



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Nyya Perceptual Theory: Disjunctivism or Anti-Individualism?

Anand Jayprakash Vaidya

Philosophy East and West, Volume 63, Number 4, October 2013, pp.  
562-585 (Article)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press

Philosophy East and West



A Quarterly of  
Comparative Philosophy  
Volume 63 - Number 4

University of Hawai'i Press

➔ For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/pew/summary/v063/63.4.vaidya.html>

# NYĀYA PERCEPTUAL THEORY: DISJUNCTIVISM OR ANTI-INDIVIDUALISM?

**Anand Jayprakash Vaidya**

Department of Philosophy, San Jose State University  
anand.vaidya@sjsu.edu

## *1. Introduction*

Misperception is part of the human condition. Consider a classic case of *coming to confirm* that one has had a *misperception*. On a stroll through the woods you see, in the distance, what seems to be a person. As you draw near, what looked like a person now appears to be a wooden post with a hat on it. On arrival you touch the post to confirm that it is not a person. From a pre-theoretical perspective, what has happened? On your approach you judged that there was a person, based on what you saw. When near, you judged that it was a post and not a person, and then by touch you confirmed that what you initially saw was a misperception.

In examining cases of misperception it is important to ask: what role does concept possession play in explaining the misperception? The *conceptualist* answer is that a necessary condition on *x* misperceiving a post as a person is that *x* possess both the concept of a post and the concept of a person, so that *x* can be in a *cognitive position* to *misperceive* the post for a person. The guiding idea is that if one possesses neither the concept of a post nor the concept of a person, it is unintelligible how one could have such a misperception. For how could one judge on the basis of one's perception alone that on approach it was a person but that upon arrival it was a post, if one failed to possess these concepts? The conceptualist maintains that a subject's misperceptions are controlled by the conceptual scheme that they possess. In general, our conceptual schemes determine a limit boundary to what we can misperceive and what others can take us to have misperceived.<sup>1</sup>

Philosophers both East and West have taken note of the fact that at least in some cases the incoherence of misperception without concept possession yields to the view that *error* or false cognition depends on *truth* or true cognition. The view that error *metaphysically depends* on truth, but truth does not *metaphysically depend* on error is called the *asymmetric dependence* of error on truth or the *parasitism* of error on truth. The guiding idea of asymmetric dependence is that the possibility of false cognition depends on a prior true cognition, and as a consequence error is parasitic on truth. If one never perceived correctly then one could not misperceive.

In his illuminating comparative essay *Parasitism and Disjunctivism in Nyāya Epistemology*, Matthew Dasti (2012) carefully argues that the Nyāya school of classical Indian philosophy offered many arguments for the parasitism of error on truth,

and that the positions they held relative to these arguments *anticipate* the epistemological disjunctivism of contemporary Western epistemology, especially that of John McDowell (1996, 2009).<sup>2</sup> Disjunctivism, in general, is, roughly, a *denial* of the claim that there is a common kind of experience between misperceptions and perceptions that is of robust explanatory value for the purposes of the philosophy of perception. At a high level of abstraction, disjunctivism claims that perceptions and misperceptions are similar in the same way that superficially similar, but chemically distinct, compounds are similar. For example, gold and fool's gold or jadeite and nephrite are macroscopically similar but chemically distinct substances. By analogy, at a deeper level of explanation, disjunctivism claims that perceptions and misperceptions, though phenomenologically similar, are fundamentally distinct and should not be categorized as being of the same epistemic kind.

Here I argue that on the assumption that Nyāya perceptual theory does advance arguments for parasitism, we *should not* conclude so *quickly* that their work entails or anticipates McDowell's specific form of epistemological disjunctivism. There are two main reasons for this. First, I argue that the Burge-McDowell debate over disjunctivism puts pressure on the idea that epistemic disjunctivism is a plausible thesis. Second, Burge's own perceptual *anti-individualism* provides a plausible alternative that has the benefit of being consistent with arguments for asymmetric dependence, as well as with contemporary research in the vision sciences.

The overall approach of this essay is exploratory. It aims to provide a constructive engagement between temporally distant and culturally unrelated philosophical traditions for the purposes of enhancing philosophical discussion. On the one hand, it seeks to bring to the table conceptual resources from contemporary analytic epistemology and the vision sciences that can help shed light on what potential options are available for understanding Nyāya perceptual theory and epistemology. On the other hand, it seeks to enrich the pool of ideas from which contemporary analytic epistemology should draw when theorizing about perception by positioning for further discussion the subtle and novel account of misperception advanced in Nyāya epistemology.

The plan of this essay is the following. In the second section below, I present the central components and arguments involved in the *asymmetric dependence* of error on truth, Burge's *anti-individualism*, and McDowell's *epistemological disjunctivism*. In the third, I present and analyze the Burge-McDowell debate over epistemic disjunctivism as a way of defending the claim that epistemic disjunctivism does not follow from asymmetric dependence. In the fourth, I use the analysis in the third to analyze Dasti's argument and to question whether the Nyāya arguments from parasitism genuinely anticipate epistemological disjunctivism. In the fifth, I present the Nyāya *misplacement theory of illusion*, or MTI. In the sixth, I argue that MTI (a) offers a metaphysical distinction between perceptions and misperceptions that falls short of epistemological disjunctivism, but (b) is consistent with perceptual anti-individualism. In conclusion, in the seventh section, I discuss how Nyāya perceptual theory should be of interest to those working in contemporary epistemology and perceptual theory.

## II. Asymmetric Dependence, Disjunctivism, and Anti-Individualism

### *Asymmetric Dependence*

At least with respect to natural-kind terms and empirical concepts, such as *water*, *human*, *shell*, and *dog*, error or false cognition *asymmetrically* depends on truth or true cognition.<sup>3</sup> It is *possible* for one to possess and learn a natural-kind concept and *never* be in error or have a false cognition with respect to deploying it. For example, one could learn the concept *shell* through observation of a teacher who uses it correctly to pick out shells from stones, and then in subsequent use never misapply the concept. However, it is conceptually *impossible* for one to possess a concept and *always* be in error with respect to deploying it. The possibility of misapplying an empirical concept that is learned from one's environment presupposes (a) that the individual possess the concept in question and (b) that their concept possession itself be a function of at least some correct cases of application. Again consider the case of the shell. Suppose a child is being taught the concept *shell* through ostention from a teacher, and each time the teacher attempts to get the student to apply the concept to a set of diverse objects, the student fails. It is plausible in this case that the student does not possess the concept or even understand it. That is, the student has not acquired the concept through ostention because it is never correctly applied. The failure to ever apply the concept correctly leads to the judgment that the student does not possess it.

In another case, suppose one misapplies the concept *cow* to a zebra that one sees off in the distance, because one is not able to distinguish adequately between a cow and a zebra from the distance one is at. For one to misapply the concept *cow* to a zebra, one has to possess the concept *cow* to be able to misapply it to a zebra. The issue of misapplication requires discussion of concept possession, so we must ask: what does it take for one to possess the concept *cow*?

If the concept *cow* refers to cows, then a subject that is in an environment cannot possess the concept *cow* unless there is some causal chain terminating in cows through which the person could have learned the concept. The central idea of asymmetric dependence can be unpacked as a commitment to two claims, one about concept possession and one about misapplication:

1. *Possession*. If an individual *A* possesses a concept *C* at time *t*, then, prior to *t*, *A* must have correctly applied *C*. Concept possession requires correct application.
2. *Misapplication*. A necessary condition on an individual *A* misapplying a concept *C* is that *A* possess *C*. If *A* does not possess *C*, then *A* cannot misapply *C*.

The conjunction of *possession* and *misapplication* allows for an interesting account of concept possession and learning. To possess an empirical concept, one must learn it. To learn a concept one must attempt to use it. But in attempting to use it, one can make a mistake with respect to applying the concept only when one can be said to

possess the concept to a sufficient degree. If one fails to use it correctly far more often than not, one cannot be credited with possession of the concept. If one does not possess a concept, then one cannot be said to misapply it.<sup>4</sup>

### *Tyler Burge on Anti-Individualism*

Tyler Burge (1979 and 1986) defends anti-individualism with regard to mental content. *Anti-individualism* with regard to mental content can be stated broadly as a thesis about the individuation of content. Burge's anti-individualism maintains that

- (1) For an individual to possess a certain class of concepts, natural kinds and social kinds in particular, it is necessary that the individual be in a certain kind of physical and social environment.
- (2) It is possible for two individuals to be intrinsic duplicates of each other, while possessing distinct concepts because they are in, and come from, distinct physical and social environments.
- (3) The physical and social environment plays an essential role in the individuation of what empirical concepts an individual can or cannot have.
- (4) For certain kinds of concepts, an individual cannot possess a concept *C* if the individual has no causal connection either physically or socially to an environment that contains *C*.

Although anti-individualism with regard to mental content is not uncontroversial, it is supported by a host of thought experiments and considerations. Burge (1986) advances the thesis by considering terms such as 'arthritis' and 'sofa.' Although Burge's anti-individualism is not identical to Putnam's (1973) semantic externalism, both theses gain support from the Twin Earth thought experiment propounded initially by Putnam and examined later by Burge.<sup>5</sup> In his thought experiment, Putnam invites us to consider two individuals in distinct possible worlds that are intrinsic duplicates of one another.

Oscar and Twin Oscar live in physical and social environments that are exact duplicates of each other in every way, except for one feature. Oscar lives on Earth in an environment where H<sub>2</sub>O is present, and 'water' refers to H<sub>2</sub>O. Twin Oscar lives on Twin Earth where XYZ is present, and 'water' is used to refer to XYZ. XYZ is a substance that is distinguishable from H<sub>2</sub>O only at the level of microstructure and not at the level of macroscopic features such as taste, color, and boiling point, or functional features such as drinking, bathing, and washing. Moreover, everything that H<sub>2</sub>O is used on Earth, XYZ is used on Twin Earth, and vice versa.

Putnam asks us to imagine Oscar traveling to Twin Earth and to consider Oscar's use of 'water' on Twin Earth upon seeing a river. Were Oscar to say, "There is water!" upon seeing XYZ in a river, would his utterance of 'water' refer to the XYZ flowing in the river? Anti-individualists take the stance that Oscar's utterance of 'water' would not refer to XYZ, since Oscar has no prior interaction with XYZ and no historical connection to it through a community of users of the term 'water' that are in physical contact with XYZ. Moreover, although H<sub>2</sub>O and XYZ have the same functional role

in each environment, Oscar cannot mean XYZ by his use of 'water,' and Twin Oscar cannot mean H<sub>2</sub>O by his use of 'water.'

The fundamental idea of anti-individualism is that the individuation conditions for mental content depend on factors that go outside the head of the individual. Oscar and Twin Oscar are intrinsic duplicates. Part of what makes it the case that 'water' for Oscar refers to H<sub>2</sub>O and not XYZ is the fact that Oscar is part of an H<sub>2</sub>O, and not an XYZ, environment and community. Part of what makes it the case that 'water' for Twin Oscar refers to XYZ and not H<sub>2</sub>O is the fact that Twin Oscar is part of an XYZ, and not an H<sub>2</sub>O, environment and community.

### *John McDowell's Epistemic Disjunctivism*

McDowell's epistemic disjunctivism, ED, is offered as an alternative to the *highest common factor* view of experience. The highest common factor view of experience, HCF, maintains that veridical and non-veridical cases share a common kind of mental state. The HCF is motivated in part by the argument from illusion that has been prevalent in many discussions and debates on perception, from Descartes and Hume to Ayer and Austin. McDowell describes the HCF and the line of reasoning leading to it:

[T]he argument is that since there can be deceptive cases experientially indistinguishable from non-deceptive cases, one's experiential intake—what one embraces within the scope of one's consciousness—must be the same in both kinds of case. In a deceptive case, one's experiential intake must *ex hypothesi* fall short of the fact itself, in the sense of being consistent with there being no such fact. So, that must be true, according to the argument, in a non-deceptive case, too. One's capacity is a capacity to tell by looking: that is, on the basis of experiential intake. And even when this capacity does yield knowledge, we have to conceive the basis as a *highest common factor* of what is available to experience in the deceptive and non-deceptive cases alike, and hence as something that is at best a defeasible ground for the knowledge, though available with a certainty independent of whatever might put the knowledge in doubt. (McDowell 2009, p. 80)

McDowell's characterization of the HCF line of reasoning is as follows:

1. Veridical perception of a yellow lemon caused by a yellow lemon Y under normal viewing conditions and a non-veridical perception whose content is of a yellow lemon but is caused by something other than a yellow lemon are *first-person phenomenologically indistinguishable*.
2. If two states are *first-person phenomenologically indistinguishable*, then they should be categorized as falling under a common epistemic kind.
3. If two states fall under the same epistemic kind, then they provide the same epistemic warrant.
4. So, veridical and non-veridical perceptions provide the same warrant.
5. If two states have the same kind of warrant, then they provide a subject with the same experiential intake.
6. So, one's experiential intake is the same in veridical and non-veridical cases.

The central idea in the HCF, in McDowell's rendering, is that conceiving of experience according to the HCF view leads to the idea that the ultimate basis of our beliefs about the external world lies in mere appearances that cannot acquire *more* warrant than what is provided by what is in common between veridical and non-veridical cases. The alternative view McDowell endorses is the *disjunctive* conception of experience. His epistemic disjunctivism, ED, has four main components:

(1) Perception is a *capacity for knowledge*:

A perceptual capacity . . . is a capacity—of course fallible—to get into positions in which one has indefeasible warrant for certain beliefs. That is what the capacity is a capacity to do, and that is what one does in non-defective exercises of it, exercises in which its acknowledged fallibility does not kick in. For instance, a capacity to tell whether things in one's field of vision are green is a capacity—of course fallible—to get into positions in which the greenness of things is visibly *there* for one, so that one has indefeasible warrant for believing that they are green. (McDowell 2011, p. 245)

(2) Perceptual appearances are *metaphysically distinct*:

The conception of [experience] I have found . . . can be put, in opposition to [the highest common factor conception], as a disjunctive conception of perceptual appearance: perceptual appearances are either objective states of affairs making themselves manifest to subjects, or situations in which it is as if an objective state of affairs is making itself manifest to a subject, although that is not how things are. (McDowell 2008, p. 381)

(3) Perceptual appearances have *asymmetric warrant*:

Experiences of the first kind [objective states of affairs making themselves manifest to subjects] have an epistemic significance that experiences of the second kind do not have. They afford opportunities for knowledge of objective states of affairs. According to the highest common factor conception, appearances can never yield more, in the way of warrant for belief, than do those appearances in which it merely seems that one, say, sees that things are thus and so. (McDowell 2008, p. 381)

(4) Perceptual experience is *non-factorizable*:

[I]t is part of the point of my disjunctive conception of experience that having an aspect of objective reality perceptually present to one entails having it appear to one that things are a certain way. But that is not to say that having an aspect of objective reality perceptually present to one can be factored into some non-mental conditions and an appearance conceived as being the mental state it is independently of the non-mental conditions. The factoring fails; the state is the appearance it is only because it is a state of having something perceptually present to one. (McDowell 2011, p. 251)

Epistemic skepticism with respect to a potential domain of knowledge is the view that human subjects do not have knowledge of potentially knowable items in that domain. At least part of McDowell's (2008) motivation for advancing epistemic disjunctivism is his belief that it provides resources for a transcendental argument

against epistemic skepticism about the external world. His strategic argument can be seen to be the following:

1. If epistemic disjunctivism is true, then there are transcendental reasons for rejecting epistemic skepticism.
2. Epistemic disjunctivism is true.
3. So, there are transcendental reasons for rejecting epistemic skepticism.

As a consequence of the strategic argument, McDowell's position can be evaluated at two distinct points. On the one hand, one can evaluate whether or not epistemic disjunctivism is true. On the other hand, one can evaluate whether or not the truth of epistemic disjunctivism provides a transcendental argument for rejecting epistemic skepticism about the external world.

Finally, in clarifying ED it should be noted that the target form of epistemic skepticism about the external world that it aims to undercut is a radical form of epistemic skepticism. That is, ED attempts to undermine a form of epistemic skepticism that threatens the idea that our *thoughts* can be about objective reality. ED does not entail the view that perception is infallible. Rather, perception is a capacity to know in the sense that we can get into positions where perception yields knowledge.

### *III. Burge and McDowell on Disjunctivism*

Burge's criticism of McDowell's epistemic disjunctivism is an attempt to evaluate the truth of epistemic disjunctivism and not the claim that it provides transcendental reasons for rejecting epistemic skepticism about the external world. His assessment and evaluation of epistemic disjunctivism rests on an examination of perceptual psychology and vision science. His meta-theoretical account of the philosophy of perception maintains that any theory of perceptual content must pay respect to perceptual psychology and the vision sciences. It is inconsistency with vision science that renders a theory implausible.

In his work on perceptual psychology, Burge has argued that perceptual anti-individualism is consistent with contemporary perceptual psychology and that, indeed, the vision sciences presuppose the truth of it. *Perceptual anti-individualism*, PAI, is the thesis that *a constitutively necessary condition on perceptual representation by an individual is that any such representation be associated with a background of some veridical perceptual representations* (Burge 2005, p. 1). In contrast to PAI, Burge argues that epistemic disjunctivism and naive realism about perception are untenable theses. The core claims of these views cannot be made consistent with contemporary work in perceptual psychology:

Disjunctivism is implausible. Not only common sense but [also] the scientific knowledge [in the vision sciences] support this initial evaluation. Disjunctivism is incompatible with the Proximality Principle, which is basic in nearly all scientific study of perception.

Given that different distal causes can yield proximal stimulation that is relevantly the same, perception of entities in the distal environment is fallible. The Proximity Principle, together with this empirical fact, entails that the same type of perceptual state can be veridical or non-veridical, perceptually referential or non-referential. (Burge 2005, p. 27)

His basic argument against ED is as follows:

1. ED denies that there is any important explanatory kind between veridical and non-veridical states.
2. The constitution of the perceptual system requires the truth of the Proximity Principle.
3. The Proximity Principle requires that perception involve an ability-general kind in common between veridical and non-veridical states. The ability-general kind is inconsistent with the claim that there is *no* important explanatory kind between veridical and non-veridical states.
4. So, ED is false.

The Proximity Principle, PP, maintains that

*holding constant the antecedent psychological set of the perceiver, a given type of proximal stimulation (over the whole body), together with the associated internal afferent and efferent input into the perceptual system, will produce a given type of perceptual state, assuming that there is no malfunctioning in the system and no interference with the system.*

A set of relevant cases where PAI, through PP, and ED disagree is shown by the following series:

Suppose that one sees an object. Then as one blinks, the object is removed and replaced by a duplicate that one cannot discern from the original in the context. As one blinks again, the duplicate is removed. One is induced by an abnormal confluence of light to have a visual illusion as of an object that is indiscriminable from the originally seen object. The light array hitting the retina is, we shall suppose, type-identical in the three cases—or at least sufficiently similar that the perceptual system cannot make use of the difference. (Burge 2005, p. 26)

PP requires that one have a general ability to use the information in common between the three cases. In Burge's account the ability is explanatory for how we come to have a perceptual system at all. Were we not to have a general ability to use the information in common between the three states, we could not have evolved to have a perceptual system. Of course, the possibility of the system evolving also requires that there are veridical states. ED, by contrast, denies that there is an explanatorily relevant kind in common between the three states. While PAI individuates perception at a type-level commonality, ED does so by virtue of the veridicality

conditions at the token level. Given that in the three cases the perceptual state is only phenomenally similar, and not target similar, ED maintains that the states are different in an explanatorily robust manner relevant to the classification of epistemic kinds.

In understanding PAI, it is of *central importance* to take note of the kind of account that Burge believes that the proximality principle delivers. In his account, PP is supposed to deliver states that are not *merely* of the sub-personal visual processing system. Rather PP governs the level of perceptual states that are attributable to individuals as conscious perceivers. This theoretical stance on PP is important because of a potential objection that one can make to the relevance of vision science to the philosophy of perception. If PP only explained sub-personal visual processing below the level of phenomenal consciousness, it would be possible for an epistemic disjunctivist to respond as follows: since ED is a thesis that applies at the personal level of perceptual theorizing, and not at the sub-personal system-processing level, the mechanism by which personal-level perception is delivered is *irrelevant* to the disjunctivist thesis. In effect, the disjunctivist would block the significance of PP as providing a problem for the plausibility of ED.

The issue can be seen to lead to a potential conflict of methodologies. On the one hand, the epistemic disjunctivist does not attend to theories in the philosophy of perception that engage perception at the level of sub-personal processing. On the other hand, PAI attempts to bring into the philosophy of perception the relevance of work in the vision sciences and perceptual psychology.

I believe that Burge's work is useful at a theoretical level where it can be deployed as a mechanism for disentangling the relations between *asymmetric dependence*, *anti-individualism*, and *epistemic disjunctivism*. In the account I will offer, McDowell and Burge can be seen to be in agreement over the importance that the asymmetric dependence of error on truth plays in a theory of perception. That is, they agree that veridicality is a necessary condition for the possibility of perception. Concept possession and perceptual capacities are enabled by veridicality. However, what they *disagree* on is what follows from asymmetric dependence. In short, PAI maintains that veridicality is necessary for a perceptual system to arise, but that veridicality is not an essential property of a perceptual type.

For the purposes of distinguishing further between ED and PAI, consider the following cases:

- (a) Rick misperceives a rope for a snake.
- (b) Varsha mis-identifies a piece of tofu for a piece of chicken.
- (c) Manjula misperceives regular coffee for decaffeinated coffee.
- (d) Zuleica mis-identifies F sharp with C sharp.

In each of these cases something goes wrong insofar as the person mistakes *x* for *y*. Furthermore, given asymmetric dependence, each of the individuals can only make the mistake that they make because they possess the relevant concepts. However, we

might further ask: what follows from asymmetric dependence? There are three arguments relating asymmetric dependence to epistemic disjunctivism. Each argument moves from the premise concerning asymmetric dependence to some claim concerning epistemic disjunctivism. One might legitimately ask if (2) through (4) below follow from (1):

1. Non-veridical perception requires veridical perception (*asymmetric dependence*).
2. So, a perception is either a mere appearance or a presenting of an objective fact (*metaphysical distinctness*).
3. So, the epistemic warrant in a veridical case is not the same as the epistemic warrant in a non-veridical case (*asymmetric warrant*).
4. So, a veridical perception cannot be factored into an appearance and the objective fact that makes it a veridical perception (*non-factorizability*).

In analyzing the argument, we need to take note of the nature of each of the claims. *Asymmetric dependence* is a metaphysical claim about the relation between truth and error as they apply to the things that can be the bearers of truth and error—truth-evaluable contents. The *metaphysical distinctness* of veridical and non-veridical states is a metaphysical thesis about the proper taxonomy of perceptual states. The *asymmetric warrant* between veridical and non-veridical states is an epistemic principle concerning epistemic warrant for belief. And the *non-factorizability* of veridical states is a metaphysical claim about the components involved in a veridical state.

The distinction between Burge's PAI and McDowell's ED can be understood as a questioning of each of the inferences from (1). While McDowell is far more open to inferring from asymmetric dependence various components of ED, Burge is far more cautious. In Burge's account, asymmetric dependence is amenable to anti-individualism, understood as the idea that perception only makes sense against the background of veridical states. This metaphysical claim, which is constitutive of perception for Burge, entails neither that there is *no* common factor of explanatory importance between veridical and non-veridical perception nor that veridical and non-veridical states have asymmetric warrant.<sup>6</sup> The Burge-McDowell debate leaves us with the following question: is perceptual anti-individualism or epistemic disjunctivism a superior platform for further theorizing about perception and for categorizing Nyāya epistemology and perceptual theory?

#### *IV. Dasti on Disjunctivism from Parasitism*

Matthew Dasti maintains that "Nyāya [epistemology] privileges veridical truth-entailing mental states and considers error conceptually parasitical upon knowledge." And that "This [asymmetric dependence] entails a disjunctive account of *pramana* and *non-pramana* states" (Dasti 2012, p. 3). In his account of Nyāya epistemology and philosophy of mind there are three forms of argument from parasitism:

- (1) *Epistemic parasitism*. Recognizing an error is parasitical upon knowing truth.
- (2) *Causal parasitism*. Any concept V that one deploys in various sorts of error states ultimately depends on one's original veridical apprehension of some instance of V.
- (3) *Parasitism of content or meaning*. Divorced from connection with external reality, concepts would be drained of content, as would the words whose meanings are tied to the concepts they express.

As an example of *epistemic parasitism* Dasti cites Uddyotakara's response to a Buddhist interlocutor who contends that everything exists in a state of flux, and therefore all cognitions of enduring things are false:

False cognitions are imitations of correct cognitions. Therefore, you must provide some example of correct cognition. (Dasti 2012, p. 4)

As an example of *causal parasitism* Dasti cites an argument by Vātsyāyana:

The mis-cognition of something depends on an original. The cognition of a post—which is not a person—as a person depends upon an original. Indeed, there is no experience as of a person regarding something that is not a person, if a person was never experienced in the past. (Dasti 2012, p. 6)

As an example of *meaning parasitism* Dasti cites Uddyotakara:

He must be asked how consciousness arises in *that very form* (the form of specific objects). If consciousness takes the form of blood, then you must explain what blood is. Similarly, the form of water and river must be explained. In the sentence, "they see a river of pus," each word, when examined individually, is found to be meaningless, if there are no real external objects. (Dasti 2012, p. 7)

Dasti argues that the three forms of parasitism lead to important features of epistemic disjunctivism:

1. *Default Trust*. Arguments from parasitism show that the default epistemic position one should take is *trust* and not *doubt*.
2. *Denial of HCF*. Arguments from parasitism tend to block the need to find a common state between veridical and non-veridical perception.
3. *Metaphysical Distinctness*. Non-veridical states are fake perceptual states; they are only phenomenally indistinguishable from genuine or veridical perception.

In evaluating the merits of the Nyāya perceptual theory and Dasti's argument for the claim that their account anticipates McDowell's epistemic disjunctivism it is important to look at the complexity of the Burge-McDowell debate over disjunctivism and anti-individualism. The debate provides additional conceptual resources for categorizing and thinking about Nyāya perceptual theory.

Recall that Burge maintains that "A closely associated thesis [of anti-individualism] is that a constitutively necessary condition on perceptual representation by an indi-

vidual is that any such representation be associated with a background of some veridical perceptual representation" (Burge 2005, p. 1; emphasis added). I take Burge, in making this claim, to be endorsing the view that error depends on truth, but truth does not depend on error, at least with respect to the generation of perceptual states. For in saying that a condition on any perceptual representation is that there be a background of veridical representation, Burge is maintaining that the possibility of having a representation at all depends on veridicality. The core claim of parasitism in Nyāya, as Dasti argues, is that error and non-veridical cognition are conceptually parasitic on truth. The passages he cites show this clearly to be the case. However, Burge argues that PAI is consistent with the *Proximity Principle*, and that ED is not. Given the argumentation between Burge and McDowell, two questions arise.

First, if Burge is correct in arguing that ED is inconsistent with the vision sciences, we are left with an *evaluative* question: should we take seriously the Nyāya perceptual theory as a worthy theory of study for theorizing further about perception in contemporary philosophy? One might wonder, what can we learn from a theory that is inconsistent with a principle that is the benchmark for contemporary research on perception? Second, given that Nyāya perceptual theory, Burge's PAI, and McDowell's ED all endorse the asymmetric dependence of error on truth, we are left with an *interpretive* question: given that Burge and McDowell disagree over the consequences that follow from asymmetric dependence, might there be room to investigate critically whether Nyāya perceptual theory also leans more toward PAI than ED?

With respect to the interpretive question, four components of Dasti's argument are important. *First*, ED does not give us a better footing for understanding an epistemic position as being one of default trust rather than doubt. It is possible that PAI can provide for a default position of trust, and perhaps even a more accurate account of the relevant kind of trust through how it explains the way that veridicality is a necessary condition on perception. We need a more robust account of the notion of *default trust* in order to evaluate the claim that ED provides a better position for the basic notion than any other competitor theory, such as PAI.

*Second*, neither epistemic, causal, nor meaning parasitism show that *there is no* common kind of mental state between veridical and non-veridical states that plays an *important* explanatory role. At best these forms of parasitism, as Dasti points out, show a *resistance* to finding a highest common factor from a certain philosophical frame of investigation. That is a philosophical frame that does not attempt a theory of perception based on an attempt to answer a totalizing form of epistemic skepticism. Given that Nyāya perceptual theory aims at providing an etiological account of the sources of knowledge, it may not need to find an internal component of a given source that is also at play in cases where knowledge is not produced. *Moreover*, it may be the case that were the certain components of their view satisfied, the theory would be amenable to the existence of an important explanatory factor between veridical and non-veridical cases of perception.

*Third*, the three forms of parasitism that Dasti draws attention to—epistemic, causal, and meaning—do not lean directly toward ED. On the one hand, epistemic parasitism appears to be a thesis about what is a necessary condition for identifying

and recognizing a false case of perception. It does not require that there be *no common kind of element* between veridical and non-veridical states. What it requires is that knowledge of *F* is implicated in recognizing that something is a *non-F*. The claim of epistemic parasitism is quite innocuous: *to identify that a zebra is not a cow, one must know what a cow and a zebra are* (think here of the *Meno* problem). On the other hand, causal parasitism appears to be no more than the thesis of asymmetric dependence, while meaning parasitism appears to be an outright example of anti-individualism about meaning.

Recall that the central thesis of anti-individualism with regard to meaning is that an individual's use of a term depends on factors outside their personal psychology. These factors include social and physical facts about their environment. In the classic Twin Earth cases, Oscar and Twin Oscar are claimed to be skin-deep duplicates of each other with identical skin-deep histories living in environments that are exactly similar, except for the fact that Oscar's contains H<sub>2</sub>O and Twin Oscar's contains XYZ. Although the substances H<sub>2</sub>O and XYZ play the same water role in their respective environments, Oscar's use of 'water,' and not Twin Oscar's use, refers to H<sub>2</sub>O. The generally accepted explanation of this fact is that (a) Oscar lives in an environment where people refer to H<sub>2</sub>O samples when using 'water,' and (b) the fact in (a) played a key causal role in Oscar's use of 'water.' Here, (a) and (b) explain how Oscar's use of 'water' comes to *mean* H<sub>2</sub>O and cannot mean XYZ. The standard upshot of the Twin Earth examples of natural and social kinds is that *a* cannot mean *y* by *x* unless *a* has causally interacted in some way with *y*, no matter how much similarity there is taking in other non-causal factors, such as resemblance or matching of descriptive content.

Keeping in mind the central thesis of anti-individualism, *parasitism of content or meaning* maintains that divorced from a connection with external reality, concepts would be drained of content, as would the words whose meanings are tied to the concepts they express. The thesis leans strongly toward the central idea of anti-individualism: *content and meaning are determined by factors outside the psychology of the individual*, because what is emphasized is the role of the external world in determining content. Parasitism of content and meaning does not lean toward ED more than PAI.

The passage that Dasti cites from McDowell as a way of making the connection between disjunctivism and the kinds of parasitism found in Nyāya epistemology does not announce the full robustness of the kind of disjunctivism that McDowell favors:

But suppose we say—not at all unnaturally—that an appearance that such-and-such is the case can be *either* a mere appearance *or* the fact that such-and-such is the case making itself perceptually manifest to someone. As before, the object of experience in the deceptive case is a mere appearance. But we are not to accept that in the non-deceptive cases too the object of experience is a mere appearance, and hence something that falls short of the fact itself. (McDowell 2009, p. 80)

In the passage above McDowell appears to be announcing ED via the non-factorizability and metaphysical distinctness of veridical and non-veridical mental states. However,

his full account is tied to the additional theses that perception is a capacity to know, and that veridical and non-veridical states have asymmetric warrant. The robustness of McDowell's ED should lead us to ask critically whether the parasitism found in Nyāya epistemology really reaches as far as ED.

Finally, it should be noted that McDowell's ED is in part motivated by an attempt to provide a transcendental argument against epistemic skepticism. In terms of a philosophical point of departure, epistemic disjunctivism appears as a response to the *Cartesian skeptical frame*. It is generated as a response to a tradition of philosophical theorizing in the Modern period of Western philosophy that turned toward taking the skeptical argument and the method of doubt as a starting point for philosophical reasoning. One of Dasti's key comparative insights is that Nyāya epistemology starts from the default position of *trust* as opposed to *doubt*. If his understanding of this claim is correct, then the classical Indian frame for philosophical reasoning would not be similar to the *Cartesian skeptical frame*, and our interpretation of any disjunctive-like components of Nyāya should be read in an appropriately adjusted manner. In the model of interpretation that I favor, I maintain that a motivation for the Nyāya account is the search for criteria by which one can explain how perception is an instrument of knowledge by looking at how the causal processes involved in misperception are distinct from those involved in perception. I believe that this component also makes their view amenable to Burge's PAI.

#### *V. Misplacement as a Route to Metaphysical Disjunctivism*

The Nyāya misplacement theory of illusion, MTI, is one of the most interesting accounts of illusion in philosophy both East and West. The Nyāya MTI allows one to attribute to the Nyāya tradition of epistemology two claims. First, veridical and non-veridical states are metaphysically distinct because of the causal processes that go into each state. Second, the causal difference between veridical and non-veridical states renders MTI different from McDowell's ED, but consistent with Burge's PAI.

For the purposes of understanding the scope of MTI it is important to take note of the fact that non-veridical states can be further classified as being misperceptions or hallucinations. MTI is propounded primarily as a theory that applies to misperceptions.

*Misperceptions* are classified as cases where an object is seen to have a property it in fact does not have. Classical cases of this are seeing a snake as a rope, seeing a stick submerged in water as bent, seeing a white shell as being yellow, or seeing an object *a* in the distance as *F* when it is *G* (where *F* and *G* are incompatible). In each of these cases an object *a* is seen to have a property, *F*, that it in fact does not have. *Hallucinations*, on the other hand, occur when there is no object that is the foundation for false property attribution. Classic cases of hallucination do not have a particular worldly object as the ground of predication. Waking hallucinations of this kind are similar to cases of dreaming in the following sense: when one's eyes are not being stimulated through interaction with an external environment there is no particular of the external environment that is the ground of false predication. Although it is tempting in cases of hallucination to think that there is an object that is misperceived,

this is a mistake usually made on the basis of the fact that in theorizing we maybe over-focused on the fact that in both cases one's eyes are engaged with their external environment. To separate misperception from hallucination, contrast seeing a person as a post with hallucinating an elephant. In the later case, if one moves one's field of vision by moving one's head, one continues to see the elephant. By contrast, in seeing a person as a post, when one moves one's field of vision one does not continue to see something about which one is in perceptual doubt, since the object that is seen to be either a person or a post is fixed in the external environment. In cases of hallucination, the external environment merely *facilitates* the hallucinated object by providing a background. The background does not involve an object that causes the hallucination.

The core of MTI as an account of misperceptions, and not of hallucinations, can be grasped through an extended examination of a case of *coming to confirm* that one has had a misperception. Suppose that upon approaching from a distance one sees a snake, but as one comes near it is revealed to be a rope. Furthermore, as one leans forward to grab it one confirms that it is a rope and not a snake. In this succession of events we have a misperception that yields to a perception that is then confirmed via a distinct perceptual modality—tactile perception. The standard Nyāya analysis of this sequence of events is as follows.

First, on the approach to the rope, for one to see the rope as a snake and then as a rope, one must first possess the concept of a snake and the concept of a rope. For if one has never seen a snake before, then one cannot see the rope in front of one, first as a snake and subsequently as a rope. Second, in seeing the rope as a snake, what has happened is that the normal causal process by which one would see the rope as a rope has been interrupted by a memory. The memory of a snake has arisen in one and has been imposed into awareness. By contrast, when one comes closer to the rope and sees the rope as a rope, no memory has intervened into the causal stream that brings about the awareness. Rather, the causal conditions that give rise to the awareness are truth productive.

On a further elaboration of MTI, Bimal Krishna Matilal explains the view by claiming that the misperception is itself based on objective features of the situation. More precisely he claims that it is very unlikely that a subject can misperceive *A* as *B* if there are no features in common whereby *A* can be confused with or seen to be *B* by an imposition from memory. In the case of the snake-rope misperception, it is because a rope can *look like a snake* that it can be misperceived as a snake by the imposition of the memory of a snake into the causal stream of the perceiver. The point is that while it is likely that a memory can intervene and cause a rope to be seen as a snake, it is unlikely that a memory can intervene and cause, for example, an ocean to be seen as a spider. The latter case would likely be a hallucination of a spider imposed on an ocean, rather than a misperception. Moreover, the objective properties of the relevant objects play a key role in explaining the possibilities for misperception through the perceptual system.

MTI allows two important factors in accounting for misperception. On the one hand, there is the subjective profile of the individual that includes the memories and concepts that the individual possesses. If an individual does not possess the concept

of a snake, the individual cannot perceive a rope as a snake. On the other hand, the objective properties *F* and *G* of objects *A* and *B* are such that one can misperceive *A* and *B* because of *F* and *G*. Moreover, in the snake-rope misperception, it is because snakes and ropes satisfy an *objective sufficient-similarity* condition, that it is possible for one who possesses both the concept of a snake and a rope to *misperceive* the rope as a snake.

The Nyāya MTI is quite natural and insightful. The rope has the dispositional property to be misperceived as a snake because it has some characteristics in common with a snake that allow the causal nexus, which includes the person approaching, and the person's conceptual repertoire, to misperceive it as a snake. The misperception proceeds by way of triggering a memory of a snake that is then imposed into the cognitive stream whereby the rope is seen as a snake. By contrast, in the veridical case, as one comes near, the rope has the ability to be seen as it is by one who has the concept of a rope. No memory intervenes in the causal stream between sense organ and object.

Returning to our question: what is the feature that makes veridical states metaphysically distinct from misperceptions of the snake-rope kind? MTI maintains that the causal pathway and proper functioning by which the cognition arises in the individual explains the difference. In misperception a memory has intervened in an inappropriate way. In veridical perception there is no such intervention.

Gautama, a founding contributor to the Nyāya, defines perceptual cognition in his *Nyāya-sutra* as:

[a] cognition [that] arises from the contact of sense faculty and sense object, [which] does not depend on language, is inerrant, and is definite. (*Nyāya-sutra* 1.1.4)

Matilal (1986) explains the definition by showing that it is intended to rule out certain kinds of cases where perception is absent. He lists three main cases:

- (1) *Perceptual doubt*. One sees from a distance something that looks like it could either be a man standing or a tree trunk. One does not know which it is and has a perceptual doubt.
- (2) *Misperception*. One sees a snake when there is only a rope before one, or a white shell as yellow.
- (3) *Non-identification*. One sees something but does not know what it is, since one has never seen it before or heard it described.

The three cases are all cases in which we fail to perceive. In the first case, we do not perceive anything because there is epistemic indeterminacy. We are neither certain that it is a man nor certain that it is a tree trunk. In the second case, we fail to perceive because we misperceive. There is only a rope, and it is *misperceived* as a snake. The third case is a failure to perceive because by definition one does not know what one sees.<sup>7</sup>

Stephen Phillips also offers an eloquent exposition of MTI. In explaining the case of misperceiving a rope for a snake he addresses the key feature that is important for

understanding the difference between misperceptions and perceptions in Nyāya perceptual theory:

Here we touch the heart of Nyāya realism. . . . Snakehood is available to become illusory predication content through previous veridical experiences of snakes. It gets fused into a current perception *by means of a foul-up in the normal causal process* through the arousing of a snake-hood memory formed by previous experiences of snakes. The content of an illusion is to be explained causally as generated by real features of real things just as veridical perception is too, although illusion involves the projection into current perception of predication content preserved in memory whereas at least in some cases (for example, those where an indeterminate perception furnishes the qualifier) veridical perception is not shaped by memory. (Phillips 2004, p. 111; emphasis added)

The ground of the distinction is the recognition of “a foul-up in the normal causal process.” Veridical cases for the Nyāya are metaphysically cases of proper causal functioning across all causally relevant factors. Non-veridical (at least cases where a subject is perceived to see an object with a property it does not have) are cases where there is an error in the normal causal processing. The metaphysical distinction between the two cases comes from the main factor that produces each, the causal nexus. In the Nyāya account veridical perception comes about when our memory *does not* intervene in the production of a cognition that arises from sense contact with an object. In non-veridical perception, at least in misperception, our memory intervenes and introduces into the causal pathway a content that is improper.

#### VI. MTI, ED, and PAI

McDowell’s ED includes four theses: (1) perception is a *capacity to know*, (2) veridical and non-veridical states are *metaphysically distinct*, (3) veridical and non-veridical states possess *asymmetric warrant*, and (4) veridical states are *non-factorizable*. MTI grounds the claim that Nyāya epistemology and their theory of perception endorse a metaphysical distinction between veridical and non-veridical states. However, I will argue that MTI falls short of ED, and that MTI is compatible with PAI. My strategy will be to discuss MTI relative to each of the theses that are part of ED.

It is unclear whether Nyāya epistemology would endorse (1). While it may be the case that their epistemology is interested in the idea that perception is an instrument for knowledge, it is not at all clear that their account conceives of perception as a capacity to know in the way explained by McDowell: “A perceptual capacity . . . is a capacity—of course fallible—to get into positions in which one has indefeasible warrant for certain beliefs.” The main issue is that a perceptual capacity in McDowell’s account is a capacity one has in order to get into a position where one has *indefeasible* warrant. In order for the Nyāya account to be similar to McDowell’s account it would have to be the case that defeasible and indefeasible warrant are important factors within Nyāya epistemology and perceptual theory. Additionally, the claim that perception is a capacity to know is *too* broad. In particular, Burge’s PAI does not preclude perception from being a capacity for knowledge. It simply explains the

details by which perception is a capacity for knowledge in a distinct manner. What is important in identifying perception as a capacity for knowledge is how a theory frames fallibility. Burge and McDowell agree that perception is fallible; what they disagree on is the proper way to understand fallibility in perception.<sup>8</sup>

There is strong evidence that Nyāya epistemology would endorse (2), the claim that veridical states and non-veridical states are metaphysically distinct. However, it should be noted that their reason for accepting this claim is based on the idea that the causal processes that go into veridical perception are distinct from those that go into non-veridical perception. In advancing this metaphysical account they differ from the disjunctivist insofar as the disjunctivist emphasizes that the difference between veridical states and non-veridical states stems from the fact that they are only *superficially* or *phenomenologically* similar, and that phenomenological similarity is not sufficient for categorizing epistemic kinds. In general, the fact that two accounts offer a metaphysical distinction between veridical and non-veridical states entails neither that both accounts offer the same distinction between veridical and non-veridical states nor that they offer the distinction for the same reason.

It is likely that Nyāya epistemology would also deny (3), the claim that veridical states and non-veridical states have asymmetric warrant, for reasons similar to those present in the rejection of (1). The idea of justification as a component of knowledge provided by perception is not operative in the frame of perceptual and epistemic theorizing that is present in Nyāya epistemology. Moreover, Nyāya epistemology does not appear to engage the *internalist* intuition that justification as a necessary condition of knowledge requires the capacity to articulate reasons in argumentation. In particular, given that (a) the idea of asymmetric warrant is proposed against the background of the *Cartesian frame of skepticism* and the argument from illusion, in which internalism operates, and (b) these components are absent in Nyāya epistemology, it is unlikely that their account would endorse (3).

Finally, it is unclear whether Nyāya epistemology would endorse (4). The idea that perception is non-factorizable can be approached in two distinct ways.

On the one hand, MTI allows one to claim that a misperception can be factored into object, sense organ, and *memory*, and perception can only be factored into object and sense organ. As a consequence, MTI allows for the view that veridical perception is non-factorizable because it denies the presence of the *memory* state, which is present in non-veridical perception.

On the other hand, McDowell's claim that perception is non-factorizable is a denial of the claim that

having an aspect of objective reality perceptually present to one can be factored into some non-mental conditions and an appearance conceived as being the mental state it is independently of the non-mental conditions. (McDowell 2010, p. 251)

And it is an endorsement of the claim that

[a] state is the appearance it is only because it is a state of having something perceptually present to one. (McDowell 2010, p. 251)

The non-factorizability claim amounts to a position on the elements of explanatory relevance for a state being veridical. The state is a veridical *appearance* because it is an occurrence based on something being perceptually present to one. Objective reality being present is what explains the veridicality of the perception. The veridical state cannot be factored into the non-mental conditions that bring it about and the mental conditions that bring it about. The structure of the objective world is an essential ingredient in explaining the veridicality. The structure of McDowell's account of non-factorizability does not allow for a clean location of the view in Nyāya epistemology because while MTI does give us an account of *misperception* it does not give us a direct positive account of perception. The conditions that Nyāya impose on perception, for example being non-erroneous, are stated as necessary conditions, and not as positive *explanatory* conditions.

Perceptual anti-individualism offers a better option for categorizing MTI. There are two central reasons why. First, PAI and MTI require that there be objective features of the perceiver's environment that can play an explanatory role in how a misperception is produced. Recall that PAI maintains that all perception requires a background of veridical perception. MTI also maintains that a misperception requires a background of veridical perception whereby the misperception can occur. One way to see this point is by looking at how objective similarity in the perceiver's environment is used to explain misperception. In order to misperceive the rope as a snake one must correctly perceive objective features of the rope whereby it can be misperceived as a snake. If one were to fail to see the coiled rope as coiled in a specific way, it is unlikely that one would misperceive it as a snake. The objective similarity between coiled rope and coiled snake enables the possibility of misperception.

Second, the proximity principle, PP, is consistent with MTI. PP states that holding constant the antecedent psychological set of the perceiver, a given type of proximal stimulation (over the whole body), together with the associated internal afferent and efferent input into the perceptual system, will produce a given type of perceptual state, *assuming that there is no malfunctioning in the system and no interference with the system*. As noted earlier in Philips' explanation of MTI, the key feature of the theory is that "Snakehood is available to become illusory predication content through previous veridical experience of snakes. [This is because] it gets fused into a current perception *by means of a foul-up in the normal causal process* through the arousing of a snake-hood memory formed by previous experiences of snakes" (Philips 2004, p. 111; emphasis added).

What both theories take into consideration is the importance of proper functioning and non-interference with the causal system. PP maintains that a certain type of perceptual state is the output of the relevant causal process *as long as there is no malfunction or interference*. MTI maintains that misperception is a consequence of an *interference* with the causal system. Thus, Nyāya epistemology can maintain that in cases of perception the causal system across all relevant factors is functioning properly, but when a misperception occurs it is because interference has occurred in the normal causal processing.<sup>9</sup>

Ultimately, it is the emphasis on objective properties in the world and causal processing that makes PAI a safer positioning for MTI than ED.

## VII. Conclusion

There are at least two distinct kinds of comparative philosophy. On the one hand, there is comparative philosophy that aims to compare two separate traditions and debate which traditions can lay claim to the ownership of a philosophical idea. For example, a comparative question of this kind is: is the kind of pragmatism found in the work of William James and John Dewey only to be found in the West as a product of prior thought on European philosophy, or are its basic principles also found in the East, in Chinese, Japanese, or Indian philosophy? On the other hand, there is comparative philosophy that seeks constructive engagement for the purposes of continued theorizing on a philosophical issue. For example, a comparative question of this kind is: what can contemporary projects in logical theory, such as work on logical pluralism, learn from an examination of the Jain theory of sevenfold predication? In contrasting these two kinds of comparative philosophy, one should legitimately ask what kind of comparative exploration has been presented here. So far I have aimed to establish a comparative point of the first kind. That is, I have aimed to show that a careful understanding of the difference between perceptual anti-individualism and epistemic disjunctivism should lead us toward the view that Nyāya perceptual theory can be understood as a theory that is amenable to PAI rather than ED. I have tried to show that the evidence does not clearly lean toward ED, and that there is consistency between MTI and PAI. However, I have not argued what the wider significance would be for contemporary epistemology and perceptual theory, were this thesis correct. Moreover, one might ask: what insight for epistemology and perceptual theorizing can we gain through a comparative analysis of contemporary epistemic disjunctivism, perceptual anti-individualism, and Nyāya parasitism? I believe that there are several advantages that contemporary epistemology and perceptual theory can gain from a comparative investigation of Nyāya epistemology.

*First*, there is the methodological point concerning (1) the relation between a thesis and the frame of inquiry from which the thesis is advanced, and (2) what effect a frame of inquiry has on the development of a specific thesis. The fact that contemporary epistemic disjunctivism, at least in the work of McDowell, finds its roots in a reaction to Cartesian skepticism makes it the case that it has a quite different frame of inquiry from the theorizing that goes into the work of Nyāya epistemology. The latter's advancement of a metaphysical distinction between veridical and non-veridical states does not depart from a concern for refuting skepticism of the Cartesian kind. In this regard Dasti is correct to point out that Nyāya epistemology departs from a *default* position of trust as opposed to Cartesian doubt. The departure point changes how we should understand the import and consequences of the form of the perceptual theory rendered.

*Second*, while it is true that in contemporary analytic philosophy of mind there are perceptual theories of emotions and discussions of the epistemic role of emotions,

there appears to be little or no discussion in analytic epistemology over the role of emotions in perception.<sup>10</sup> That is, no philosophical discussion of how the emotions one is having at a certain time can affect how one sees objects in their environment. Neither McDowell nor Burge engage in how the emotions may play a substantive role in how our misperceptions come about. By contrast, the Nyāya MTI account highlights this factor as one account of how misperception can come about. By providing such an account, they offer several questions for epistemic and perceptual theorizing, such as: (1) which emotions are likely to cause misperceptions and (2) how exactly do emotions cause misperceptions? While it may be true that Nyāya epistemology is not the only tradition to investigate the relation between emotion and perception, their discussion of it along with other traditions presents a new opportunity for furthering research in epistemology and perceptual theory.

*Third*, much of the contemporary debate concerning skepticism in analytic philosophy concerns either Cartesian skepticism or discussions of Putnam's brain-in-a-vat hypothesis. In both of these cases we are concerned with a totalizing form of skepticism. In the former, the strong form comes about because an evil demon is hypothesized to be producing our perceptions; in the latter the strong form comes about because a mad scientist has plugged our brains up to a computer. Both of these forms of skepticism depart from an unnatural source. While both are logical possibilities that the strongest form of anti-skepticism must respond to, neither are natural possibilities that a weaker form of anti-skepticism would respond to. In terms of providing a naturalized account of how to explain misperception, the Nyāya MTI account focuses on a feature of misperception that, although non-scientifically presented, is nevertheless insightful. The account focuses on the way in which some misperceptions must be a function of a generalized form for misperception:  $x$  can be misperceived for  $y$  by agent  $A$  because  $x$  has some properties objectively in common with  $y$  that, along with the emotions and concepts that  $A$  has, provide for an account of a natural disposition on  $A$ 's part to misperceive  $x$  for  $y$  in certain circumstances.

Hopefully, future work in epistemology will aim to engage in comparative work of the constructive kind attempted here with the aim of enriching research and widening the pool of sources from which a philosophical theory can be constructed.

## Notes

I would like to thank Purushottama Bilimoria, Karin Brown, Manjula Rajan, Krupa Patel, and the students in my Spring 2012 Philosophy of Mind Seminar for inspiration, discussion, and criticism of this work. The failures that remain are due to my own inability to understand the intricate details of the theories involved. My hope, of course, is eventually to understand them.

This essay is an extended version and treatment of an argument that I discuss in my much longer treatment of perception, "Perception and its Content: An Examination of Disjunctivism and Conceptualism about Perception from the Perspectives of Phenomenology, Vision Science, NYĀYA, and Buddhist Epistemology."

- 1 – It is important to note that even in cases where a subject may lack robust concepts, such as *cow and zebra*, it is possible for the misperception of a cow for a zebra to be voiced in terms of demonstrative concepts. For example, one might on approach think, “that object looks like that,” where the first demonstrative picks out a cow and the second a zebra, in a pasture where both zebras and cows are present and the statement is understood to be a comparative judgment along a set of properties. However, on arrival, one might recoil from one’s initial judgment and think, “That object does not look like that,” recognizing that from a distance one had a misperception of similarity and that the two animals in one’s perceptual field are not similar because they are not both cows or both zebras.
- 2 – While it is true that many philosophers have taken some kind of disjunctivist turn in recent Western epistemology, it would be incorrect to note this without pointing out that there are a great number of philosophers that have not.
- 3 – In Anglo-American philosophy the term ‘asymmetric dependence’ is most often associated with Jerry Fodor’s work in semantics (1987). While there are some components in common between that usage and the use I make here of the term, I want to note that Fodor’s account is not the one that is under discussion here. Rather, the simple idea that getting things right is prior to getting them wrong is what is of central importance to the use of ‘asymmetric dependence’ in this essay.
- 4 – It is important to note that there are issues surrounding the relation between concept possession and the complete and incomplete understanding of a concept that are relevant to the issue of asymmetric dependence that go beyond the scope of this essay. For example, it appears to be possible for one to incompletely understand a concept one possesses. One can possess the concept of a right triangle without grasping that the Pythagorean Theorem holds. However, it appears impossible to possess the concept of a right triangle and deny that it is a three-sided closed-plane figure. Thus, the following question arises: which judgments about a given concept are necessary so that one can be said to possess the concept so as to be able to misapply it in a given case?
- 5 – It is important to recognize that Burge and Putnam differ in their understanding of what exactly follows from the Twin Earth thought experiment. Anti-individualism is not the same as semantic externalism. At least one key difference between the two views is concerned with the relation between sense and reference. It is a bit odd to present Burge’s Anti-individualism through the use of Putnam’s Twin Earth case; however, I do so because of the popularity of the example and the fact that it can be used to establish the basic point that factors outside an individual’s internal psychology are relevant for individuation of mental content.
- 6 – There is another way to separate the difference between perceptual anti-individualism and epistemic disjunctivism. The difference comes in looking at an analogy between chemical kinds and epistemic kinds. In the basic case,

because they are both externalist sorts of theories perhaps PAI and ED agree over the fact that chemical kinds are individuated by factors outside the individual. So, for example, because chemical theory states that chemical composition is essential to the categorization of chemical kinds, and XYZ and H<sub>2</sub>O are different chemical compounds, XYZ and H<sub>2</sub>O are distinct no matter what superficial similarities they possess. However, in the case of perception, ED maintains that since veridical states are true and non-veridical states are false, no matter what phenomenological differences there are in common between the two states, they are epistemically distinct. PAI, in contrast to ED, maintains that while it is impossible for concept possession to occur without veridicality, it is possible for two perceptual states to be identical even though one is veridical and the other is not. Moreover, PAI denies that perceptual theory will maintain that truth and falsity are the relevant individuating factors for perceptual states in the same way that chemical theory maintains that chemical composition is the relevant factor for categorizing chemical compounds. In looking at Burge's example of viewing two distinct but phenomenologically similar objects over time—dime<sub>1</sub> and dime<sub>2</sub>—the difference is apparent. Disjunctivism maintains that the two perceptual states are distinct perceptual states because their veridicality conditions are distinct. PAI maintains that the two perceptual states are similar even though they have distinct veridicality conditions.

- 7 – It is important to recognize that the definition given by Gautama and discussed by Matilal appears as if it supports disjunctivism. The mere fact that perception, in the definition given, has three necessary conditions that separate *seeing* from *perceiving* allows for the possibility that one could be in a state phenomenologically similar to a perceptual state, yet not be enjoying a perception. This reading gives the disjunctivist position an initial positive grounding. For example, one could argue that in each of the cases Matilal's explanation shows that a state that is phenomenologically similar to a genuine perceptual state is not a perceptual state because some factor of relevance is missing. But given that the factors are not phenomenological, phenomenological similarity is not sufficient for a state to be a perceptual state. While the argument is clearly available, the counter-considerations that I discuss offer another way of interpreting the overall perceptual theory offered.
- 8 – For extensive discussion of this issue see Burge 2011.
- 9 – It is important to note that the claim being made here is that both PAI and MTI look carefully at the causal role of the environment and the make-up of the subject in the production of a perceptual state. What is *not* being claimed is that both accounts offer the *same* causal story. It may very well be the case that PAI and MTI disagree on the correct causal story, and even that MTI is incorrect from a scientific standpoint over what the causal story is. However, MTI is closer to PAI than ED because it looks at the causal story in rendering an account of misperception and perception, just as PAI does. ED is in essence a denial of

HCF and does not look at causation in explaining the difference between veridical and non-veridical states; it simply looks at the veridicality conditions.

10 – While a brief survey of the literature shows no serious investigation of emotional states and perception in analytic epistemology, I doubt that the same would be true of European philosophy. I am inclined to think that European philosophers have discussed in some depth the relation between emotional states and perceptual states.

## References

- Burge, Tyler. 1979. "Individualism and the Mental." In Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling, and Howard K. Wettstein, eds., *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press) 4, no. 1: 73–121.
- . 1986. "Individualism and Psychology." *Philosophical Review* 95: 3–45.
- . 2005. "Disjunctivism and Perceptual Psychology." *Philosophical Topics* 33, no. 1: 1–78.
- . 2011. "Disjunctivism Again." *Philosophical Explorations* 13, no. 3: 43–80.
- Dasti, Matthew R. 2012. "Parasitism and Disjunctivism in Nyāya Epistemology." *Philosophy East and West* 62, no. 1: 1–15.
- Fodor, Jerry. 1987. *Psychosemantics: The Problem of Meaning in the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT/Bradford.
- Matilal, Bimal Krishna. 1986. *Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- McDowell, John. 1996. *Mind and World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- . 2008. "The Disjunctive Conception of Experience as Material for a Transcendental Argument." In Adrian Haddock and Fiona Macpherson, eds., *Disjunctivism: Perception, Action, Knowledge*, pp. 376–389. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2009. "Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge." In Alex Byrne and Heather Logue, eds., *Disjunctivism: Contemporary Readings*, pp. 75–91. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- . 2011. "Tyler Burge on Disjunctivism." *Philosophical Explorations* 13, no. 3: 243–255.
- Phillips, Stephen. 2004. "Perceiving Particulars Blindly: Remarks on a Nyāya-Buddhist Controversy." *Philosophy East and West* 54, no. 3: 389–403.
- Putnam, Hilary. 1973. "Meaning and Reference." *Journal of Philosophy* 70, no. 19: 699–711.