Sensation and the Grammar of Life:
Anscombe's Procedure and her Purpose

Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman

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Analytic philosophy of perception of the last twenty or so years might reasonably be framed as a tug of war between two opposing theories - Representationalism (of various stripes) and Naïve Realism. A few dissenting voices come from the sidelines: that of the of the Sense Datum theorist (now usually empirically-informed), the adverbialist, and a number of pluralists calling 'halt'. The grammatical theorist, who had her heyday in Oxford in the 1950s, seems to have deserted the scene completely.

This chapter is about one 'grammatical theorist' whose absence from the side-lines is, we think, a great loss to contemporary debates. Despite writing two ground-breaking papers on sensation,[1] G. E. M. Anscombe is hardly ever reckoned to be a philosopher of perception at all. A cursory sample of any clutch of the most influential monographs in the philosophy of perception over the last forty years will show her barely referenced (of ten of those on our combined bookshelves – the reader is encouraged to check their own! - Anscombe is mentioned only twenty-one times; five references are in footnotes. Nine references appear in a single text: Howard Robinson's *Perception* (1994)). In the recent *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Perception* – all 907 pages of it – Anscombe is cited only twice, again, in footnotes.

The (lack of) influence of Anscombe's philosophy of perception stands in sharp contrast to her dominance in philosophy of action. Her masterpiece *Intention* has, at the time of writing, been cited over 5,000 times, and it is generally thought to provide the blueprint for the whole of that sub-discipline. But even when influential attempts have been made to understand perception as a kind of action, Anscombe's work has not been thought relevant. The broad consensus that perceiving is an activity has led few current philosophers of perception see the specifics of action theory as relevant to a philosophy of perception, at least in published work. Relatedly, until recently, questions proper to an ethics of perception have been rarely articulated - and if they have, they have been framed by moral theorists or philosophers of emotion anxious to pull the domain of value into the nexus of the perceivable, and not much by self-identified philosophers of perception.

Here we focus only on making available some of the basic conceptual tools of Anscombe's *grammatical* approach and on showing in what respects her *procedure* offers an alternative to the *ontological* approaches that still dominate the contemporary debate. Participants in the 'tug of war' are unified in their supposition that a theory of perception should tell us the fundamental nature of perceptual experience and, as part of that, *what it is* that we perceive. It is this supposition that Anscombe rejects and, as we explain, in doing so she reveals an ethical *purpose* for philosophy of perception.

We begin by setting out a fragment of the theoretical background needed to understand Anscombe's method in philosophy of perception before contrasting her grammatical procedure

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[1] Hereafter 'The Intentionality of Sensation: A Grammatical Feature' will be referred to as IS. See also 'The Subjectivity of Sensation' (1976/1981a).

with the ontological procedure of her interlocutor. In later sections, we identify three mistakes that exegetes have made in approaching Anscombe's philosophy of perception. These stem from failure to recognise the meaning and implications of Anscombe's claim that the intentionality of sensation is, as she dubs it, 'a grammatical feature'.

Needless to say, the successful introduction of a new paradigm into philosophy of perception will require more space than a single chapter (see Fish, this volume). Readers should take this intervention as an encouragement to, and promise of, further work.

§1. The raging nerve extracted

Anscombe was animated by questions concerning a philosophy of perception from her earliest days as an undergraduate at Oxford in the late Thirties, long before she developed her interest in the philosophy of action. She attended H. H. Price's lectures on perception, finding them 'absolutely about the stuff' though she abhorred Price's conclusions ('I used to sit tearing my gown into little strips because I wanted to argue against so much that he said').[2] It is possible that such preoccupations made her peculiarly responsive to the force of Wittgenstein's philosophy when she encountered it later as post-doctoral fellow in Cambridge. She recalls:

> I always hated phenomenalism and felt trapped by it. I couldn't see my way out of it but I didn't believe it….the central nerve of it remained alive and raged achingly. It was only in Wittgenstein's classes in 1944 that I saw the nerve extracted.[3]

Those classes contained Wittgenstein's discussions of material that would come to be known as the 'private language argument' and which surfaces in those passages in the *Philosophical Investigations* that get us to see how our psychological verbs function.[4] Wittgenstein denies that to grasp the meaning of a psychological verb is to identify its referent – mental phenomena which, on empiricist model of concept acquisition, such terms might be thought to pick out. Rather it is to come to participate in forms of linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour. He called these forms or practices - which involve the interweaving of words and action into recognised patterns of human interaction - 'language-games' and he seeks to describe them.

In appealing to language games that involve psychological verbs and sensation words, Wittgenstein wants to get us to see that such words express concepts that have a different, more complex, character than that of a straightforward classificatory concept - a concept that picks out some class of things.[5] This complexity, Wittgenstein thinks, is revealed in, and reflected by, the structure of the practices in which those verbs have their home. Thus, in contrast to the mistaken empiricist impulse to classification (which Anscombe characterises as: 'I have got *this*, and I define "yellow" (say) as *this*'), participating in a linguistic practice involves far more than identifying an instance or token of a class or type. This is because it involves being acculturated – or trained, as Wittgenstein somewhat provocatively puts it – *to continue in a way that is characteristic of the practice*. It hence involves not only the use of words but forms of behaviour and interaction with others as well as with the natural and material environment. Since the intelligible use of a word is governed by the norms of such materially realised, temporally extended practices, sense or meaning cannot be privately established, even where the referents of terms used on occasion may be private, as when one is in pain.

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[2] Anscombe 1981, viii.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] For pertinent discussion of what 'getting us to see' amounts to, see McGinn (1997), esp. p. 116.
[5] For helpful discussion, see Frey and Frey 2017, p.217-219

Anscombe's contention is that a central task for philosophers of perception is to undertake a 'grammatical investigation'. That is, to describe the structure of the concept of *sensation*, a structure that is revealed in the complex patterns of speech and action that manifest an individual's grasp of the meaning of words like 'see', 'colour', 'appearance'. If they were to turn their attention to that task, two things would follow. First, they would discover that the ontological debate that characterises the tug of war is ultimately misguided. Second, as we later explain, if briefly, the ethical dimension of our perceptual lives would come into view.

§2. What is an object of sight?

To see what such a grammatical investigation might look like, we now turn Anscombe's philosophy of perception proper. Anscombe's central claim is one that will have a familiar ring to philosophers of perception: verbs of sensation take intentional objects. Like many theorists, she sees this claim as key to unlocking the relationship between the subjectivity of sensation and perception's epistemic role.

The category of 'intentional object' reflects Anscombe's intellectual debt to the Thomist tradition,[6] and it is this phrase, and this heritage, that has seemed to some to place her philosophy of perception in the tradition associated with her fellow Thomist, Franz Brentano. But while Aquinas (and Aristotle) is indeed an unmistakable and important influence, her deployment of Wittgenstein's method transforms Brentano's notion of an *intentional object* into a grammatical category – a transformation this section of the chapter explains.[7] The subtitle of her paper, 'The Intentionality of Sensation' is 'A Grammatical Feature': as we shall see, the switch from an ontological to a grammatical understanding of intentionality takes her away from any position which could be regarded as a forerunner of contemporary intentionalism.

Anscombe's grammatical procedure is evident from the outset: she sets about illuminating the status of an 'object of sight' not by reflecting on perceptual experience, but by examining the way a teacher might elicit understanding of the grammatical concept of a direct object in her pupils. She imagines the teacher proceeding as follows. The teacher gives her pupils a paradigm sentence: 'John sent Mary a book'. Then she asks them: 'What does the sentence say John sent Mary?' On the getting the pupils' response 'a book', the teacher replies: '*That* is the direct object'.[8] We might imagine the teacher giving a wide range of sample sentences and asking the same question in respect of each. The pupils 'catch on' to the grammatical concept of a direct object when they know *how to go on* – they return the correct answer in novel cases and are able to construct cases of their own.

The understanding that the teacher elicits is, in an important sense, already manifest in the pupils' ordinary linguistic practice. That the pupils are competent language-users, able to construct and employ sentences containing transitive verbs, is a pre-condition for her teaching. In that sense, the pupils already *operate with* the grammatical category, 'direct object'. The teacher's lesson makes explicit this understanding by introducing the *term*, 'direct object', and teaching them its use. Once they have mastered the use of this term, they can employ it to talk about features of their linguistic competence.

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[6] For discussion of Anscombe's Thomism in the context of her philosophy of action, see Schwenkler 2019, pp.157-161

[7] See Poulvet 2008 and Geach 1957 for comparative discussions of Wittgenstein's and Aquinas' treatment of intentionality.

[8] See *IS*, pp. 6-9

We can see how different the character of the concept 'direct object' is from that of a classificatory concept (like 'book') by reflecting on the teachers' procedure. In her lesson, the teacher draws attention to the relevant grammatical category by posing questions that require the pupils to reflect on the parts and structure of a familiar sentence. 'What does the sentence say John sent Mary?'. The concept of a direct object is not, and could not, be ostensively taught: the teacher does not, that is, pick out things that form a class. One way to put this is to say that the word '*That*' functions differently in the teacher's response '*That* is the direct object' than it would in an ostensive demonstration '*That* is a book': only in the latter case is 'that' a referring expression. A pupil who raised the question, 'Which book?', would show that she had not understood this. This question lacks application because the response that gives the direct object – 'a book' – does not refer to a particular worldly book, but rather identifies a part of the sentence. But note too that although the term 'direct object' identifies a part of the sentence (viz. 'a book'), it does not refer to *the words* 'a book' either (another kind of thing that could be picked out with the ostensive use of '*That*'). As Anscombe notes, it is not the case that the sentence says that John gave Mary *a bit of language*!

In sum, direct objects are not things that we find in the world; rather, when we are talking about our talk about the world, we can pick out a certain structure or pattern in that talk by pointing out a particular way in which verbs are combined with other terms. It is here that the concept of a 'direct object' is to be found, and this is what Anscombe means by calling it a 'grammatical category'.[9]

Anscombe's profound challenge to both sets of participants in philosophy of perception's tug of war is the following: each treats the concept of an object of sight as if it were a classificatory category. But for Anscombe, an object of sight is the direct object of the verb 'to see'. As such, it too is a grammatical category. To get a sense of what she has in mind here we can imagine our teacher giving a lesson to teach her class the meaning of the phrase 'object of sight'.

> Teacher: *'Mary sees a book.' What does the sentence say Mary saw?*
> Pupil: *A book.*
> Teacher: *That is the object of sight.*

The understanding that the teacher elicits is, once again, already manifest in her pupils' ordinary linguistic practice; for example, to say what she sees and to ask another what they see. That the pupils are competent language-users, able to construct and employ sentences with the grammatical structure of 'Mary sees a book', is a pre-condition for her teaching. So, in this sense, the pupils already operate with the grammatical category, 'object of sight', before they are taught the use of that term. The teacher's lesson, if it is successful, gives them a grammatical term, 'object of sight', which enables them to talk about the linguistic mastery they already possess. They can now not only talk about what they see but talk about their talk about what they see.

Anscombe describes the use of 'object' as she means it here as the 'old' use, a use that nevertheless remains familiar in phrases such as 'object of desire'. The 'modern' use, conversely, picks out objects of the sort that might find in a person's pocket – worldly stuffs like pencils and keys. Anscombe's old use of 'object' is however grammatical – an object of sight is the direct object of the sensation verb 'to see'. Accordingly, the pupil who responds to the teacher's questioning by casting around looking for the worldly book that Mary saw – an object in the 'modern' sense – has not grasped the fact that 'object of sight' is a grammatical category. For Anscombe, both the Direct Realist and her historical opponent, the Sense Datum theorist make a mistake akin to that of such

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[9] Compare Frege on the concept 'horse'; for discussion see Frey and Frey 2017, p.221-223

a child. In learning that the sentence says that Mary saw something and forgetting that 'object of sight' is grammatical category, they ask instead after *what this something is* that Mary saw, or what it is that she *really* saw. That is, they ask, 'What did Mary see?', and treat the answer as returning an object in the modern sense: a worldly entity or an entity of some other kind. Anscombe notes that this is bound to lead to philosophical confusion in cases of error, illusion or hallucination, where *Mary's* answer to the question 'What do you see?' does not describe any *thing* in her vicinity.

§3. Anscombe's procedure

Suppose Anscombe were right in her claim that 'object of sight' is a grammatical, rather than a classificatory category. How should we then proceed in philosophy of perception? Above we emphasised that the teacher's procedure works only for a pupil whose linguistic competence already involves mastery of the verb 'to see'. If Anscombe is right, it is then *this very mastery* that is the proper subject matter for philosophers of perception, and the term 'object of sight' is one of the lexical tools that the philosopher will use in her description of that mastery. Armed with the term 'object of sight' the philosopher of perception can now proceed to describe this linguistic competence by asking what patterns the verb 'to see' imposes on its (grammatical) objects. One line of investigation will ask which putative 'x' in sentences of the form 'Mary sees x' or 'I see x' are intelligible (what are the possible objects of sight). Another will investigate whether, where some 'a' is an object of sight, linguistic competence commits us to accepting other objects, 'b', 'c', 'd'. For example, whether 'I see a rabbit' commits a speaker to, e.g. 'I see a mammal', 'I see a grey fluffy shape', or 'I see a living thing' (what are the relations between objects of sight).[10] The first line of investigations will draw the limits on what we see from within the linguistic practice; the second will reveal patterns of inference within the conception of sensation (its geometry).[11] In short: the task for the philosopher of perception is not to describe the character of what we see, but to describe the character of our descriptions of what we see. That is, it is to describe the character of 'objects of sight'.

Because the notion of linguistic competence includes more than mere use of words – as noted above we are speaking here of language-games and not mere sentential structure – this investigation into patterns of intelligibility and inference will need to study words *in use*, and will not be limited to the question of whether a sentence is grammatically well-formed or felicitous. Analogously, a study of the concept *length* would encompass not just a study of well-formed sentence-types containing the word 'length' and its cognates, but also of the practices of measuring, estimating, building, etc., into which the use of those sentences is interwoven. It might be of interest to such a study to discover, for example, that the question 'How long?' can be intelligibly asked of a corpse but not of a living human adult.[12]

To begin to see how such an investigation might proceed in relation to the verbs of perception, consider a non-perceptual transitive verb, 'to donate'. There are conditions on the intelligible use of that verb that go beyond the simple sentential structure: subject, verb, object, object (e.g. 'John donates food to the homeless'). For example: the subject must be sentient and capable of intentional action (a machine cannot donate its time to a cause, nor a germ its disease to a cat). To be a donor, one must also have an understanding of what is needed or wanted by those to whom one is donating. A monkey cannot donate its blood to medical science, nor a baby its rattle to a dog. This latter point brings into view constraints on intelligible objects of the verb 'to donate': a saucer of mud, a punch in the face or a toenail clipping cannot typically be donated – the verb's

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[10] Cf. Frey and Frey (2017)

[11] Compare, *Intention*. See Wiseman 2016, ch. 3 for a discussion of the form of philosophical enquiry in *Intention*.

[12] See Anscombe 1976/1981b, p. 117.

possible objects are limited to things wanted or needed. Here, further patterns and connections will come into view. These patterns and connections are part of what a person with linguistic competence knows – or part of what is encoded in the linguistic competence that is manifested in her participation in practices of giving and receiving. If I encounter you leaving vegetable peelings outside a fire station, your utterance 'I am donating food to the homeless', though well-formed, will suggest something awry.

In 'The Intentionality of Sensation: A Grammatical Feature', Anscombe makes a start on just this investigation. She observes that objects of the verb 'to see' display a pattern that is found elsewhere and which, in fact, is characteristic of a large class of psychological verbs. She draws our attention to this pattern by saying: the verb 'to see' is an intentional verb and takes an intentional object. Note again that 'object' here has its grammatical and not its ontological meaning, so, to emphasize, what is being said to be 'intentional' is not a class of things but a class of direct objects - here is a first move in a philosophical description of linguistic mastery, made by employing 'direct object' as a grammatical category. This is why Anscombe calls the intentionality of sensation 'a grammatical feature'.

The use of the word 'intentional' to describe this pattern is Anscombe's stipulation, but she chooses it because the pattern displayed by (grammatical) objects of sight is also found in descriptions of intentional action. This might at first seem astonishing, but a little reflection reveals the source of the shared form.

Anscombe notes things about descriptions of intentional actions:

1.A Not any true description of what you do describes it as the action you intend: only under certain of its descriptions will it be intentional ("Do you mean to be using that pen?" – "Why, what about this pen?" – "It's Smith's pen." – "Oh Lord, no!)

2.A The descriptions under which you intend what you do can be vague and indeterminate. (You mean to put the book down on the table all right, and you do so, but you do not mean to put it down anywhere in particular on the table).

3.A Descriptions under which you intend to do what you do may not come true, as when you make a slip of the tongue or pen. "You act, but your intended act does not happen".

These features are likewise broadly found in descriptions of what is seen (that is, are features of objects of sight):

1.P Not any true description of what you see, is a description under which you see what is seen. ("See that man in the red coat? He's the mayor" – "The mayor? I'd never have guessed!"

2.P The descriptions under which you see something may be vague and indeterminate. ("I see a vase of flowers" – "How many flowers?" – "Loads! More than 20")

3.P. Just as the action you intend to bring about may not occur, the object you see may not exist (the possible non-existence of the object is the analogue of the possible non-occurrence of the intended action). ("I see pink elephants!")

The following case illustrates the presence of these features in descriptions of action and perception (adapted from *IS*, pp 9-10).

A hunter is hunting in a forest. Peering into the wood he says 'I see a shadow moving in the trees!'. 'What is it?' asks his fellow hunter, 'What can you see?'. 'A stag!', the hunter replies. He takes aim, and shoots. But what he saw was, in fact, his father out for a stroll in the forest. He shoots his father. Later, in a law court he says, weeping, 'I saw *my father*'. His friend, called as witness, says, 'He aimed and shot intentionally, and he did shoot his father. But he didn't shoot his father intentionally – he never saw his father.'

It is true that the hunter saw his father, something he came to realise after the event and that he weepingly acknowledges in the law court. But while the description 'his father' was true of what he saw – what he saw was, in fact, his father – his first-person report 'I see a stag' is not untruthful. Indeed, it is the fact that he saw his father *under the false description* 'stag' that is explanatorily relevant: it explains why he took the shot.

The vignette contains multiple intelligible uses of the sensation verb 'to see'. Using the term 'object of sight', we can describe connections between these uses by describing relations between the *objects of sight*. Note, that these relations will not be relations between two distinct relata (like the relation between a table and a book), but rather logical or inferential relations between direct objects (like the relation between 'a gift' and 'a book' in 'John gave Mary a book'). Let us see how.

The object of sight in the initial statement 'He sees a shadow moving in the trees' is 'a shadow moving in the trees'. This object is both the *description under which* the hunter sees ('a shadow moving in the trees' is a description that he would give of what he sees) and a true description of something that is there in the situation and which might be seen by others (there is, indeed, a shadow moving in the trees). Anscombe calls the first kind of object (one that gives the *description under which* what is seen is seen) an *intentional object*, and it is with respect to these objects that the pattern found in *descriptions under which* what is done is done is replicated. In 'intentional object', 'object' is used in its *old*, grammatical, use. She calls the second kind of object (one that is a true description of something there to be seen) a *material object*. In 'material object', 'object' is used in its *modern*, ontological, use. So here, the intentional object, 'a shadow moving in the trees' is also a material object.

The hunter's tragic acknowledgement in the courthouse 'I saw my father' records what Anscombe calls a merely material use of the verb 'to see'. Here, the description 'my father' is not an intentional object – the hunter did not see the shadow under that description – but is nevertheless a true description of what the hunter saw. Anscombe points out that whenever the verb 'to see' is employed with a merely material use (as giving an 'object' in the modern sense), it is always legitimate to ask: 'What did you see *in that* you saw (e.g.) your father?'. For a merely material use of the verb 'to see' to be intelligible, there must be some answer to that question which gives an intentional object. (Note: the previous sentence is an example of the sort of description that will constitute a philosophy of perception, on Anscombe's view).

In contrast, the hunter's first-person report, 'I see a stag!', gives the description under which *he* saw his father, and so 'a stag' is an intentional object. The tragedy of the case is that this intentional object was merely intentional, though the hunter took it to be also material.

Anscombe's vignette illustrates the three features which should be recognisable to any seer. Not any true description of what you see is a description under which you see it (P1). Like descriptions of intentional action, description of what is seen essentially evoke the point of view of the agent of subject. While I may be able to give many true descriptions of what you, in fact, see, only some of those are descriptions under which *you* see what is seen. 'A man born in Liverpool', 'Your

father', 'A mammal weighing 80kg' may be true descriptions of what the hunter in fact sees (they are all descriptions that are true of his father), but none gives the description under which he sees that which is, in fact, his father. Whether or not there were stags to be shot in the vicinity, there was no stag at the place at which the hunter took a stag to be: just as the action you intend to bring about may not occur, the (intentional) object of sight you see may not exist (P3). A cautious or more experienced hunter may have responded differently to his friend's query. 'I'm not sure, there is a moving shadow in the trees – but I can't see more than that, perhaps there is something there'. The descriptions under which you see something may be vague and indeterminate (P2).

What Anscombe is concerned to reveal is that the question 'What do you see?' has its life in the language-game that is characteristic of the verb 'to see', and is answered by giving a *description* of what one sees (an intentional object), something the story also illustrates. In the normal case, however, the description will be true of something there to be seen, and so will be a material, as well as an intentional, object. This second claim, about what is normal, is also a contribution to a philosophical understanding of perception, being as it is one part of a description of the *mastery* that is its topic.

We can now state explicitly the mistake Anscombe diagnoses in the positions of her mid-century dialectical opponents, although, as we shall see, she characteristically concedes that both 'have a great deal of point' (*IS*, p.13). Both the Ordinary Language philosopher and the Sense-Datum Theorist, extract the question 'What do you see?' from the language-game *in which it has its home* (and which, for Anscombe, they should be seeking to describe), and treat it instead as a *classificatory* question that is to be answered by returning a type of entity.

One way of putting the observation that the Ordinary Language Philosopher and Sense-Datum Theorist take the question to be *ontological* (albeit while glossing over important differences between them even with respect this) is as follows: both fail to recognise that in its primary use an answer to the question 'What do you see?' gives an *intentional object*, a (grammatical) object of the verb 'to see' that has the features described in (1.P) – (3.P). Failure to recognise this – a failure which extends to the Ordinary Language Philosopher despite his superficial methodological closeness to the grammatical theorist - leads to a search for a kind of *thing*. Now a theorist's sensitivity to, and concern for, the three features Anscombe notes will determine which species of ontological theory he is drawn to. The sense-datum theorist takes very seriously (1.P) – (3.P), and so refuses to identify 'what is seen' with (what Anscombe calls) the material object. But without the grammatical category of an *intentional object* his only option is to reify intentional objects into descriptions of some other kind of *thing* – some thing that cannot but be there in the whole situation, whether or not that description matches anything that might be publicly seen. This is the role for sense data.

The Ordinary Language Philosopher by contrast ignores or seeks to explain away (1.P) – (3.P), preferring instead to advert directly to the worldly objects that perceivers, when genuinely perceiving, confront. And this is why, according to Anscombe, though such a philosopher will recognise material *uses* of the verb to see – indeed, the method of such a philosopher is chart such uses - he will not allow intelligible uses of 'see' that are *merely* intentional, or even those uses that are intended to be material but miss their mark. On this view, the hunters use of 'see' in 'I see a stag' is faulty. Concomitantly, such a theorist may well insist that the hunter saw his father, *tout court*; the testimony of the hunter's friend must be dismissed, as well as that of the hunter. We will see the difficulty for this position shortly. To close this section, we circle back to the thought that, if the exposition we have offered is broadly right, Anscombe should in no way be counted as a forerunner to contemporary representationalism.

Representationalism is an *ontological* theory of perception – it tells us that what is seen are represented properties, features, relations, perhaps under certain manners or modes of presentation, which may or may not be instantiated. That Anscombe supposes there is an intelligible use of the verb 'see' where the application is merely intentional – the use is not intended to give a material object of sight, an object that could in principle be available for others to see at a sensory context – implies nothing about what she takes the *nature* of hallucinatory (and concomitantly perceptual states) to be. She offers no positive ontology of perception; this is not what she is up to.

§4. Two ontological errors in brief

Anscombe's position is, undoubtedly, subtle and complex. The unfamiliarity of the grammatical register of Anscombe's philosophy of perception – contemporary philosophers without a background knowledge of Wittgenstein's later work will find her moves neither natural nor logical – has led to a number of interconnected exegetical errors. These errors have combined to prevent subsequent philosophers of perception from recognising the significance of her intervention. We gloss two errors here, picking up the third in §5 before closing.

The first error can be quickly stated. A failure to recognise that 'object of sight' is a grammatical, rather than ontological, category for Anscombe may prompt questions about the mode of existence and relations between intentional and material objects of sight, as well as about the identity conditions of the former. What are the identity conditions for intentional objects? What are the modes of existence of intentional and material objects? In what relations do material and intentional objects stand?

For Anscombe, the questions like 'When is object *a* the same as object *b*?' will be answered by a very different procedure depending on whether 'object' is used in its old or modern sense, and in some cases, attention to the linguistic practice that the philosopher of perception seeks to describe will show why the demand for an answer is misplaced.[13] Take the question 'What are the identity conditions for intentional objects?' There are, notes Anscombe, cases in which questions concerning the identity of an intentional object have 'some interest' – and note these questions are questions of *practical* and not *philosophical* interest to people engaged in language-games characteristic of our everyday commerce with the verbs of perception. Where the intentional object is also a material object, questions of the identity of the former are usually taken as questions of the identity of the latter: if you see your father (intentional object) and I see my boss (intentional object), the question of the identity of those objects reduces to the question of whether your father (material object) is my boss (material object). The question of the identity of intentional objects takes on a less prosaic form in areas of linguistic practice where, even in the presence of a shared material object, the reduction is ruled inappropriate. For example, if you and I are looking at

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[13] Johnson (2004) makes such a demand. He finds Anscombe's notion of intentional object 'perfectly harmless' – he sees that it does not turn direct objects into things. Yet he also says it is 'jejune' because it fails for him to meet what he takes to be a primary explanatory task for a philosophy of perception. He writes: 'Anscombe offers us no way of making sense of non-trivial claims of identity of intentional objects across [perceptual] reports.' It is not clear what non-trivial might mean in this context though it is plain that Johnston is looking for something more substantive than 'that is just how our language goes'. This suspicion is raised by the peculiar charge he raises against Anscombe. Johnston is taken by the familiar theoretical thought that hypothetical experiential transitions between hallucinatory and veridical states could be 'seamless'. This raises epistemic questions – how can I know if I am now hallucinating or now genuinely perceiving? But Johnston's problem is different. He wants to tell us in virtue of what it is that such transitions are seamless – what makes them so. Granted we may be apt to offer the same perceptual report with the same intended use in both cases, but, asks Johnston, what makes *that* so much as possible? This, he thinks, is what Anscombe's grammatical account cannot give us. And he is right. Anscombe's project is not ontological.

together at a painting that strikes me as naïve and gauche and you remark 'I see echoes of German Expressionism in this work', I might ask, shocked: are we seeing the same thing? Is your visual impression very different to mine? Are you are colour-blind, or wearing the wrong glasses, or not really looking? Or, to give another example, I might wonder on looking again at my lover after discovering his infidelity whether I any longer see the same face: his visage always struck me as innocently beautiful but now I see his shifty expression and his arrogant gaze. In cases where we both see a pink elephant (intentional object) when no pink elephant (material object) is there to be seen, our ordinary linguistic practice offers a number of procedures for deciding whether we see 'the same' (causal, phenomenological, counterfactual) but the question is ultimately left open by the practice.

A second way in which the failure to take on board the grammatical character of Anscombe's investigation reveals itself, is in a lack of sensitivity to the importance of the first-personal character of perceptual reports in Anscombe's methodology. This reveals itself, for example, where Anscombe's position is reconstructed using only the third person pronoun, as is relatively common in brief expositions of Anscombe's position, or, relatedly, without due notice of the role of the interrogative mode ('What do *you* see?') in identifying objects of sight. For Anscombe, the question 'What do *you* see?' and its answer '*I* see *x*' are essential parts of the exposition of the grammatical category 'object of sight'; and a description of the formal character of this exchange is a central goal for a philosophy of perception.[14]

§5. Anscombe's Purpose

Earlier in the paper, we outlined the background to Anscombe's *procedure*. In this section we discuss Anscombe's *purpose* by bringing her into fleeting dialogue with the disjunctivist, and concomitantly a third exegetical mistake. Our discussion will be necessarily brief, but it aims to highlight the richness of what Anscombe's philosophy of perception offers.

Recall, 3.P says that just as the action you intend to bring about may not occur, the object you see may not exist. This, however, is something that the disjunctivist denies – in cases where the object does not exist, he says, you only 'seem' to see an object (or some other such locution). For him, cases of the kind in 3.P. are the 'bad cases' and involve error and illusion. Disjunctivism, as such and broadly speaking, has at its centre an epistemic notion of the 'goodness' and 'badness' of perceptual experience. A good experience involves acquaintance with that which can be represented, truly or falsely. A bad experience forecloses such acquaintance.

Adopting Anscombe's grammatical procedure, we can now allow that the question of whether a case falling under (3.P.) is a bad case is sensitive to the actual circumstances in which the perceptual episode takes place, circumstances that include facts about the perceiver and her intentions. Similarly, the question of whether a case in which the intentional object is a material object is a good one, can only be addressed if the circumstances of the perceptual episode are known. Indeed, as we will see, there may be good cases in which what you see does not exist, and bad ones in which it does. This is because, for Anscombe, the goodness or badness of perception is not

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[14] While Howard Robinson is one of the few theorists to discuss 'The Intentionality of Sensation' in any detail, in his *Perception*, pp. 167-172, his reconstruction of Anscombe's argument is striking in eliding completely the first person pronoun. This suggests he does not recognise that for Anscombe the question 'What do you see?' and its answer 'I see *x*' are essential to identifying the intentional object of sight. It suggests too that he does not appreciate that when a perceiver reports what they see, the description they give can be either intentional or material depending on their use of the verb 'to see'.

exhausted by the epistemic distinction, veridical/non-veridical, but can accommodate a practical or ethical evaluation.

We can approach (though only approach) this bold point – more work will be needed elsewhere - by considering a complaint against Anscombe made by Travis (2013), one that will have purchase with many contemporary philosophers of perception. Travis objects that 'see' is a success verb; as such there is no use of the kind described in 3.P. This objection is an opportunity to make explicit a feature of Anscombe's account that might be read as a kind of proto-disjunctivism.

We have stressed that verbs of sensation are *intentional* – that is, any intelligible use of these verbs implies an intentional object (even if the use itself is *merely material*). However, when we consider the language-game in which the question 'What do you see?' has its home, we should recognise that the *point* of that language-game – the point of our talk of what we see – is to communicate about our shared, publicly perceivable world. As such, the most usual use of a sensation verb is its *material use*. The purely intentional use of the verb 'to see' is one that, as we might put it, is a development from that more primitive language-game characterised by the question 'What do you see?' where the expected answer is a description of a joint object of perception.

The idea that our use of the verb 'to see' contains these layers of sophistication is not a feature special to perception, but a feature of the idea of a *practice*. When a practice is complex – as human practices invariably are – we should also expect that a learner's grasp of the practice to deepen over time as she comes to 'get the hang of' the practice insofar as she needs to. And learners will also naturally differ in their competencies and interests. What one must grasp in order to join in a game of rugby in the park falls far short of the sort of the understanding of that game that is possessed by a professional player who has dedicated herself to participating the sport, and who structures her life – her diet, exercise, sleep patterns, relationships, leisure – around its demands. Similarly, sensitivity to the structures of a linguistic practice can develop and deepen over time, along with one's grasp of the concepts and words that shape those practices. We start by teaching a child the material use of the verb to see – a use the mastery of which is the use of the intentional verb 'to see'. Later, she will learn to talk about cases where things 'seem' or only 'look' a certain way, or cases where things do not look as they are; we may begin to offer comparisons things 'looking the same' or 'looking different'. Now she learns the *merely* intentional and *merely* material uses. If she becomes a painter or an ophthalmologist or a magician, her mastery of some areas of this practice will deepen. (If she becomes a philosopher, she will need to acquire terms with which to describe those specialisms: the term 'object of sight' will be among them.)

How our concepts of sensation are elaborated and deepened then depends on our 'getting the hang of' certain patterns of inference and enquiry, patterns, which are mediated and augmented in all sorts of ways by essentially perceptible artefacts, artefacts that are designed to be perceived and even contemplated, as well as by perceptual media of various degrees of technological complexity. Ophthalmologists test our eyes by asking if we can discern shapes against backgrounds and their locations. When I say 'I see a red line to the left of a green one' the doctor does not correct me: 'No you don't, the green is to the left of the red!'. We have critical practices around shared experience of artworks or designed artefacts or items of personal style – we may discuss and offer justification of what we can see and evaluate what things look like. A full philosophical description of the grammar of sensation will account for all of these forms and the practices that produce them and that they produce.

As will now be clear, 'asymmetry' in application of the verb 'to see' – the fact the purely intentional use of the verb is learnt after the material use – is not the asymmetry the disjunctivist had in mind. Further, Anscombe's priority of material over merely intentional uses of the verb 'to see' does not

attribute goodness and badness to individual perceptual experiences depending on whether they do or do not represent or present features of the environment. My report 'I see a red line to the left of a green one' need not be a bad case, even though there is no red line to the left of the green one – this is seen from the context. But it should now be clear too that there is nothing in 3.P, nor in this refusal to employ only an epistemic notion of 'goodness', that threatens the fact that, in the normal case, 'see' *is* a success verb after all. Travis seems to suppose that because, for Anscombe, the verb 'to see' can have purely intentional uses, this precludes a conception of perception whereby perception is, after all, 'a way of providing acquaintance with that which can be represented, truly or falsely, as being such-and-such ways'. Yet on Anscombe's view, many *sincere* expressions of visual self-consciousness are neither intended to be nor should be treated as *attempts* to provide a material object of sight. And this is the case, even though the possibility of such uses depends on shared linguistic practice *begins from the material use of the verb*. So, what should we say about such sincere expressions that are so intended (that is, that are attempts to give a material object of sight) but which miss their mark? Are they then bad? Again, Anscombe's position draws us back to the particular circumstances in which what is seen is seen – and allows for some manoeuvre.

To bring this out, consider Travis on the experience of a person suffering an hallucination:

> Of course, someone who suffers hallucinations (a schizophrenic, say) may be said to 'see' things that are not there. But here, I think, scare-quotes are important. You may 'see' ghosts, or lions in the kitchen, when there are none. The problem then is that you are 'seeing' things which are not there to be seen; that is, not *seeing* anything (p.58).

Of course, where a person who is hallucinating reports seeing lions in the kitchen and her intended use is material, it is true that there is no material object of sight – this is just what we mean when we speak, ordinarily, of an hallucination. But the grammatical framework provided by Anscombe allows us to say much more about the situation, about what may be going wrong or right, and about how we might respond in the circumstance.

So as not to foreclose an investigation, let us dispense with the loaded term 'hallucination' and with the psychiatric diagnosis. Instead, picture a familiar case in which a young child with a rich imagination insists 'I see lions in the kitchen' (her imaginary pet lions perhaps) or 'I see ghosts under my bed'. On the grammatical approach to perception, the philosopher's engagement with the case does not end with the diagnosis that the sensation verb has no application because no lions or ghosts are there to be seen. It does not end with the diagnosis that what we have here is the 'bad case' – bad because it is on the wrong side of the disjunct that has phenomenally indistinguishable veridical perception on the other. Rather, we can go on to ask how this use of the verb 'to see' fits into the pattern of use that has at its centre cases which involve shared visual experience with others. This returns us too to the import of Anscombe's *interrogative mode*. The parent might seriously query 'And what do you see now?' – here deploying the intentional use. She might offer gentle reminders: there are no ghosts, you are not seeing ghosts – now with the material use in mind. And perhaps the child even might come to say 'I am not seeing ghosts' even while she 'sees ghosts', as a way of trying to reassure herself and bring herself back into a shared visual experience with others. Or, the parent may wish to encourage and foster her child's imaginative capacities – she may provide her with paint and paper and ask her to paint the lions so that she might see them too.

This brief discussion of purely intentional uses of the verb to shows up one way in which the disjunctivist's purely epistemic use of 'good' and 'bad' cases can lead us away from attending to the richness of our perceptual language game, and the concrete circumstances in which perceptual

experience takes place. Note how very different things are in the opthamologist's surgery to in the painter's study or the child's nursery. These differences are part of the structure that is Anscombe's topic. Wholly intentional uses can be fully accommodated in the weft and weave of mature human practice.

We end, then, by reflecting on the ethical dimension of our perceptual practices, a dimension that can now be brought into view. What then could be a 'good' or 'bad' case, by Anscombe's lights? Since this large question will take us too far from concluding, we close with only a sketch, one that brings Anscombe into conversation with her onetime interlocutor: Iris Murdoch.

In 'Modern Moral Philosophy', G. E. M. Anscombe writes:

> It is not profitable for us at present to do moral philosophy; … it should be laid aside until we have an adequate philosophy of psychology, in which we are conspicuously lacking (p.169).

The question of how Anscombe's account of intention provides the sort of philosophy of psychology she sees as necessary before work on ethics can begin has been much debated. This is natural given a modern tendency to take the subject matter of moral philosophy to be overt intentional action. However, it is well-known that the Aristotelian ethics Anscombe advocates in that paper has at its centre the idea that the virtuous person will not just act differently but she will see differently. Her actions are good and, to borrow a way of framing things associated more with Iris Murdoch, her vision is just. But these two aspects of her character are not accidentally connected.

Anscombe's later work distinguishes theoretical from practical truth.[15] Roughly, an action that possesses practical truth or, better, *is* practically true is one the goodness of which derives from, or is, inherited by the goodness of its ends.[16] Seeing fits into this pattern. Where one's ends are not good, by whatever objective standard one appeals to here, the episodes of seeing and of perceptual activity that are directed toward that end, however indirectly, are not good either. Murdoch's moral psychology explores in great detail what might be called the fallen nature of our sight – we are biased and prejudiced; we overlook what is there to see; the descriptions under which we see what is there to be seen are often unjust; her treatment of the case of M&D in 'The Idea of Perfection' is her central case. But she also makes room for the possibility of a change in, and ultimately, the *perfectability* of vision, a task which she sees as endless.

What perfectability of vision could amount to in Anscombe's moral psychology, and what the possibility of perfectability requires, is a difficult question that does not have a place here. What we can say is this. Sight is a capacity that belongs to a human animal living with others in a material world of institutions and practices, many of which, for Anscombe – even notoriously - are corrupt. Accordingly, for the Anscombian theorist, illusion cannot be thought of merely as matter of some introspectable *this* being unmoored from any worldly causes or things. Rather it concerns the nature of the circumstances - material, natural, intersubjective and epistemic - in which the perceiving animal finds herself and the conduciveness of those circumstances to human life going well; matters that, on the face of it, seem distant from the philosopher's tug-of-war.

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[15] See for example 'Practical Truth' (1993)

[16] See the undated manuscript 'Good and Bad Human Action', first published in 2005

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