

Seeing-as and Schelerian Wertfühlen

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Taking recent discussions of the epistemology of evaluative and 'emotional' judgments as my starting-point, I investigate whether an adverbialist account of seeing-as can assuage some of the metaphysical worries people have raised about ephemeral or 'non-canonical' objects of perception such as flames, soap-bubbles, glimmers, highlights, reflections, echoes, shivers, atmospheric phenomena like rainbows and mirages, shadows, after-images, constellations, affordances and values.

I argue against Deonna et al. (2012) and the orthodoxy in the emotion literature, and in favour of Mulligan (2007, 2009), that seeing-as allows us to capture the way evaluative judgments and appropriate emotions are justified by perceptions, characterising both judgments and emotions as reactions to such seeings-as. They are reactions, however, not just to the objects directly perceived, but to these objects-as-exemplifying some property.

In seeings-as, "the third argument of 'see as' attributes to a subject a non-conceptual way of seeing what the second argument refers to" (Mulligan 1999: 125): the "as" clause is an adverbial modification of the act of seeing. I defend this construal against the standard anti-adverbialist arguments. Individuating objects of seeing-as as manifestations, I argue, allows for both an ontologically plausible construal of the entities concerned, as for the 'right' logical relations among the ways they are seen. By distinguishing between the intentional and representational properties of seeing-as, we can explain why to undergo an emotion is indeed to stand in an intentional relation to value, but the relation is not belief nor does it involve any representation of value (Mulligan 2007: 209-210).

I then consider applications to other types of perception. Not just seeing-as involving axiological properties, but also other types of perceptions do not represent their correctness conditions, even though they represent (conceptually) their satisfaction conditions. What it means to have correctness conditions is to be governed by certain norms. For perception, e.g., the norm is two-fold: that the world be such how the experience represents it to be; and: that the experience should not occur if the world is not like this. The perception is under this norm because it is a reason to believe. This does not mean, or entail, however, that my perception of this dog in front of me as dangerous *represents* the world as *being such that there is a dangerous dog in front of me unless I'm wrong*; what is represented is rather a certain exemplification of a value, to which I may be more or less sensitive. I perceive the world as exemplifying this value, and may be wrong (or rather: have an inappropriate perception) if the world does not exemplify this value.

My relation to the value I see exemplified is passive, reactive, mind-to-world rather than world-to-mind. Our access to value thus is Schelerian Wertfühlen rather than neo-sentimentalist 'construction'.

References

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