

Merleau-Ponty's Account of Hallucination

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Perception occupies a central place in Merleau-Ponty's early philosophy, and he offers us a rich and insightful account of what it is to perceive. An enduring problem for theorists of perception is how to account for hallucinations. Traditionally, these are taken to be experiences in which the subject is presented with things that do not exist, e.g., insects crawling under her skin. It is usual to distinguish them from illusions, which are defined as misperceptions of real things, e.g., seeing the black cat as tabby.ⁱ Despite the increasing interest in Merleau-Ponty's work, very little has been written about his treatment of hallucination. My aim in this paper is to offer a reading of his account. Merleau-Ponty takes hallucinations to result from the malfunctioning of two capacities that are properly exercised in perception. I will begin by outlining some preliminary claims Merleau-Ponty makes about hallucinations, before examining the two capacities involved in them. The final section of this paper will examine Merleau-Ponty's remarks on the phenomenology of hallucination, and link these to some claims made in the clinical literature on this topic.

1. Preliminary claims about hallucination

The literature on hallucination falls roughly into two categories: what might loosely be called clinical treatments of hallucination, and accounts of hallucination given by philosophers of perception. Clinical accounts focus on *actual* cases of hallucinatory experience, e.g., schizophrenic hallucinations. The peculiar features of such

experience are noted, and hypotheses about its nature and origins are offered. In contrast, philosophers of perception tend to think of hallucination as a *possible* kind of experience: an experience that is subjectively indistinguishable from perception, but which, unlike perception, presents the world incorrectly. There are exceptions, but on the whole, philosophers of perception are not interested in whether anyone actually has such experience. Merleau-Ponty's approach to hallucination falls into the first category. He is interested in what kinds of hallucinations people *actually* have, and discusses schizophrenic and mescaline-induced hallucinations at length. He is not concerned with types of experience that are merely conceivable.

Merleau-Ponty begins by identifying two facts that an account of hallucination must accommodate. First, most hallucinating subjects distinguish between their perceptions and their hallucinations. Merleau-Ponty makes this claim on the basis of experiments carried out on hallucinating subjects, where the experimenter creates a worldly analogue of the hallucinatory experience, thus presenting the subject with a real thing that corresponds to his hallucination. A subject who has tactile hallucinations of pricks and electric currents is blindfolded, then pricked and given an electric shock. A man who hallucinates that the doctor's hand is a guinea pig is given a guinea pig to hold when he goes to shake the doctor's hand. A patient who sees a man dressed in a certain way at a particular spot in the garden is presented with a real man wearing those clothes, standing at that spot in the garden. A woman who hears voices is played similar voices on a gramophone record. In all of these cases, the hallucinating subject is able to distinguish between the real experience and the hallucination. Moreover, the subjects say things to imply that they can tell which experience is real. The subject who is pricked and given an electric shock states that *these* experiences have been caused by the doctor; the patient who hears the

gramophone record states that these are direct voices, not *her* voices; the patient who sees the man standing in the garden is astonished, says that someone else is standing in the garden, but refuses to say that there are now two people (the hallucinated person and the real person) in the garden (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 389—90). The second fact that needs to be explained is the existence of hallucinatory deception. Although hallucinating subjects can distinguish between their perceptions and their hallucinations, they are nevertheless misled by their hallucinations.

Merleau-Ponty's initial conclusions from this experimental data are negative. First, he concludes that hallucinations cannot be sensory experiences like perceptions, differing only insofar as they occur in the absence of the appropriate worldly stimuli. If this were so, then hallucinations and perceptions would be indistinguishable for the subject who undergoes them. But as shown above, this is not the case. Merleau-Ponty also dismisses the claim that hallucinations are judgements. On this view, to have a hallucination of a man standing in the garden is not to have a sense experience of the man, but either to judge that there is a man standing in the garden, or to judge that one sees a man standing in the garden. Merleau-Ponty argues that this account cannot accommodate the strange ambivalence in subject's attitudes towards their hallucinations. On the one hand, subjects typically distinguish between their hallucinations and their perceptions, and can seemingly tell that their hallucinations are unreal. At the same time, however, subjects are deceived by their hallucinations and take them to be real. But to judge that there is a man standing in the garden (or that one is having sense experience of such a man) is to take this to really be the case. Moreover, this appears to be an all or nothing affair: I either judge that the man is there/I am seeing the man, or I do not. Thus there seems to be no way to account for

the ambivalence in subjects' attitudes towards their hallucinations if they are understood as judgements.

Finally, Merleau-Ponty considers the claim that hallucinations are beliefs. To hallucinate a man in the garden on this view is to believe that there is a man in the garden, or that one has sense experience of such a man. This suggestion is initially more plausible than the previous one because belief allows for ambivalence in various ways, so that a subject can be described as both believing p in certain contexts, and not believing p in others, even though there is no change in her mental states. However, a brief survey of such cases reveals that none captures the kind of ambivalence found in subjects' attitudes towards their hallucinations. Some ambivalent cases of believing are where the subject is not completely sure that p . Clearly, this does not describe hallucination – the subject who both takes the doctor's hand to be a guinea pig whilst distinguishing between this experience and the experience of a real guinea pig is not simply unsure whether the doctor's hand is a guinea pig. Other ambivalent cases of believing are where the subject has a suppressed belief that p . In these cases, the subject will act as if she believes p , but will not assent to the ascription of the belief. Again, this does not capture what goes on in hallucination, where the subject consciously takes her hallucinations to be both real and unreal. Further examples of ambivalent belief concern subjects who have not made all the rational connections between their beliefs. Schwitzgebel (2002) gives the example of Ella, who is learning Spanish. If asked, she assents to the claim that all Spanish nouns ending in 'a' are feminine, which suggests that she believes that this is so. However, Ella also knows that certain nouns ending in 'ista' can be used as masculine or feminine. If an 'ista' word came to mind, she would not have assented to the claim that all Spanish nouns ending in 'a' are feminine. This suggests that in

other contexts, Ella should not be ascribed the belief that all Spanish nouns ending in ‘a’ are feminine. Again, this throws no light on hallucination. The subject who is fooled by his hallucination of a man in the garden, whilst also distinguishing between this experience and a real perception of a man in the garden has not simply failed to make all the rational connections between his beliefs in the same way as Ella. The claim that hallucinations are beliefs should therefore be rejected.

How then should we account for hallucinations? Merleau-Ponty claims that although hallucinations cannot simply be sensory experiences like perceptions, there is nevertheless *something* sensory about them, because subjects describe their hallucinations in sensory terms. He suggests that hallucinations result from the exercise of two capacities or functions that are also exercised in perception. Merleau-Ponty does not offer any neat label for the first capacity. But it can be called ‘the power of summoning’, in accordance with remarks he makes in his discussion of hallucination, where he claims that in hallucination, the body ‘summons up... the pseudo-presence of [an] environment’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 396). He also describes this capacity in similar terms in his discussion of Schneider, where he describes the normal person as possessing the ‘function of “projection” or “summoning”’, which is exercised in perception and action (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 129). The second function is that of ‘perceptual faith’, which Merleau-Ponty tells us is Husserlian *urdoxa* (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 400). I will examine these two capacities in turn.

2. The power of summoning

The power of summoning is a capacity that is exercised in perception. Merleau-Ponty holds that the subject perceives the world as having an immediate bodily significance.

Rather than perceiving her environment 'neutrally', she perceives things as having a value for her in terms of her capacities to interact with them. She perceives chairs as for-sitting, cakes as edible, hollow trees as for-hiding-in, scorpions as to-be-avoided, and so on. Things appear as reachable, out-of-reach, as requiring her to move in certain ways to touch them.

Merleau-Ponty argues that perception gets its content from the perceiver's motor-skills. Motor skills are physical abilities. They range from very simple capacities, such as the ability to scratch oneself, to more complex skills, such as the ability to ride a bicycle. Motor skills affect perception in the following way. To exercise a motor-skill, one must be in the right kind of environment – e.g., I cannot exercise my bike-riding skill without a bicycle. Since engaging in an activity requires a particular sort of environment, the ability to engage in that activity essentially involves the ability to identify environments that are appropriate for doing so. An integral part of what it is to be skilled at, e.g., sailing is to be able to recognise when conditions are suitable. Someone who tries to sail his boat at low tide when the hull is touching the seabed is not a skilled sailor. Merleau-Ponty holds that recognising an opportunity to engage in some activity is not a matter of judging that one may do so. Instead, the subject simply perceives her surroundings as offering an opportunity to exercise her skill. Acquiring a motor-skill is thus partly a matter of learning to perceive opportunities to exercise it. Learning to sail, e.g., is partly a matter of learning to see when the wind is favourable, or when a storm is brewing. Motor skills thus furnish the subject with ways of perceiving the world.

Merleau-Ponty also places habits in the same category as motor skills. This categorisation makes sense if we reflect on how motor-skills are acquired. One acquires motor-skills through practice. To learn how do to *x*, one must attempt to do

x , and keep doing so. As one practices, one gets better at doing x . Practice is a matter of familiarising oneself with the activity so that engaging in it eventually feels natural. Consider, e.g., what it is like to learn to play the clarinet. To begin with, the clarinet feels unfamiliar in one's hands. The instrument feels heavy; exerting the right pressure on the reed with one's mouth is uncomfortable; one repeatedly misses the lower keys, as one is unused to how far one must stretch one's fingers to reach them. One will constantly have to think about how to play the different notes. As one practices, however, playing the clarinet starts to feel natural. One gets used to the weight of the instrument, and it no longer feels uncomfortable to hold. One does not constantly miss the lowest keys because now their position feels just right. One no longer needs to think about how to play the different notes, and one gets better at automatically making minute adjustments to the pressure one's mouth exerts on the reed to compensate for small changes in pitch as one plays more loudly or softly. Habits are also acquired through 'practice' – they just *are* one's usual ways of doing things. As with motor-skills, one's habitual ways of behaving feel utterly familiar. They also affect how one perceives the world. Merleau-Ponty gives the example of a woman who habitually wears a hat with a large feather. She is so used to wearing it that she no longer notices the extra weight of the hat on her head, and immediately sees whether her hat will fit through the doorway (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 165).

Merleau-Ponty argues that a further factor involved in perception is one's current task or project. The perceived demands for action differ in their 'urgency' depending on what one is actually doing. Those opportunities for action that relate to one's current task are perceived as more 'urgent'. One perceives the pile of dirty dishes as requiring washing, e.g., but this demand is perceived as more 'urgent' when one's parents are about to arrive for dinner. Similarly, the engrossing detective novel

is perceived as inviting one to read it, but this invitation ‘recedes’ when one is getting ready for work.

Merleau-Ponty observes that perception has an affective or emotive dimension. The affective values of perceived things contribute to our sense of what behaviour is appropriate or required. A city, e.g., can feel foreboding, and this sense of foreboding ‘invites’ us to pay close attention to our surroundings, to be alert to danger, to walk quickly, not to linger in the sinister streets. One’s home, in contrast, feels safe and familiar – it invites one to relax, to let down one’s guard. Since one’s skills and habits enable one to perceive one’s surroundings as requiring certain forms of behaviour, we should expect them to also affect the emotive dimension of perceived things. This is so. We have seen that objects which one is skilled at manipulating *feel* familiar. But habitual interactions with things also result in their having more specific affective values. Through repeated interactions with the grumpy teacher, the child comes to see her as scary, which inhibits her from asking the teacher for help with her maths homework. The ‘urgency’ of a demand is also to do with the affective dimension of things. A dog-fight involving *my* dog demands to be broken up quickly. The sense of urgency in this case is tied up with my perception of my dog as that familiar lovable canine with whom I share my home.

The upshot is that perception, on Merleau-Ponty’s account, is not the passive receiving of data from the world. Instead, it involves exercising one’s motor skills to summon appearances. In this way, the subject ‘arranges round about [her] a setting of a definite structure’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 399). However, perception is not just the summoning of appearances. There is a *correct* way to perceive things – an appropriate way for them to look and feel. As Dreyfus (2007) has pointed out, the subject does not just summon. She is also summoned by the world to perceive it in a

certain way. Thus the piano summons the skilled pianist to see it as an opportunity to exercise her skill at playing it; my dog summons me to see him as familiar and lovable, and so on. The power of summoning therefore functions normally or properly when it is exercised in response to the promptings of the world. For Merleau-Ponty, hallucinations result from the ‘running wild’ of this power (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 396). It loses contact with the world so that appearances and values are summoned in the absence of the appropriate worldly cues – ‘the initiative comes from [the subject] and has no external counterpart’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 395). The lack of worldly input means that hallucinations have a different phenomenology to perceptions. They are not proper sense experiences – ‘the victim of hallucination does not see and hear in the normal sense’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 398). This is why hallucinating subjects can distinguish between what they hallucinate and what they perceive. But hallucinations are nevertheless akin to sensory experiences insofar as they result from the exercise of perceptual capacities. The subject ‘makes use of his sensory fields and his natural insertion into the world to build up... an artificial world’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 398). This is why hallucinating subjects describe their hallucinations in sensory terms.

Merleau-Ponty’s account of hallucination provides a nice explanation of a phenomenon known as ‘delusional mood’, which typically precedes the onset of psychotic episodes in schizophrenia. Hallucinogenic drugs can also induce a similar experience. Delusional mood involves experiencing things and events as having an anomalous affective value. Sometimes this consists in a diffuse sense of strangeness and danger. In other cases, particular things are experienced as being oddly significant or meaningful (Stanton & David 2000: 333—4). Given Merleau-Ponty’s analysis of hallucination, the existence of delusional mood is unsurprising. He claims

that hallucinations occur when the power of summoning is exercised in the absence of the appropriate worldly cues. Delusional mood, on this view, just is the summoning of affective values that have no connection with the world. A sense of danger is summoned independently from things that tell the subject they are dangerous. What should be experienced as familiar is felt to be strange. Objects that should have no special significance are imbued with meaning, so that an empty crisp packet has the felt importance of a family heirloom, and thus demands that the subject save it rather than discard it, treat it as a cherished item, rather than a piece of rubbish.ⁱⁱ

3. Perceptual faith

The second capacity that Merleau-Ponty takes to be involved in hallucination is perceptual faith. Like the power of summoning, this is a capacity that is properly exercised in perception. Perceiving requires faith, on Merleau-Ponty's account, because perceivers are fallible. Many philosophers have thought that our fallibility as perceivers brings with it the possibility of scepticism. On this assumption, it is natural to read perceptual faith as the belief that the things one perceives are real. However, Merleau-Ponty has no truck with sceptical worries. Moreover, he carefully distinguishes between perception and cognition, and since perceptual faith is a capacity that is exercised in perception, it cannot be a belief one holds about the things one perceives. It follows that this obvious reading is incorrect.

A proper understanding of perceptual faith requires a grasp of how Merleau-Ponty rules out scepticism, whilst maintaining that perceivers are fallible. Scepticism trades on the thought that appearances may not accurately depict reality. It thus requires a conception of things-in-themselves, whose nature is independent from any

experience of them. Merleau-Ponty rejects this idea as incoherent. He holds that the only sensible notion of things is things-as-experienced. On this view, things just *are* as they appear. However, Merleau-Ponty's identification of things with appearances is a far cry from an idealism that denies the existence of a transcendent world. Idealism of this sort requires us to conceive of *mere* appearance – i.e., appearance that has no connection with an external reality. Merleau-Ponty thus sees idealism as appealing to the same distinction between appearance and reality as scepticism, although the idealist denies that the concept 'reality' has any application. His contrasting view is that whilst perceived things depend upon a perceiver, perceptual appearances are not independent of the transcendent world that is perceived. As we have seen, perception involves summoning appearances in response to the summons of the world. Before perception occurs, there is only 'a vague beckoning' from the world (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 278). Perceived things come into being when the perceiver responds to this vague beckoning by summoning the appropriate appearances. Merleau-Ponty writes, 'I start to focus my eyes on the table which is not yet there... my body centres itself on an object which is still only potential, and so disposes its sensitive surfaces to make it a present reality' (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 278). Although the power of summoning can be exercised in absence of the worldly cues that normally guide it – this is what happens in hallucination – the resulting experiences do not have the same quality as perceptions. It follows that perceptual appearance, on Merleau-Ponty's account, cannot be divorced from the presence of the world that occasions it. Scepticism is thus ruled out without resorting to idealism.

Merleau-Ponty's claim that things are as they appear has implications for his account of what it is to misperceive. An account of misperception must say what provides the standard of correctness for perception. One obvious answer is that the

things perceived provide this standard. A subject perceives correctly if her perceptual experience accurately depicts the nature of what she perceives, and incorrectly if it does not. But to make this claim, one must hold that things have a character that is independent of experience, i.e., one must conceive of things-in-themselves. The obvious answer is thus in conflict with Merleau-Ponty's position. Merleau-Ponty makes sense of misperception by privileging certain appearances over others. The privileged appearances provide the standard of correctness for perception. A correct perception will be one that is consistent with the privileged appearances, whilst an incorrect perception – i.e., an illusion – will be one that is inconsistent.

Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between appearances by appealing to the idea of 'maximum grip'. He writes,

'For each object, as for each picture in an art gallery, there is an optimum distance from which it requires to be seen, a direction viewed from which it vouchsafes most of itself: at a shorter or greater distance we have merely a perception blurred through excess or deficiency. We therefore tend towards the maximum visibility, and seek a better focus as with a microscope' (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 352).

One has maximum grip on an object when one perceives it in the best possible context for viewing it – when one is in the best location, the best light, not tired, ill, or sleepy, etc. (In light of the above discussion, we might say that one has maximum grip when one is in the best conditions for exercising one's power of summoning in response to the promptings from the world.) The real character of a thing is how it appears when one has maximum grip on it. The best context in which to view colour, e.g., is bright, natural light. The colour something appears in this context is its real colour. Merleau-Ponty holds that we are drawn towards the best context for viewing

something. If, e.g., I am trying to match the colour of sewing thread to some fabric, I unthinkingly move towards the window, or hold the fabric up to the light. Similarly, when trying to read without my glasses, I naturally peer more closely at the print so that it is in focus.

It is part and parcel of this idea that we have a sense of when we are *not* in the best context for viewing something. I am aware, e.g., when a book is out of focus. Merleau-Ponty describes this as a sense of tension (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 352). The sense of deviation controls movements towards maximum grip – I simply act to relieve tension, e.g., by moving the book nearer to my face. It also enables us to perceive a thing as having the same properties in different contexts, even though those contexts change the way the thing looks. A text, e.g., appears clear and sharp when held near my face, but fuzzy when held far away. Yet the latter perception is of the book being out of focus, rather than as having fuzzy print. Similarly, the shadows falling on a corduroy skirt change the colour from red to dull brown. Nevertheless, I perceive the skirt as being a uniform red colour. Merleau-Ponty holds that this is because the perception of the thing at less than maximum grip (the text as fuzzy, the skirt as brown) is affected by the sense of deviation from maximum grip. The text is thus seen as out of focus, rather than fuzzily printed; brown patches on the skirt are seen as red-in-shadow, rather than simply as brown.

Maximum grip on an object is not something that can be achieved all at once. For one thing, the best conditions for perceiving an object vary depending on which aspect of the object one is interested in. To see the texture of the brushwork on a painting, e.g., one must get up close to it, but from this position, the size of the work cannot be seen properly. Moreover, the things one perceives have depth – their shape is three-dimensional. However, there is no one best position from which to view an

object's shape. No matter where one stands, parts of the object will be hidden. Maximum grip on an object's shape is achieved by viewing it from everywhere. But one cannot view it from everywhere all at once. Instead, one has to view it from everywhere over time, by walking around the object, or turning it over in one's hands. Each perspective on the object will be accompanied by a sense of deviation from maximum grip that counteracts the distorted appearance of the object's shape in the same way that one's sense of deviating from maximum grip counteracts the brown appearance of the red skirt seen in dim light. Just as this allows one to see the colour of the skirt as red-in-dim-light, so too it enables one to see, e.g., the sides of a cube as equal-but-seen-from-one-point-in-space.

An illusion is an experience of something that is inconsistent with how that thing looks when one has maximum grip on it. This is not to say that illusions always occur when one perceives something in conditions that are not the best for viewing it. One can have less than maximum grip on something without thereby having an illusion. But sometimes, in such a context, the wrong appearances are summoned, and misperception results. As we have seen, there is a sense in which the appearance of a thing varies with the context in which it is viewed. The corduroy skirt, e.g., looks red in bright daylight, but brown in dim artificial light. It follows that whether or not something's appearance is consistent with how that thing looks at maximum grip is not simply to do with whether the two appearances are the same. Instead, when perceiving goes smoothly, the varying appearances of a thing are regulated by one's sense of deviating from maximum grip. A perception of the skirt as brown in dim artificial light is thus consistent with a perception of it as red in broad daylight, providing that the former experience is sufficiently moderated by the perceiver's sense of deviating from maximum grip. Since the real nature of a thing is the way it

appears when one has maximum grip on it, illusions can always be corrected by getting a better perceptual grip on the object of experience. But since maximum grip is not something that can be achieved all at once, one can never be sure at any one moment that one is not undergoing an illusion.

These ideas can be explained further by appealing to the horizontal structure of perceptual experience. To understand the notion of a horizon, consider the following two features of perceptual experience. First, perception presents me with entities I experience as having depth – I experience them as taking up space. Second, perception is egocentric – I perceive things from a point of view in space. If we take seriously, as Merleau-Ponty does, the thought that we really *perceive* objects with depth, rather than merely inferring that we perceive them, then it follows that parts of the things I perceive will be both hidden from me (it is impossible to see all of a three-dimensional object from one perspective) *and* somehow given in my experience. When I look down at my dog, e.g., I can only see the top of his head, his back, and the tops of his paws. But my experience does not present me with a partial collection of flat body-parts. It presents me with a dog-shaped creature that takes up a certain amount of space, seen from a particular point of view. For this to be so, my experience must present my dog as having hidden parts – a belly, a chin, bottoms of paws. Merleau-Ponty thus describes perception as having both explicit and implicit aspects. I explicitly see the top of my dog's head, his back, and the tops of his paws, whilst his belly, his chin, and the bottoms of his paws are given implicitly in my experience. The implicit aspects in perceptual experience are its 'horizons'.

Another way to describe the horizons is as presenting me with what things look like from some other point in space. In the above example, the horizons of my experience present me with what my dog looks like from underneath. The horizons of

experience are thus implicit references to further experiences one may have of the things one sees. The theory of horizons helps explain the contribution made to perception by the sense that one does not have maximum grip on what one sees. One's sense of deviating from maximum grip affects the horizons of one's experience, so that one is implicitly presented with what the object looks like when one *does* have maximum grip on it. The text thus looks out of focus rather than fuzzily printed because horizons of my experience implicitly present the text as looking sharp when closer up. Similarly, the skirt looks red-in-shadow rather than brown because perceptual horizons implicitly present the skirt as red when seen in daylight. Since horizons are implicit presentations of what something looks like in another context, a horizon can be satisfied or fulfilled by taking up the perspective referred to by the horizon and perceiving explicitly what the horizon only presented implicitly. When I look down at my dog, e.g., I am implicitly presented with what he looks like from underneath. The horizons of my experience will be satisfied by taking up this perspective on him, and so explicitly experiencing his belly, his chin, and the bottoms of his paws. It follows that an appearance of something at less than maximum grip will be consistent with how it looks when one *does* have maximum grip on it if the horizons of the former experience are satisfied by what the object looks like in the best context for viewing it. The two experiences will be *inconsistent*, if the horizons of the former cannot be satisfied by what the object looks like when one has maximum grip on it. Merleau-Ponty gives the example of seeing what appears to be a stone on the path, which on closer inspection turns out to be a patch of sunlight (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 347). When the patch of sunlight is perceived as a stone, horizons of the experience implicitly present the perceiver with what the object will look like from closer up: he is presented with further stone-like experiences. But

when the perceiver walks up to the stone (and so takes up the perspective referred to by his earlier perception), he does not have stone-like experiences. Instead, he perceives a patch of sunlight. Thus the horizons of his earlier experience are not fulfilled.

The following account of perceptual faith can now be offered. It is part and parcel of the experience of a horizon that one experiences it as capable of being satisfied by further experiences of the object. But since misperception is possible, one can never know for certain that they will be – only further perceptions can reveal whether or not this is so. To experience the horizons as capable of being satisfied is thus a matter of faith. Merleau-Ponty writes, ‘perceiving is pinning one’s faith at a stroke, in a whole future of experiences, and doing so in a present which never strictly guarantees the future’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 346). Perceptual faith is not, however, a cognitive attitude one takes up towards the things one perceives. It is a perceptual function, the exercise of which contributes to the content of perceptual experience. To perceive the horizons of one’s experience as capable of being satisfied is simply for one’s experience to have the ‘value of reality’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 399). The things one experiences feel real. Merleau-Ponty argues that cases of hallucinatory deception are cases where normal perceptual faith is disrupted. The perceived world loses the value of reality, whilst hallucinated entities gain it. This accords with the experiences of some schizophrenic subjects who describe the perceived world as feeling unreal and dreamlike during psychotic episodes. Hallucination is thus able to ‘supplant’ perception, without being qualitatively indistinguishable from it (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 399). Subjects are *not* deceived by their hallucinations because they are qualitatively identical, or even very similar to their perceptual experiences. Instead, it is an anomalous sense of what is real that leads to hallucinatory deception.

4. Phenomenological differences between hallucination and perception

Merleau-Ponty claims that perceptions and hallucinations have different phenomenology. On his account, the things we perceive are experienced as 'inexhaustible': as things that can be experienced from every point in surrounding space; in greater detail as one examines the object more closely; and as something that can be experienced by other subjects. In other words, perceived entities are presented as things that can be the intentional objects of an indefinite amount of experience. For Merleau-Ponty, these are not conclusions one draws about the perceived object; this is literally how one *experiences* it as being. Objects can be experienced in this way because of the horizontal structure of perception. Horizons of my experience present me with the hidden parts of the things I see. They refer to another perspective from which the thing I am seeing can be viewed. Through the horizons of my experience, I therefore perceive the thing I currently see as perceivable from elsewhere, which also gives me a sense of it as experience-able by others. To see the object, they will have to be located at one of the points in space to which the horizons of my current experience refer. Similarly, horizons of my experience implicitly present me with what the object looks like from closer up, i.e., what it looks like in greater detail. Perception has infinite horizons that implicitly present further experiences of the thing one perceives. Merleau-Ponty writes, 'I can feel swarming beneath my gaze, the countless mass of more detailed perceptions that I anticipate, and upon which I already have a hold' (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 395).

One may wonder how such experience is possible. To perceive an object in this way seems to require us to have *all* possible experiences of the thing in each

momentary perception of it. Apart from the implausible immensity of such a task, this would rule out all possibility of perceptual discovery. I already perceive everything there is to see of an object, so subsequent perception of it cannot reveal anything new. However, although there is a sense in which further experience of an object 'adds nothing to' my current perception of it (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 395), I can still discover new things about it through perception. This is because perception, for Merleau-Ponty, always has indeterminate aspects. Perceiving, on his account, is a matter of making the indeterminate and ambiguous, determinate. The perceiver is presented with vague something-or-others that invite further exploration. They suggest to the perceiver how they should be perceived. The subject responds to these suggestions by summoning the appropriate appearances and the vague something-or-others take shape as things with a definite character. But this process is not cumulative like painting a picture, where the more one paints, the more picture there is. Perception is necessarily of a figure on a background, which means that the whole scene cannot be made determinate all at once. The figure is the focus of one's attention; it is seen clearly and in detail. It stands out from the background, which is perceived indistinctly, as indeterminate. One experiences the area immediately surrounding the figure as populated by vague presences. The further they are from the figure, the more ambiguous they become. These vague presences can be made determinate by focusing one's attention on them, but when attention is focused on one, the others recede. It follows that on Merleau-Ponty's account, parts of the visual field are always seen ambiguously.

The horizons of experience can be indeterminate. Consider, e.g., the sight of a rhino in the distance. From faraway, I perceive a vague something-or-other. Horizons of my experience implicitly present me with what it looks like closer up.

But this implicit presentation is also ambiguous – the thing I see in the distance could be a rhino, an elephant, or a jeep. As the thing gets closer, I see that it is a rhino. I therefore discover facts about the thing I see through further perceptions of it, but my current experience of it as a rhino was nevertheless implied in my earlier perception. Thus Merleau-Ponty describes further experience of an object as ‘*developing* what is suggested by the horizons of my present experience’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 395, my italics).

Merleau-Ponty claims that hallucination lacks the full horizontal structure of perceptual experience. In hallucination, the subject is not implicitly presented with infinite further experiences she may have of its object. ‘The hallucinatory thing is not... packed with small perceptions which sustain it in existence. It is an implicit and inarticulate existence’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 395). Merleau-Ponty hints that it is futile to try and imagine what it is like to hallucinate without hallucinating (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 394). Thus we should not try to imagine what it is like for one’s experience of something to lack the infinite horizontal structure of perception. Nevertheless, it seems that we can get some purchase on the idea by reflecting on what it is like to perceive a rainbow. Rainbows are presented as located in space. However, they can never be reached. As one walks towards the place where the rainbow seems to end, the rainbow recedes so that it always appears the same distance from one’s location. Insofar as it is presented in space, one’s experience of the rainbow has horizons that present the rainbow as viewable from elsewhere. But as the rainbow cannot be reached, one’s experience of it is different from the experience of, e.g., a beam shining from a floodlight. It is plausible to suppose that one’s experience of the rainbow lacks horizons that present the rainbow as experience-able from an infinite number of points in surrounding space.

Merleau-Ponty's claims about the difference in phenomenology between hallucination and perception offer a striking and elegant account of a puzzling phenomenon: publicness. In his discussion of hallucination, Merleau-Ponty notes that an important difference between perceptions and hallucinations is that whilst perception presents its object as being situated in the intersubjective world, hallucination does not (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 395). This is consistent with later research carried out by Aggernaes (1972), who identified various characteristics that we experience reality as having. One such characteristic is publicness – we experience reality as being available to other people. He then interviewed a number of hallucinating subjects about the quality of their hallucinations, and the reality characteristic that their hallucinations tended to lack was publicness – subjects tended to experience their hallucinations as a private spectacle, which only they have the power to witness.

It is *prima facie* difficult to see what the quality of publicness might be. One might suppose that this is to do with spatiality. It seems plausible to suppose that if something is presented as located in space, it is thereby presented as something that others could see if they were close enough to it. Thus one might conclude that to experience something as public is to experience it as spatial, whilst to experience something as lacking publicness is to experience it as non-spatial. However, this reading is problematic. Some hallucinations *are* non-spatial, e.g., sometimes voices are experienced as being 'in one's head', rather than issuing from some external source. But other hallucinations do present their subject with an object that is apparently located in space. One subject, e.g., hallucinated three men who walked up to him and genuflected (Manford & Andermann 1998).

A further option is that publicness is not a quality of experience, but something one *judges* about one's experience – namely, whether or not the things one sees could be experienced by others. Difficulties arise, however, if one asks why hallucinating subjects tend to make this judgement. One might suppose they make this judgement after discovering that others cannot see or hear what they do. But although it is true that hallucinating subjects may sometimes be led to make such judgements on this basis, it will not do as a general explanation of what it is for a hallucinated entity to lack publicness. For one thing, it is unclear why subjects tend to reach the conclusion that they are witnessing a private spectacle, rather than the equally, if not more plausible conclusion that the other has bad eyesight, is lying, or is part of a conspiracy intent on tricking him. More importantly, Aggernaes' conducted his interviews with the specific aim of describing the phenomenology of hallucinations. The people he interviewed listed lack of publicness as a felt quality of their hallucinations. It follows that although subjects can judge that their hallucinations are a private spectacle, lack of publicness is primarily a quality of experience, rather than a judgement one makes about it.

Lack of publicness is apt to appear mysterious, since it cannot be identified with lack of spatiality, and it is not a judgement one makes about the objects of experience. However, Merleau-Ponty's claim that hallucinations lack the full horizontal structure of perceptions allows him to account for publicness in the following way. Horizons implicitly refer to another perspective one may adopt on the thing one experiences. They refer to other places in space from which the thing one sees may be seen. The horizons of one's experience therefore give one a sense that the thing one is looking at is available to others, i.e., is public. To see the object, others have to be located at one of the places in space referred to by the horizons of

one's perception. Hallucinations, on the other hand, lack the infinite horizons of perceptual experience. Thus they do not present their objects as things that can be viewed from a variety of different perspectives. In this way, hallucinated objects are not experienced as a part of the intersubjective world. As Merleau-Ponty writes, 'the hallucinatory phenomenon... is not *accessible*, there is no definite path leading from it to all the remaining experiences of the deluded subject, or to the experiences of the sane' (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 395).

5. Summary

Merleau-Ponty argues that hallucinations result from the malfunctioning of two perceptual capacities: the power of summoning and perceptual faith. The power of summoning is the ability to summon appearances. In perception, one does this in response to the promptings of the world. Perceptual experience, on Merleau-Ponty's account, has infinite horizons that implicitly present the subject with what the object of her perception looks like from elsewhere. The horizons are presented as capable of being satisfied, but since illusion is possible, the subject cannot know in advance that they can be fulfilled – only further experience can reveal whether or not this is so. To perceive the horizons as capable of being satisfied is thus a matter of faith. But perceptual faith is not a cognitive attitude one takes up towards the things one sees. It is instead, a perceptual function that manifests in a sense of 'realness' that permeates perceived things. To perceive the horizons of experience as capable of being satisfied is thus simply to perceive the things one sees as real. Hallucination occurs when these two perceptual capacities lose contact with the world. In such a case, the power of summoning is exercised independently from the worldly cues that normally guide

it. Appearances are summoned, but – Merleau-Ponty claims – they lack the full horizontal structure of perceptions. Hallucinated entities do not appear as things that can be the intentional object of an indefinite amount of further experience.

The lack of horizons also explains why hallucinated things lack publicness. The horizons of experience implicitly refer to other perspectives from which the object of experience may be perceived. In perception, the objects are presented as things that can be viewed from all points in surrounding space. One therefore has a sense of them as things that are fully public – other people can see them if they take up one of the perspectives referred to by the horizons of my experience. This is not so for hallucinations. The lack of horizons means that hallucinated entities are simply not presented as things that can be seen from an indefinite amount of perspectives. Hallucinations thus have a different phenomenology to perceptions, which explains why subjects normally distinguish between them. Hallucinatory deception occurs when perceptual faith is disrupted. In such cases, perceived entities lose the quality of realness; they appear dreamlike, or unreal. At the same time, hallucinated entities gain the value of reality. The subject is thus deceived by her hallucinations because they feel more real than what she perceives.ⁱⁱⁱ

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ⁱ There are cases that put pressure on the traditional distinction. The sensory distortions resulting from the use of certain drugs, and those associated with various pathological conditions, do not always involve experiencing something that does not exist. A commonly reported feature of LSD experiences,

e.g., is of the floor rippling in three-dimensional, kaleidoscopic patterns. Nevertheless, we are inclined to call these ‘hallucinatory’ phenomena. Thus hallucinations should perhaps be distinguished from illusions on the grounds that the former are abnormal experiences brought about by drugs or illness, whilst the latter occur in normal subjects. However, since the discussion in this paper focuses on Merleau-Ponty’s treatment of those hallucinations which present the subject with non-existent things, the traditional distinction between hallucination and illusion is sufficient for present purposes. I would like to thank an anonymous referee for raising these issues.

ⁱⁱ Experience recounted to me by schizophrenic subject.

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