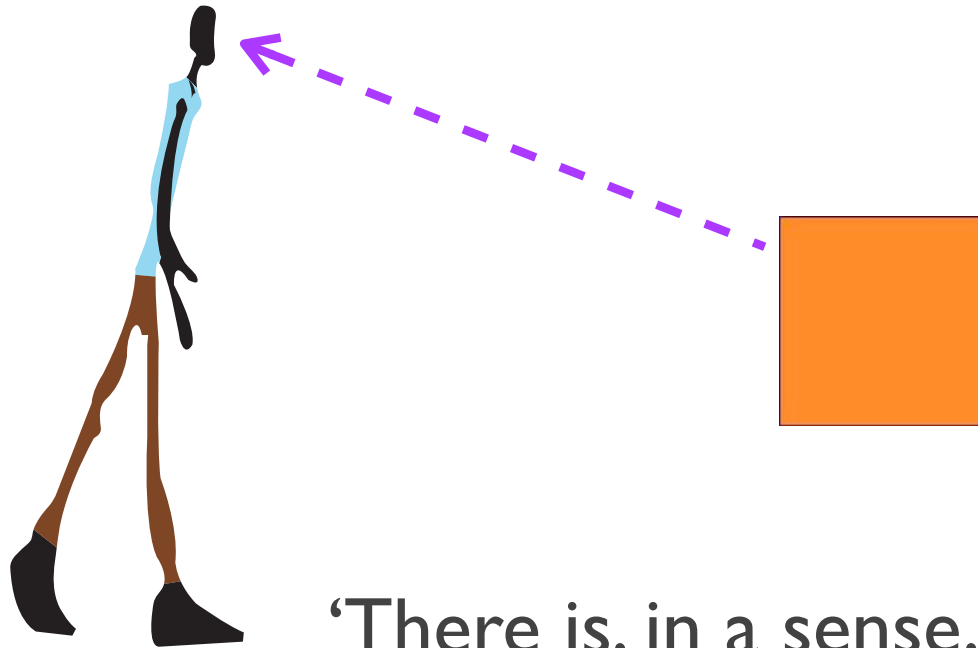


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‘There is, in a sense, no such thing as an after-image or a **sense-datum**, though there is such a thing as the experience of having such an image’

recall Place on the 'phenomenological fallacy'

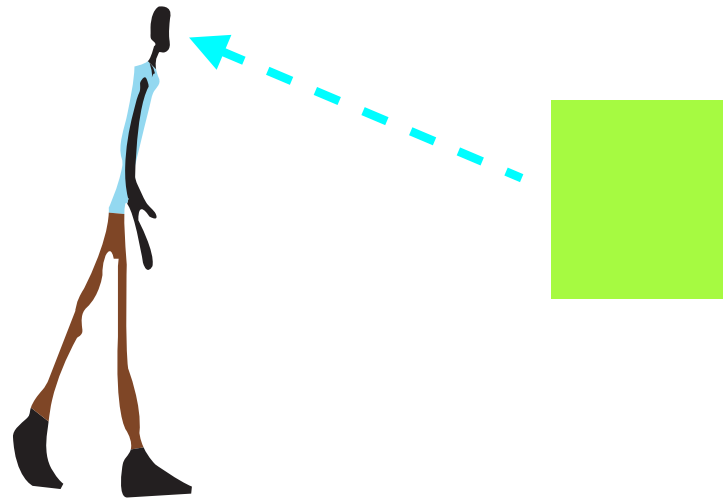


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according to Place, 'when we describe the after-image as green, we are not saying that there is something, the after-image, which is green'

to think otherwise is supposedly to commit the 'phenomenological fallacy'

but is it really a fallacy?

not according to the 'argument from illusion'

the argument from illusion, first part

1. consider a ordinary situation which we would naturally describe as one in which Olivia sees a material object, say a (grey, curvy) dagger
2. any such ordinary situation has an hallucinatory counterpart: a situation in which Olivia hallucinates a dagger

‘from the inside’, the two situations are the same
3. in the hallucinatory situation Olivia sees something that is grey and curvy, but which is not a dagger (or any other material object)—call this thing Olivia sees a sense datum

the hallucinatory situation, according to the first part

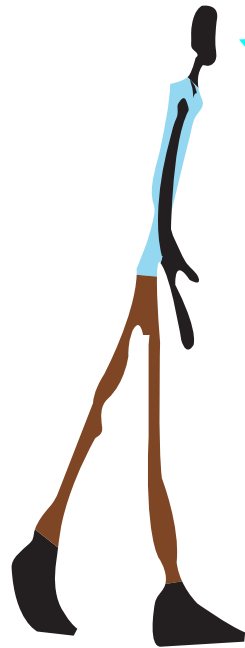


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Olivia

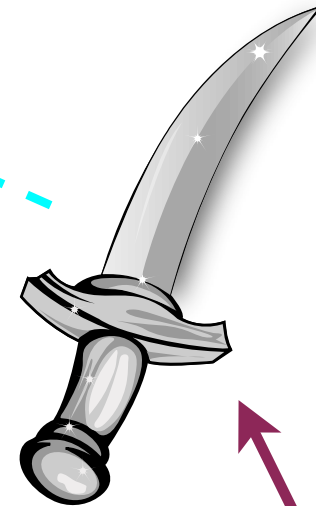


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a non-material
object, a 'dagger-ish'
sense datum

the argument from illusion, second part

4. if Olivia sees a (grey, curvy) sense datum in the hallucinatory situation, she sees a (grey, curvy) sense datum in the ordinary situation
5. Olivia only sees one grey curvy object in the ordinary situation
6. hence, if Olivia sees a (grey, curvy) sense datum in the hallucinatory situation, in the ordinary situation she does not see the dagger

putting the two parts together

3. in the hallucinatory situation Olivia sees something that is grey and curvy, but which is not a dagger (or any other material object)—it is a (grey, curvy) sense datum
6. if Olivia sees a (grey, curvy) sense datum in the hallucinatory situation, in the ordinary situation she does not see the dagger
7. hence, putting the two parts together, and generalizing the argument, we never see (or perceive) any material object

the ordinary situation, according to the argument

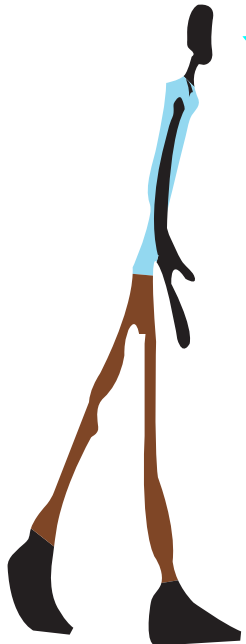


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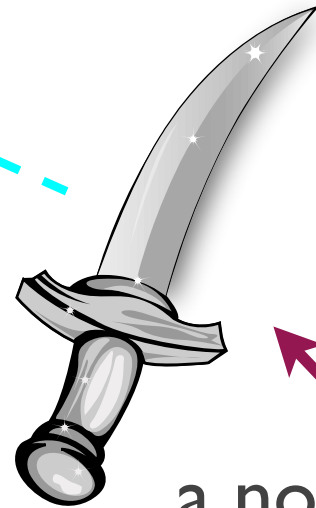


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a non-material
object, a 'dagger-ish'
sense datum

Olivia

the real physical dagger (if indeed there is one), is not seen

Valberg sets out an antinomy: an apparently reasonable argument for some claim p , and an apparently reasonable argument for not- p

incidentally, Kant was fond of antinomies

the p in question is (near-enough) the claim that we do not perceive physical objects—for instance books (the same conclusion as the argument from illusion)

concentrate on the argument for p (24-32), and the (very short!) argument for not- p (33)

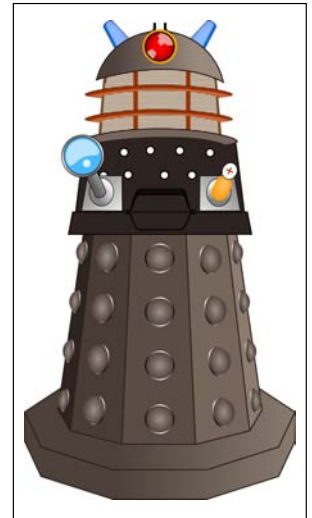


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