

Perceiving

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Psychologists, psychiatrists, neurologists, psychophysicists, anatomists, physiologists, etc., are the experts usually consulted on the remarkable phenomenon of perception. The information given is, most of the time, on the observed perceptions of their test persons, pupils, patients, and test animals, but hardly ever on how they themselves perceive the perceptions of their test persons, pupils, patients, and test animals. The problem of the perception of perception is obviously not that of psychologists, psychiatrists, neurologists, psychophysicists, anatomists, physiologists, etc., but rather one of epistemologists. They were the ones who first pointed to the fun one could have with the logic somersaults that had been declared naughty and indecent by the great wise men of 80 years ago like Bertrand Russel and Alfred North Whitehead. It is the somersaults of the "concepts of the second order", the concepts that can be applied to themselves: learning of learning, awareness of awareness, understanding of understanding, etc.

There was ample reason for avoiding such self-referentialities, as they lead to inconvenient paradoxes. Think of the unpleasant person who says, "I am a liar". If we believe him, he has lied; if we believe that he has lied, he has said the truth, ... and so on and so on. No one wants to get involved with that sort of thing. And hardly anyone wants to speak about language (there we are again, language can speak about itself), one might speak about grammar, that is about how one ought to speak, but not about what one can speak (or not speak).

Now, what about perception? Since perception is a function of the brain, we need a theory of brain-function. In order to write this theory, we need a brain; which is to say, such a theory must write itself, the writer of that theory must stand up for himself/ herself: the moralizing "You shall..." becomes the ethical "I shall...".