

Seeing Minds: Exploring an action-oriented account of social perception

Nivedita Gangopadhyay
Center for Subjectivity Research
University of Copenhagen

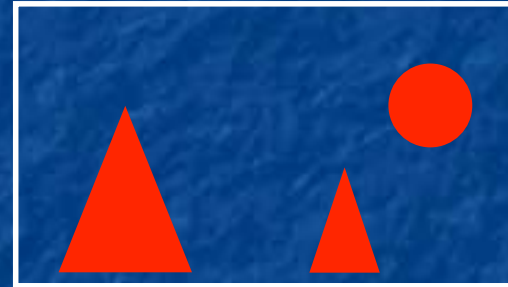
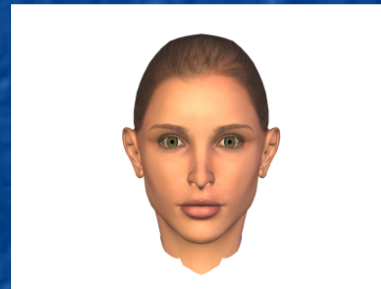
Modern phenomenological approaches to the problem of other minds

“Phenomenological views... involve non-mentalizing, embodied, perceptual approaches to questions of understanding others and the problem of intersubjectivity.

We begin from the recognition that the body of the other presents itself as radically different from any other physical entity, and accordingly our perception of the other's bodily presence is unlike our perception of physical things.

The other is given in its bodily presence as a *lived body*, a body that is actively engaged in the world.” (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008, p.183)

Perception, physical entities and attribution of mental states:



When do perceived physical entities start becoming the object of mental-state ascriptions?

Perception of “embodied intentionality”:

Perception of the other’s skilful bodily engagement with the world

Phenomenological claim:

There is an *experiential* difference in the perception of embodied intentionality and the perception of non-intentionality.

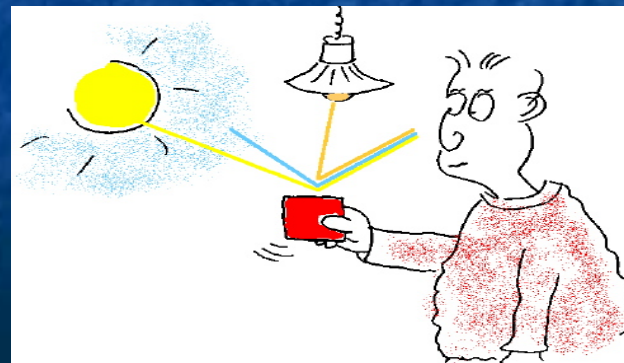
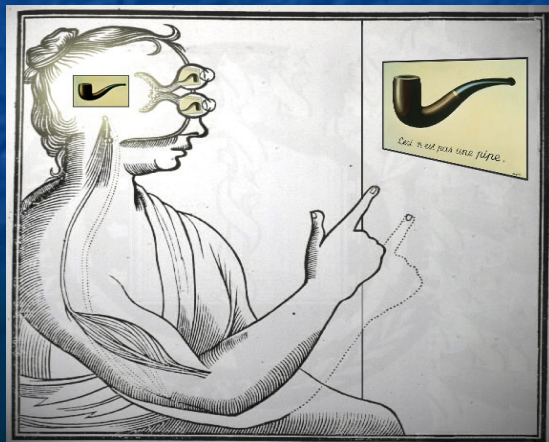
The other’s embodied intentionality is *perceptually given* in a way that is different from the givenness of non-intentionality.

The perception of embodied intentionality:

- There is a genuine, nontrivial difference in the *informational content* of the perception of embodied intentionality and the perception of non-intentionality
- The difference in perceptual information leads to a further difference in the way information is *processed* in case of perception of embodied intentionality as opposed to the perception of non-intentionality
- The difference plays out from the low-level description of sub-personal processing to the higher personal-level descriptions

How to account for the difference in the informational significance of the perception of embodied intentionality and the perception of non-intentionality?

An account of perception, where the mechanisms of perception and mechanisms of action are tightly coupled



An “action-oriented account of social perception” built on the following two claims:

- a) Perception is an *active process of participation* by the perceiver in enabling a perceptual state and is not a matter of the perceiver’s passive representation of environmental features
- b) The informational significance of the other’s perceived embodied intentionality is adequately captured in terms of perception as an active process of participation by the perceiver in enabling a perceptual state

The perceived embodied intentionality of the other contains richly structured information, which is intelligible as *affording the perceiver a certain type of (social) interaction.*

Thank you