

## Modes of Presentation

We can distinguish three different kinds of modes of presentation:

1. perceptual; 2. bodily sensory; 3. intellectual.

Perhaps the most familiar one is intellectual: according to Frege, these are the senses ('modes of presentations') expressed by sentences and words. Frege assumes that such modes of presentations are objective and mind-independent: they are the way we can come to think about the world or things in the world.

When one apprehends or thinks a thought one does not create it but only comes to stand in a certain relation, which is different from seeing a thing or having an idea, to what already existed beforehand. (G. Frege, 'The Thought', 1st footnote)

Just as Frege thinks of thinking a thought as an intellectual act of grasping something-to-be-grasped, we can think of perceiving as a sensory act of grasping something-to-be-grasped. This is the model Johnston uses. Individual experience becomes a kind of 'sensory grasping' of a qualitative, phenomenal reality out there.

*Exercise:* reflect on your current visual experience, and consider how it is perspectival: it centres on a point just behind your eyes. Now imagine stepping in and out of that point, e.g. by moving your head sideways back and forth. There are indefinitely many such points that are unoccupied by a head with eyes. Why not think that the world is visually presented to those points just as much?

This gives rise to an objectivism about phenomenal consciousness:

All the modes of presentation of each existing thing, be they intellectual or sensory modes, all the possible ways of thinking and sensing each such thing, come into being with the things themselves, whether or not there are any individual minds to sample these modes of presentation, i.e. to access them in individual mental acts. (2007, 235)

A so-called subjective mental act is, then, to be thought of as an act of accessing a mode of presentation of the items that the act thereby is about. (2007, 245)

Johnston refers to this totality of objective modes of presentation as 'Objective Mind'. Why should we think of this collection as a mind?

If we are indeed Samplers of Presence, then the representational theory of consciousness is exploiting a kind of *introjective error* (I borrow this idea from Mark Kalderon): we mistake an aspect of the objective world for an aspect of some kind of 'subjective experience', where the latter is a confused idea that arises from just this mistake.

## What are our mental lives?

If the phenomenal character of our perceptual, bodily sensory, and intellectual lives is wholly determined by objective modes of presentation (i.e. the appearances and qualities of the things in the world, including our bodies), then what is left of our own, individual mind?

Our hypothesis has it that our respective mental lives are just particular idiosyncratic histories of accessing modes of presentation. What we accessed were objects presenting in this or that way; our mental lives are parasitic on this ubiquitous fact of presentation. We are not Producers of Presence; that is, we are not beings whose psychological operations are the absolute preconditions of presence. Everything that fills our minds, the whole content of our minds, is the contribution of the objects. When we speak of consciousness, we are systematically getting hold of the wrong end of the stick, the basic reality is not the fact of consciousness, understood as the inner achievement of a mind. It is a fact of the continuous and multifaceted disclosure of objects, which certain evolved animals are able to access. (2007, 254)