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Is seeing judging? Radical contextualism and the problem of perception

Abstract:

There are radically divergent understandings of representation at play in philosophy and cognitive science and they make one approach in very different ways the question whether seeing is judging. Suffice it to consider that it is quite frequent, and basically non polemical, within cognitive science, to speak of perceivers's subpersonal states, as well as of perceptual experiences, as *representations*, whereas from a philosophical viewpoint the question remains open as to whether such subpersonal states and experiences do indeed *represent* things as being a certain way, namely veridically or non-veridically. Many philosophers are more than happy to simply pick up from cognitive science the use of the term 'representations'. This talk will center on two recent debates in the philosophy of perception which I hope will help bring forth some hidden questions the nature of representation poses. The first was a debate over perceptual psychology and disjunctivism and took place around 2005-2011 between a representationalist (Tyler Burge) and a disjunctivist (John McDowell). It concerns mostly what I will call Question 1: should one say of a perceivers's subpersonal states that they are *representations*? A reference to D. Dennett's proposal of a personal/subpersonal distinction will be introduced in this context. The second debate takes place between two disjunctivists (John McDowell and Charles Travis) and concerns the 'Myth of the Given'. It concerns mostly what I will call Question 2: should one say of perceivers' *perceptual experiences*, as opposed to his (or her) judgements, that they *represent things as being a certain way*? Both debates will help me bring forth questions regarding the nature of representation which I believe matter for understanding what radical contextualism's bearing on the problem of perception might be.