

The Direct Contextual Realism Theory of Perception

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Direct realist theories of perception do not receive much consideration today, aside from the cursory refutations that have appeared in the literature for decades.¹ The model of perception most widely accepted today, dominant across not just mainstream philosophy of mind but also psychology, cognitive science, and neurophysiology, is “indirect” (or “representational”) realism. For indirect realism, the external world’s existence and knowability is not compromised by its absence in experience. There are notorious difficulties involved with sustaining indirect realism’s viability in the face of challenges from the idealist (why doesn’t experience simply encompass all reality?) and the skeptic (how can we know anything beyond experience?). Direct realists see such difficulties as unnecessary and preventable. If some form of direct realism can effectively reply to these challenges, philosophy of mind and psychology would be radically transformed.

This paper develops one sophisticated type of direct realist theory, the direct contextual realism (DCR) theory of perception. DCR holds that perception is a natural process of experience that contains a portion of the perceived object (typically its surface) within that process. This theory’s origins may be traced back to the attempts by pragmatists, especially John Dewey, to formulate an alternative to dualistic and idealistic accounts of experience. These origins will not be surveyed here,² although they inspire my efforts to revive direct contextual realism. For today’s readers, the motivation for giving this theory due consideration will be developed in two stages. First, this paper examines a strong argument by John Foster against direct realism in order to expose a contradiction within its foundations. Second, it shows how this contradiction can be avoided through contextualizing perception while at

the same time preserving the directness of perception. For those readers already persuaded by direct realism, this two-stage procedure may seem unnecessary. However, contextualism is not a well-developed and widely familiar philosophical perspective. In this contemporary atmosphere the most effective and persuasive tactic would be to place DCR's cornerstone precisely where its would-be destroyer crumbles. However, the usual philosophical style will here be reversed. Instead of providing the details of the theory and then showing how it resists attack, this paper explains where an attack against a type of direct realism self-destructs and a stronger version of direct realism is born from its ashes.

Many arguments have been carefully crafted since the Greeks attempting to show that the external world cannot be directly perceived. Modern attempts typically rely on a principle sometimes labeled as Leibniz's Law (a.k.a. the Indiscernibility of Identicals): If X and Y are identical (in the sense of being one and the same object), then everything that is true of X is also true of Y. In other words, if X and Y are the same object, then they will have exactly the same properties. To cast doubt upon whether or not the perceived object is really an external object, it is only necessary to provide a situation in which some quality of the perceived object is not any of the qualities of the external object. Once just such a discrepant situation has been established, a key conclusion follows: In that situation, the perceived object cannot be the external object (or any other external object in the vicinity), and so something "internal" must be perceived instead. To complete the argument against direct realism, one further step is needed: If, for all we know, all perceiving situations are likewise discrepant situations, then, for all we know, perception is only of internal objects of some sort. Therefore, whatever knowledge perception can give must be knowledge only of these internal objects, and direct realism has no justification for claiming that perception is of external objects. This bare outline only suggests a common modern tactic; of course many additional premises and subarguments give this epistemological mode of argument any cogency.

John Foster's argument against direct realism in *The Nature of Perception*³ has this general form, and it also has the merit of supplying one of the most elaborate and powerful versions of this argument in recent philosophy. Inspired by Bertrand Russell and A. J. Ayer, Foster likewise holds that among the many arguments against direct realism, this epistemological one is most effective. As promised, the self-destruction of this argument is demonstrated, by proving that Foster's key premises lead to a contradiction: That we know some of the real qualities of perceivable objects, and that we can never know the real qualities of perceivable objects. This contradiction is caused by Foster's assumptions that (1) an object of perception has a determinate set of real qualities that are unaffected by perception, and (2) the situation in which perception occurs is exhausted by this determinate set of real qualities of the object. These assumptions effectively declare that that the external object's real qualities are utterly isolated from, and unaffected by, the act of perceiving. Foster (like Russell and

Ayer) evidently stands in the tradition of philosophy that enforces a sharp dichotomy between intrinsic and relational qualities, and declares that only an object's intrinsic qualities are its real qualities. Contextualism is a robust philosophical alternative that rejects intrinsic, nonrelational qualities or properties. The principle of the identity of indiscernables may stand; contextualism instead questions the way that the "external" object of perception is conceived. A theory of direct realism inspired by contextualism can thus avoid making the two troublesome assumptions, permitting perception to give direct access to, and knowledge of, external objects.

Real Objects and Veridical Perception

Foster carefully distinguishes several types of direct realism, settling on the presentationalist type of strong direct realism for his harshest attack (Foster 2000, 60–70). This theory holds that in perception, the phenomenal content's qualities originate only in the "concrete external situation" (Foster's phrase), which is available from the perception's perspective on reality. Like any type of strong direct realism, presentationalism (hereafter PSDR) holds that perception is not psychologically mediated in any way. Were PSDR to fail to fully account for perception, Foster concludes that only representationalism is left as an alternative to idealism (Foster's ultimate preference). Because PSDR is the theory of perception discussed in Foster's book that is most similar to direct contextual realism, a DCR theorist should take great interest in the argument Foster offers against presentationalism.

The argument has the following outline:

1. According to PSDR, in every case of perception its qualitative content originates solely in the concrete external situation (60).
2. In a case of nonveridical perception, its qualitative content cannot originate solely in the concrete external situation (61–64).
3. Any case of a veridical perception can be construed as a limiting case of a series of decreasingly nonveridical perceptions (67–69).
4. There is no sufficient reason to suppose that in any case of putatively veridical perception the perceiver is really having a veridical perception instead of a nearby, very similar, nonveridical perception in the series (69–70).
5. Hence, there is no sufficient reason to suppose that any perception is genuinely veridical.
6. Thus, to the best of our knowledge, every case of perception is a case of nonveridical perception.
7. Therefore, PSDR is completely false: in no case of perception can its qualitative content originate in the concrete external situation (derived from 2 and 6).

While steps 3–6 are ingenious, his argument for premise 2 should be the DCR theorist's primary focus. Here, then, is Foster's argument for premise 2:

- 2a. An object that could be an object of attempted perception has a determinate set of "real" qualities that are not affected or altered by perception.
- 2b. If the real relevant qualities of an object are identical with the qualitative content of an attempted perception of that object, then that perception is truly of the object (and not of something else) and it can be properly be called a "veridical" perception. Otherwise, the perception is a nonveridical perception.
- 2c. In some cases of a perceiver attempting to perceive an object, the qualitative content of the perception is not identical with the real relevant qualities of object, and so in those cases such perceptions are nonveridical.
- 2d. Only if a perception is a veridical perception can that perception's qualitative content originate solely in the concrete external situation.
- 2. Therefore, in a case of nonveridical perception, its qualitative content cannot originate solely in the concrete external situation (derived from 2c and 2d).

The DCR theorist will take close notice of premises 2a and 2d. What reasons can be given to support these premises? For premise 2a, Foster offers no support. He takes it for granted that all parties simply agree that there are evident cases of failure to perceive the real qualities of an object, and thus there are evident cases of nonveridical perception, even if the precise explanation for why nonveridical perceptions occur may be in dispute. The instances he supplies are these: "A much-cited example is that of the stick in water. The stick is, in reality, straight, and remains so when it is partially immersed in water.... Another familiar example is that of the distorting effect of colored glass" (61). What argument does Foster supply for premise 2d? There is an argument, requiring the entire second paragraph of page 46. This argument, suitably elaborated, runs as follows. Notice how this subargument requires a repetition of 2a at the outset.

- 2d.1. An object that could be an object of attempted perception has a determinate set of "real" qualities that are not affected or altered by perception.
- 2d.2. There are known cases of nonveridical perception.
- 2d.3. In a case known to be a nonveridical perception, there is (a) some quality Q of that perception's qualitative content C that is (b) known to not also be a member of the set R of real relevant qualities of the object.
- 2d.4. The set R of real relevant qualities of the object exhaust the concrete external situation for a perception.
- 2d.5. The PSDR theory of perception can, for any case of perception, only use R to account for C.

- 2d.6. In a case of known nonveridical perception, the PSDR theory of perception must appeal to something else in addition to R to account for Q's presence in C (derived from 2d.3, 2d.4, and 2d.5)
- 2d. Therefore, only if a perception is a veridical perception can its qualitative content originate solely in the concrete external situation.

A small number of intriguing tacit premises in Foster's arguments have been exposed, which, even more importantly, contradict his explicit premises. The DCR theorist is most interested in 2a, 2d.3, and 2d.4, which now need new labels:

Real Qualities (RQ). An object that could be an object of attempted perception has a determinate set of "real" qualities that are not affected or altered by perception.

Nonveridicality (NV). In a case known to be a nonveridical perception, there is (a) some quality Q of that perception's qualitative content C that is (b) known to not also be a member of the set R of real relevant qualities of the object.

Object=Situation (OS). The set R of real relevant qualities of the object exhaust the concrete external situation for a perception.

The OS premise does seem to be a legitimate point for Foster to use, since his definition of PSDR would seem to require that the PSDR theorist agree to OS. A direct contextual realist cannot be as accommodating to OS, for reasons that will emerge later.

What stands out at this stage of the examination of Foster's arguments is that NV apparently contradicts premise 6 of the overall argument that was discussed first:

No Veridical Perception (NVP). To the best of our knowledge, every case of perception is a case of non-veridical perception.

If NVP is true, and if all knowledge originates in perception, then we can infer the following:

Ignorance of Real Qualities (IRQ). To the best of our knowledge, we do not know the real relevant qualities of any object of attempted perception.

NV, on the other hand, requires that we have the ability to know whether some quality of a perception's content is also a member of the set of real relevant qualities of an object. How could we possess this ability? Only if we had knowledge of the set of real relevant qualities of an object, of course. The validity of NV requires this further premise:

Knowledge of Real Qualities (KRQ). In a case known to be a non-veridical perception, the set R of real relevant qualities of the object are known.

Because IRQ and KRQ are contradictory, NV requires precisely what NVP denies, that we can know some object's real relevant qualities. So long as all knowledge originates in perception (an assumption that Foster does not appear to deny), NV and NVP cannot both be true. Therefore, Foster's argument is internally inconsistent and self-destructs.

Direct Contextual Realism

The best motivation for carefully examining direct contextual realism arises from considering the reasons why Foster's argument requires contradictory premises. Foster temporarily grants that we know some cases in which the perceived qualities vary from the object's real relevant qualities, and therefore he temporarily grants that in such cases, we can know at least some of that object's real qualities. After all, if we could never know any of an object's real qualities, we could hardly be in a position to say whether any attempted perception of it is veridical or nonveridical. The whole enterprise of declaring some perceptions to be nonveridical would seem to only make sense if we actually do declare some perceptions to be veridical. Foster's argument needs to take advantage of our established practice of making perceptual judgments. But either we really do succeed in making veridical perceptual judgments, or we never do. Foster's argument requires that both actually be the case.

Is the contradiction in Foster's argument a victory for PSDR? Recall that according to PSDR, in every case of perception its qualitative content originates solely in the concrete external situation. While the PSDR theorist would happily reject NVP and hold that there are cases of veridical direct knowledge, should PSDR reject NV and also RQ as well? The rejection of NV would come at a steep skeptical price. How could PSDR maintain NV and also account for our ability to distinguish between more and less veridical direct perceptions? In a nutshell, how can PSDR explain how we can know when a direct perception is veridical and when it is not?

PSDR as defined lacks the resources to explain our ability to know when direct perceptions are veridical. If in every case of perception its qualitative content originates solely in the concrete external situation (i.e., in the object, by OS), then every perceived quality is grounded in the object, and its legitimacy must therefore be acknowledged. If all perceptions of an object are truly of the object's qualities, then the possibility for having nonveridical perception seems small indeed. This point was no doubt an inspiration for Foster's line of attack against presentationalism. But if PSDR is inadequate, and if the collapse of Foster's argument prevents a confident move towards internalism, what other option can there be? Is there another position besides the extreme views of (1) every perception

is a direct knowing of its object, and (2) no perception is a direct knowing of its object, but rather a knowing of something else?

An exploration of the direct realist's options at this stage should involve pragmatically retaining NV instead of immediately accepting the skepticism of NVP without good reason. If a theory of perception retains NV, that requires an acceptance of the conceptual apparatus involved: The qualities of a perception's content C and a set R of real relevant qualities of the object against which the qualities of C may be compared. Furthermore, NV requires that both C and R be available to the perceiver in actual cases of perception, so that the perceiver may perform the act of comparison and pass judgment on whether a perception is veridical or not. Such judgment is hardly infallible or perfect all the time for all people; NV only commits the direct realist to explaining our actual (imperfect) capacities for deciding some cases of veridical/nonveridical perception where we succeed in doing so.

One immediate consequence for a direct realist theory that accepts NV is the following:

Lone Perception (LP). A perceiver cannot undertake a determination whether a perception is veridical or nonveridical by examining only the qualities of that perception's content. In short, lone perceptions cannot be knowings.

LP is a rejection of the perceptual theory of the given, the supposed empirical foundation for certain knowledge, which pragmatists have persistently opposed. There is no such thing as knowledge by acquaintance, if by acquaintance is meant "known at first sight." Perception must at least require a "second sight" if the comparison grounding NV can be undertaken. Many empiricists have decided that LP must be true if all knowledge begins with the senses. However, an empiricist may find the ground of knowledge in sensory experiences either individually (a lone perception is a knowing) or collectively (perceptions when compared can generate knowings). Direct realism is a type of empiricism and its denial of LP would thus be an endorsement of collective perception (CP). But that is not all that NV requires. No multiplicity of perceptions can together generate knowledge, since that multiplicity still lacks some standard of comparison such as the set R of real qualities. The only realization forthcoming from an examination of a series of perceptions is the extent to which they may agree or differ from each other in various respects. Empiricists should at long last accept the lesson from LP's failure: They should firmly repudiate knowledge by acquaintance and sense-data, and not expect all perceptions to be involved in knowings. Many, if not most, of our perceptions are either never attentively noticed, noted without making any comparisons, or involved in comparisons that catch our attention but never result in knowings. Put another way, most of our sensory experiences, taken individually or collectively, are neither veridical nor nonveridical. Perceptual

knowledge does occur, but it is the exception rather than the norm. What is the additional ingredient that permits a collection of perceptions to generate knowings? As numerous empiricists have argued, the perceiver must already have a conception of the potential object of veridical/nonveridical perception that involves, among other things, some definite set of qualities relevant to the mode of perception. This is also true in the generalized case of a second-person determination of whether someone's perception is veridical. A psychologist's determination of whether a person's perception is veridical must depend in part on that psychologist's conception of the object of attempted perception.

Conceived Object (CO). To judge whether a perceiver's perception of an object is veridical, a perceiver (or another person) must have a conception of the object of veridical/nonveridical perception that involves, among other things, some definite set of qualities relevantly displayed by the object.

The conception of an object's qualities may have either an empirical basis or a nonempirical basis. What distinguishes CO from RQ is not its basis, but rather CO's lack of the adjective "real" (since metaphysical connotations should not prejudice the inquiry) and the absence of the condition that the object's definite set of qualities must not be affected or altered by perception (since that is a separate question). Again, CO is not a commitment to the notion that we must have such a definite conception for any and all objects of perception. Many things are perceived in a nonknowing manner (which is not the same as perceiving them in a nonveridical manner) where no such definite conception is applied. For example, it is quite pointless to suddenly gaze up at a cloud and then ponder whether one is perceiving the cloud veridically or nonveridically. In the absence of some expectation of that cloud's definite features, one simply perceives the cloud in a nonknowing fashion.

If the term "phenomenal appearance" had not long ago been appropriated by the modern epistemologies of representationalism and subjectivism, we could still innocently speak of perceiving a cloud phenomenally as opposed to perceiving it veridically/nonveridically. To perceive an object in a nonknowing way is simply to have a nonknowing experience of the object instead of having an experience of an object as known or not known. Pragmatism requires this three-fold distinction, which better locates the proper role for conception in the process of perception.

Perceptual Knowledge (PK). Most perceptions are not instances of knowledge, but when a perception is an instance of knowledge, its status as knowledge also depends on the perceiver's conceptual attitude towards the object.

Of course it is quite possible that someone could have a definite conception of some of the cloud's relevant qualities, anticipate what would be seen (for exam-

ple), and compare what is actually seen with this definite conception. Expert tornado chasers, for example, can know storm clouds. But no direct realist should unreasonably demand that all perception fits this schema. Therefore, for all cases of nonknowing experience, the direct realist appears to be quite immune from the arguments raised by Foster. There is no good reason to deny that in a case of nonknowing experience, that experience is not a perception of a part of an object. Cases of knowing experience do require more examination to ensure that direct contextual realism is fully insulated from Foster's line of argument.

NV, CP, CO, LP, and PK should be part of the foundations for direct realism in general and direct contextual realism in particular. DCR holds that perception is a natural process of experience that contains a portion of the perceived object within that process. While the precise metaphysical understanding of DCR's contextualism will be deferred for now, its antipathy to RQ is contextual in the sense that DCR abandons RQ's contested notion of "real" perception-independent qualities. Therefore, DCR specifically endorses an alternative to RQ:

Veridical Qualities (VQ). An object that could be an object of attempted veridical perception has a determinate set of relevant qualities.

Can this suitably weakened epistemological principle be used to get DCR in trouble? Consider the following argument against direct contextual realism, which proceeds from VQ. Let O be an object that could be the target of an attempted veridical perception.

1. An object O that could be an object of attempted veridical perception has a determinate set R of relevant qualities (VQ).
2. If a perceiver's attempt to perceive O results in perception containing no qualities that are in R, then (by NV) that perception is nonveridical.
3. A perception that fails to perceive an object veridically fails to perceive any part of the object.
4. If an attempted perception fails to perceive any part of the object, then the object is not within the perceiver's experience.
5. Therefore, DCR realism is false, since in a case of nonveridical perception no part of the object is within experience (derived from 3 and 4).

The force of this argument could be evaded if direct contextual realism were to simply define "perception" as "veridical perception," but this would hardly be helpful for the philosophical enterprise of understanding perception in all of its complexity. The DCR theorist should instead challenge premise 3, which is closely similar in spirit to premise 2d from Foster's argument above. Both take their plausibility from the root idea that if one of a perception's qualities is not among the object's determinate relevant qualities, then to that extent the perception cannot be of the object but is of something else. If none of a perception's

qualities are among the object's determinate relevant qualities, then that perception is entirely of something other than the object. As we have seen, PSDR may well be forced into accepting this root idea. But why should direct contextual realism be forced as well? DCR's allegiance to the notion of nonknowing experience already means that even if a perception is a nonknowing experience, that perception can still be of an object's part and not of something else entirely. DCR's approach to nonveridical experience should likewise take the stand that such a perception can still be of a perceived object and not something else. This approach in essence seeks some middle ground between the all-or-nothing epistemological stances that either a perception of an object is completely accurate or else that perception cannot really be of that object at all. This middle ground would provide for the possibility of partially accurate perception in two senses: First, that some qualities of a perception perfectly match the object's determinate qualities while others do not, and second, that the qualities of a perception, while not perfectly matching the object's determinate qualities, do approximate those qualities to some degree.

But can DCR so easily reject premise 3? Consider the following argument for this premise, which proceeds from OS. Again, let O be an object that could be the target of an attempted veridical perception.

- 3a. The set R of real relevant qualities of object O exhaust the concrete external situation for a perception (OS).
- 3b. If a perception fails to perceive an object veridically in all relevant respects, then (by NV) that perception does not contain among its qualities any of R.
- 3c. If a perception fails to perceive an object veridically in all relevant respects, then that perception is not of the concrete external situation (derived from 3a and 3b).
- 3d. If a perception is not of the concrete external situation, then that perception fails to perceive any part of an object.
- 3. Therefore, a perception that fails to perceive an object veridically fails to perceive any part of that object (derived from 3c and 3d).

DCR should, like any direct realism, accept the spirit of premise 3d (even if quibbling over its precise wording could be instructive). There is an opportunity, though, to pursue DCR's protest against the excessive privileging of "real" qualities by rejecting 3a (OS). Why should OS be accepted? It is curious that Foster makes a slide in phrasing, perhaps unconsciously, from first describing the aim of perception broadly as the "concrete external situation" (60), then as "the external item or situation" (61), and finally as "the item's actual character" (64). Be that as it may, Foster's argument clearly requires OS even though he does not justify it; direct realism just as clearly should reject it, as DCR does. But what

exactly would an alternative to OS look like? What else can a direct perception aim at, if not the actually existing qualities of the perception's intended object?

There are many possible ways of pursuing an alternative to OS. The inspiration underlying OS is, I think, that direct perception can only aim at what actually exists in the world, regardless of the degree to which any perception succeeds. Other nondirect theories of perception can add mediating "mental" factors, but Foster takes it that any such mediating factors must be extraneous to objective reality. Therefore, the rejection of OS is an opportunity to raise the metaphysical question, which Foster ignores, of what precisely exists in the world to be perceived. The DCR theorist should pursue an alternative to OS that reinforces DCR's commitments to the reality of nonknowing experience and to the idea that objects may have additional qualities in addition to those specified for the purpose of determining veridical perception. One of the best ways to provide reinforcement is to ground DCR on a type of naturalism that does not reduce the situation of perception to just those qualities or properties (hereafter used synonymously) possessed by individual objects which are deemed suitable for knowledge.

Consider an expansive way of understanding natural properties as an alternative to OS: contextual naturalism.

Contextual Naturalism (CN). An object's properties exist dependently on some or all of the properties of other objects in the environment that are interacting with that object.

CN is incompatible with conceiving any of an object's properties as intrinsic or essential properties whose existence is not dependent on or relative to any property of anything else. The relationship between CN and DCR is such that the perceiver must be one of the interacting natural objects upon which a perceived object's property P depends, and therefore the "concrete external situation" perceived consists of the entire natural environment sustaining P.

According to CN, any perceivable property of an object is dependent on at least one other property of an interacting second object (and likely a third, fourth, etc.). This dependent interaction is what permits the existence of perspectives upon objects external to the perceiver. Indeed, we learn how to distinguish genuinely external objects in experience from internally-generated phenomena by attending to whether or not the object can be viewed from a variety of perspectives. The epistemological arguments deployed by Russell, Ayer, and Foster crucially depend on the ability of perspectives to provide varying and sometimes conflicting qualities of an external object and not of anything else, so that the very question of the "correct" perspective on an object could even arise. But only their a priori privileging of some set of intrinsic fixed properties, which by definition cannot be perceived by varying perceptions, raises difficulties with DCR's

position that all perspectives on an object are still perceptions of the object and not perceptions of something else. DCR certainly permits the pragmatic privileging of some definite set of properties for the purpose of establishing a convention of judging a perception's degree of veridicality. But this is an epistemological privileging that occurs for definite practical needs, and it should not be grounded on a corresponding metaphysical privileging of those useful properties.

Instead of pursuing further the significant issue of perspectives, another useful illustration of direct contextual realism's value may be drawn by considering the nature of color. Direct contextual realism radically transforms the primary-secondary quality distinction. Are colors real, and if so, *where* are they real?

Direct Contextual Realism's Treatment of Color

The efforts to locate colors either externally in the enviroing world or internally within the perceiver both suffer from grave difficulties. Body-mind dualism of the traditional sort could point to the absence of color in science's catalog of matter's fundamental properties in order to support its placement of colors in the nonmaterial mind. Naturalists relying on science could not so easily locate colors internally, since the physical perceiver could not really possess color properties any more than the physical environment. Among naturalists, three basic options emerged in the twentieth century: Colors do not exist and so are never truly seen (eliminativism), or colors are properties reducible by physicalist explanations to basic properties (reductionism), or colors are a real yet nonreducible property of the observer alone (subjectivism or "double-aspect" theory). The last option leads inevitably toward some sort of property dualism, which to most naturalists is the option of last resort, while eliminativism has failed so far to be widely persuasive. Reductionism seems least problematic, and so it has been pursued both internally and externally, as naturalists seek scientifically respectable properties in the environment or the perceiver to serve as the ground for explaining color.

This debate between "objective" and "subjective" naturalism has dominated color theory for several decades. No clear winner has emerged, which is likely due to the nature of the debate. Typically, disputants take for granted that the failure of one kind of naturalism is sufficient to establish the other. In this atmosphere, raising problems for the other side garners greater rewards than the benefits from trying to establish plausibility for one's own side. Only stalemate has resulted, as Evan Thompson has recounted.⁴ The failures of both sides to adequately account for perceived color suggest that the debate's common premise should be abandoned, and there are signs that this is already beginning to occur in psychology and neurophysiology.

From the perspective of CN, the objective-subjective debate is grounded on the dubious assumption, aligned with reductionism, that color's reality must either be in the perceived world or within the perceiver. Contextualism's alternative would treat color as a property of the entire perceiving situation. For example, for color produced by reflectance, DCR would locate color in the ambient light/reflectant object/sensitive perceiver system of naturally interacting objects. By refusing to locate color in one of these three system components, DCR cannot please either objective or subjective naturalists. Objective naturalists find this relational and dispositional account of color to be too anthropocentric and divergent from science's aim to describe nature as it exists independently of human experience. However, the objective naturalist's reliance on devices such as the spectrometer to detect and measure light frequencies only replaces one reactive body (the human being) with another (the device), and so science remains a method for ascertaining the relational properties of color. Subjective naturalists approve of the dependence of color on the perceiver, yet find additional dependence on external conditions unnecessary. However, a human being only perceives color under specifiable sets of enviroining conditions, and so colors are hardly the free creation of the isolated human body.⁵ Colors are neither in the internal mind nor in the external world; when we perceive colors, we are directly seeing what the enviroining world (in which we are embedded) is like. CN directly leads towards a functional and pragmatic transformation of mind-body dualism, since nothing is intrinsically mental or physical.

Direct contextual realism can accommodate the distinction between primary and secondary properties while preventing its inflation into an ontological dichotomy. DCR should make a contextual distinction between scientifically measurable properties arising in the transaction between environment and measuring device and humanly perceivable properties arising in the transaction between environment and perceiver. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, this functional treatment of the primary-secondary property distinction permits a satisfactory reply to another attack on direct realism, which argues that directly perceiving colors is incompatible with the scientific knowledge of nature. As shown above, CN and DCR's approach to color is quite compatible with, and actually supported by, the current direction of color science. Pragmatists in particular should explore DCR for its service as a bridge with phenomenology and for its capacity to inspire resolutions of other long-standing problems in philosophy of mind. Direct contextual realism is a robust yet unjustly neglected theory of perception. Its ability to withstand powerful objections, and its alignment with pragmatism, deserves closer examination.

Notes

1. Detailed discussions of direct realism's troubles appear throughout Howard Robinson, *Perception* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

2. Direct contextual realists have been few and far between; the most thorough exposition remains Lewis E. Hahn's *A Contextualist Theory of Perception* (Berkeley: University of California

Press, 1942). Hahn built upon foundations laid by John Dewey's naturalistic empiricism and related empiricisms. Other direct realisms congenial to the contextualist version defended here have been grounded on a variety of phenomenological approaches to perception, which unfortunately cannot be discussed for lack of space.

3. John Foster, *The Nature of Perception* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

4. The most thorough discussion of the seemingly insurmountable problems for both subjectivism and objectivism is by Evan Thompson, *Colour Vision* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995). Thompson's rejection of both subjective and objective naturalisms in favor of a contextual and "ecological" approach agreeing with direct contextual realism is very encouraging. See, among the numerous writings defending objectivism, Peter W. Ross, "The Location Problem for Color Subjectivism," *Consciousness and Cognition* 10 (2001): 42–58, and following commentary. On the other side in favor of subjective or anthropomorphic color, see C. L. Hardin, "Reinverting the Spectrum," in Alex Byrne and David Hilbert, eds., *Readings on Color*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 289–302.

5. J. Harvey's efforts to revive a compromise position, an anthropomorphic dispositionalist theory of color, adopts the contextual naturalism urged here. Harvey also helpfully establishes an empirical distinction between an object's "present color" and "official color"; the latter being a social convention of selected privileged properties for judging perceptual veridicality. See Harvey, "Colour-Dispositionalism and Its Recent Critics," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61 (July 2000): 137–55.

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