Problems With An Adverbial Theory

by

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The characterization of pure perceptual statements I am considering here is one is one which I once held. It is close to the adverbial theory presented by Chisholm, but it is possible that with some sort of sophistication Chisholm can evade problems insurmountable to my own view, as my own view may involve something dispensable to Chisholm. I am not familiar with the literature on the subject, and if such a sophisticated version of the adverbial theory exists I would appreciate having it brought to my attention. The following criticism need only be understood to apply to my own view, although although it was suggested to me from a number of sources.

The view I held was that all pure perceptual statements can be cast in the subject predicate form F(a). Thus 'I am appeared to redly' would in this view be cast in the form ' 'redly(I)'. H ere 'redly' may be taken as an abbreviation for 'being appeared to redly'. The abbreviation is a good one because, upon my view, 'being appeared to redly' is a simple predicate and the component phrase 'being appeared to' occurs in all such simple predicates. Hence, since 'redly' alone determines the simple predicate intended, and it displays the simplicity of the predicate, 'redly' should be used as the predicate itself. Of course, 'redly(I)' can always be expressed as 'I am appeared to redly.'

In the above example I have used 'redly' as a simple predicate. However, I have not committed myself to the view that 'redly' is indeed a simple predicate. The intent of the above example

is to make clear the following definition of 'F(x)', where 'F(a)' is any pure perceptual statement. 'F(a)' is defined as 'a is appeared to F'. Now, this is a consise notation which displays the logical form of the statement. The next task is to examine what simple predicates there, in fact, are.

Suppose that 'redly,' 'bluely,' 'roundly,' and 'squarely' are simple predicates, and suppose I have a pure perception of a red square and a blue circle. How is this perception expressed in a statement? Consider 'redly(I)&squarely(I) & bluely(I) & roundly(I).' This statement is an inadequate representation of the perception, as the statement would also be true if I had a pure perception of a red circle and a blue square. It is impossible, with only the predicates 'redly' 'roundly,' 'bluely,' and 'squarely,' to distinguish in a statement having a perception of a red square and a blue circle from having a perception of a blue square and a red circle. The only course available is to introduce more predicates.

Suppose the predicates 'red-roundly,' 'red-squarely,' 'blue-roundly,' and 'blue-squarely' are introduced. The distinction impossible above is now possible, but another problem arises. Suppose I have a perception of a red square to the right of a blue circle. What pure perceptual statement will correspond to this perception? Consider 'red-squarely(I) & blue-roundly(I).' This statement is an inadequate representation of the perception, as the statement would also be true if I had a perception of a blue circle to the right of a red square. Again, the only course available is to introduce more predicates. This process of adding new predicates will always be necessary as

long as there are any distinctions in the perception which are not stated in some predicate. Judging from my own perceptual experience, there is such a unity in perception that the only way all distinctions could be so made would be to have a predicate for every poss ible state of perception as a whole. Such predicates I will call absolute predicates. Of course, no two absolute predicates could be true of the same subject at one time.

There is a difficulty in the above account of pure perceptual statements. If all self-evident truths are either logical or perceptual, then how is 'red-squarely(I) only if redly(I) & squarely(I)' to be handled? The truth of this statement is just as evident as the truths of logic and perception. Superficially I can see three possible approaches to this problem. They are:

1) The statement 'red-squarely(I)' needs analysis. Its analysis will be a conjunction of 'redly(I),''squarely(I),' and 'F(I).' 'F(I)' is still to be determined.

2) The statement is true in virtue of internal relations between the meanings of the predicates, and we are directly aware of this.

3) Get rid of all predicates except ablolute ones.

Approach (1) makes the truth 'red squarely(I) only if redly(I) & squarely(I)' fall into the familiar category of logical truth, by defining 'red-squarely(I)' in a certain way. Then however another problem will arise. 'Red-squarely(I)' is no longer a pure perceptual statement, but is a conjunction of them. The conjunction involves an element 'F(I)' which is undetermined. If 'F(I) only if redly(I) & squarely(I)' is true, then the problem which prompted this definition will not be solved. I

solved. If 'redly(I),' 'squarely(I),' and 'F(I)' are independent, then this problem will not arise. If all cases of similar truths about perception can be handled in this manner, then perception can be completely described by independent statements. I have no proof that this is impossible, but I also have no idea of how perception can be so described. Anyone maintaining that perception can be so described should be able to give some account of how this is possible.

Approach (2) says that there is an internal relation between the meaning of 'redly(I) & squarely(I)' and the meaning of 'red-squarely(I)'. It also says that I am directly aware of this relation. This direct awareness must be a peculiar perception of some sort. Thus there is a pure perceptual statement 'relation-between- p-and-q-ly(I),' where p and q are the above mentioned statements. Because I have this peculiar perception I know 'red-squarely(I) only if redly(I) & squarely(I)'. If awareness of this relation gives knowledge of the problematical perceptual truth, then the following truth must hold: 'relation-between-p-and-q-ly(I) only if (red-squarely(I) only if redly(I) & squarely(I))' How is this truth to be accounted for? It must be accounted for in the same way as it was used to account for the original perplexing truth about perception. But this account will generate another such truth. Thus an infinite number of perceptions of this peculiar nature are required if knowledge of the original truth about perception is possible. This is impossible, so account (2) fails.

Approach (3) attempts to remove the problem by getting rid of such predicates as 'redly' and 'squarely.' Only ablolute predicates are permitted. There are two problems with this

view. One is that it is difficult to understand how such predicates can be learned, in general. In cases where, for some reason a person has a very simple total perception, such as just seeing a field of red, it may be possible. However, usually perception as a whole is to diverse to be treated in this manner. The second problem with this view, and the more serious one, is that that there are still such self-evident truths as that no one subject could have two different ablolute predicates at one time. This truth is not a logical truth or a perceptual truth, so approach (3) fails.

This paper considers the consequences of a number of assumptions. One is that all self-evident statements are either logical statements or pure perceptual statements. A certain characterization of pure perceptual statements is also assumed. A problem then arises with a certain type of statements which are surely self-evident. Three approaches to this problem are examined and two discarded. The remaining appreach requires that all pure perceptual statements are independent. Such a characterization of pure perceptual statements appears impossible but this is not proven. No other approaches to the problem have occured to me, although some may exist.