

PHILOSOPHICAL LECTURE

WHAT'S REALLY WRONG WITH
PHENOMENALISM?

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Introduction

PHENOMENALISM has been refuted so often that it might seem tedious and unnecessary to examine it again. But I, for one, do not find the present state of discussion entirely clear or satisfactory. Some current criticisms of phenomenalism rest upon appeals to ordinary language, which are in principle incapable of deciding a philosophical issue; others on dubious general doctrines about the impossibility of the sort of language to which phenomenalism would commit anyone who accepted it; others on too brusque and sweeping a denial of the 'sense-data' or 'appearances' in terms of which phenomenalism is stated; others on what appear, at least in default of further explanation, to be mere technical difficulties in working out the details of a phenomenalist account. As I see it, the essential case against phenomenalism requires none of these. At the same time, I admit that this is a complex problem; there are many relevant arguments, which I cannot go into in detail, but which are, fortunately, so familiar that there is no need to do so. At the price of a sketchy treatment of tactics, I want to pay some attention to strategy, and to consider how the main arguments fit together. However, I should make it clear that my title is intended not as a rhetorical question but as one that admits of an answer, and I shall try to show what at least the outline of that answer should be.

Two kinds of phenomenalism: the initial argument for realism from simplicity

The name 'phenomenalism' is applied to at least two closely related views. One is a doctrine about what there is, namely that there are minds and certain mind-dependent entities, variously described as experiences, ideas, perceptions, sensations,

appearances, phenomena, sense-data, and so on, and *there is nothing else*. What we commonly take to be things existing, events occurring, processes going on independently of minds and outside them, including trees, mountains, stars, clouds, rainbows, sounds, smells, shadows, light, electromagnetic fields and radiation, molecules, neutrons, and whatever happens to these things or whatever they do, are somehow to be explained away as not occurring apart from minds. In this sense 'phenomenalism' is another name for idealism, and its opposite is realism about a non-mental world.

But this sort of phenomenalism seems highly implausible, and many philosophers have been reluctant to embrace it in a naked state. Berkeley remained true to its principles, but softened its implications by postulating a divine mind. Hume thought that no one, however irresistible he found the arguments in its favour, could seriously believe it for any length of time. But why is it implausible? That it flies in the face of common sense is hardly an adequate reason for philosophers to reject it. Common sense is only vulgar prejudice unless there are arguments to support what it holds. Fortunately there is at least one powerful argument to support it, the argument from simplicity. What this argument appeals to is simplicity in a rather special sense. Its principle is that one view is to be preferred to another in so far as the first resolves what on the other view would be improbable coincidences. Phenomenalism, without Berkeley's God, is committed to the intermittent existence of things, and hence to interpreting successive observations of the same thing as the repeated springing into existence of complex groups of phenomena just like groups that passed out of existence some time before; and this sort of coincidence would occur not just a few times, but on innumerable occasions. Also, whatever observed phenomena we now explain in terms of unobserved causes would be left unexplained. In short, it would be an utterly improbable coincidence that our perceptions should lend themselves as well as they do to being interpreted as intermittent observations of a world of persisting things, unless there was some set of persisting entities related in some systematic way to what we perceive. The realist hypothesis, in a broad form which would include even Berkeley's account of the mind of God, is overwhelmingly supported by these considerations against its phenomenalist rival.

But this is only one form of phenomenalism. The other, recently more prominent, is a doctrine about language and

meaning, the doctrine that statements about such things as I was listing, material objects and the like, can be either translated into or in some other way reduced to statements about such mind-dependent items as sense-data. At first sight this linguistic phenomenalism avoids the implausibility of the previous view. It can repeat Berkeley's claim that by it 'we are not deprived of any one thing in nature'.¹ No ordinary statements about independent and persisting things are denied: we are merely offered an interpretation of them. Has this table continued to exist while no one was in the room? Yes, of course; but this only means that if anyone had had certain experiences he would have had certain others. Linguistic phenomenalism resolves the dispute between realism and idealism, explaining that these are only alternative languages, only different ways of saying the same thing.

However, this peace settlement may well seem rather one-sided. Whereas the idealist has achieved all his objectives, the realist is left frustrated and helpless. He is allowed to use the words he wants to use, but they are prevented from expressing his distinctive view. His verbal weapons have been changed from steel into lead. Linguistic phenomenalism encapsulates realism within idealism.

But if so, it is still at variance with common sense. If it is contrary to common sense to say that trees and stars do not exist apart from minds, it is equally contrary to common sense to say that saying that they do exist apart from minds boils down, on analysis, to an admission that they do not. The linguistic phenomenalist can speak with the vulgar, but only with his tongue in his cheek. Consequently, his view is still exposed to the argument from simplicity which gives common sense whatever authority it has. Admittedly phenomenalism can encapsulate the argument from simplicity much as it encapsulates the realism which that argument supports, but then the argument becomes a merely pragmatic one: the simpler, realist, way of speaking is better only because it is more economical and therefore more convenient. But the serious argument remains outside. What even on the linguistic phenomenalist view simply is there contains all the same fantastic coincidences of recreation, all the same causal incoherencies as before. This point is analogous to a criticism of reductive views of unobserved theoretical entities in science. The hypothesis that there are electrons helps to explain the relevant observations, and is confirmed by its success in

¹ *Principles*, § 34.

explaining them, only so long as it is taken as asserting that there is really something there. If it is taken instead as merely a convenient way of reporting and predicting experimental results, it has no explanatory power, and these predictions will be in need of some other support.

Linguistic phenomenalism, then, only appears to remove the paradoxical character of the original doctrine, and it has well-known difficulties of its own. The proposed translation of material object statements into sense-datum statements is only foreshadowed, never carried out. There are insuperable obstacles to equivalent translation between the two 'languages', in that the truth-conditions of a material-object statement do not coincide with those of any complex of experience reports. It has been doubted whether there even *could be* genuine sense-datum statements, and it is still more doubtful whether there actually *are* any. If there are, they may turn out to be of some such form as 'It looks to me as if there is a book on a table' and hence to be parasitic upon the language of material objects: this would appear to make circular any attempt to reduce the language of material objects to that of sense-data.

The main phenomenalist argument: central thesis and two continuations

Despite these difficulties, phenomenalist views continue to have some attraction for philosophers. There is a counter-argument which lends them plausibility by appearing to undermine any rival view.

This argument consists of three main stages. First, it tries to establish what I shall call the central thesis, that the immediate objects of perception, whatever we directly see, hear, taste, and so on, are mind-dependent entities, say sense-data. Secondly, this thesis is combined with some empiricist view about meaning to yield the conclusion that the meanings of all our statements must be based upon these mind-dependent entities, and this in turn leads to the doctrine of linguistic phenomenalism, that all our statements are really about sense-data. Thirdly, the same central thesis is combined with some principles about evidence and legitimate inference to form the 'veil of perception' argument: any inference from these immediate but mind-dependent objects to outside counterparts or causes of them would be unsound: even if we could meaningfully assert that material objects, etc., exist apart from minds, we could never have any good reasons for doing so.

This whole argument, therefore, rests on the central thesis, and it is this, understandably, that has come most under attack. Many critics have argued that the required sense-data cannot be found, and that what we see, hear, and feel directly are ordinary objects and occurrences, that we are acquainted with the components of the common world. But these criticisms are not completely satisfying. It seems that some meaning *can* be given to talk about sense-data, and while no doubt there is an entirely ordinary and satisfactory sense in which we see tables and shadows and smell the scent of flowers, there may also be a sense in which some more inward objects are more directly perceived. Appeals to the adequacy of ordinary usage cannot rule out this possibility: they only put on the sense-datum theorist the onus of saying more clearly what he means. For example, Austin's criticisms in *Sense and Sensibilia* of the attempt to use the 'argument from illusion' to establish this central thesis amount to a refusal to let the argument get off the ground. A more conciliatory approach might be more fruitful. Can we not consider whether there are any senses, even odd or perverse ones, in which this central thesis might be acceptable, and, if so, whether in any of these senses it will support either of the intended continuations of the phenomenalist argument?

Alternative interpretations of the central thesis

We can, of course, dismiss the attempt, implicit in some of the literature, to establish the central thesis by double definition—e.g. by first defining 'sense-data' as 'whatever we directly perceive', and then saying that it is part of the meaning of the term that sense-data are mind-dependent. This fallacy is exposed as soon as it is stated. A more plausible proposal is that we should introduce sense-data as hypothetical entities, postulated to explain how sensory illusions can occur. They would then be actual things which we observe, inside our heads, in much the sort of way that we ordinarily assume that we observe whatever we feel with our hands or taste with our tongues: sense-data would be objects which made direct contact with some internal sense-organs, with no intervening causal processes. When I see double, there is somewhere inside my head a sort of double-image photograph, which I observe when it makes contact with an inner eye that works rather more like a tongue. We refer these objects to an outside world. In principle this is always a mistake; but in cases of standard perception the mistake is in a way successful; it is rewarded and is reinforced.

perhaps with some adjustment, while in cases of recognized illusion it is withdrawn. Now an hypothesis of this sort would help to explain some of the stock illusions, though it is by no means the only possible explanation of them. But it is an empirical hypothesis about the internal mechanism of perception, and physiologists probably know enough about that mechanism to say that this hypothesis is false. What is more, *these* sense-data would be physical, though intra-cranial, objects; though causally dependent upon our outer sense organs and nerves, they would not be *mind*-dependent; they would not be necessarily as we perceive them to be, but could be misperceived. Even if the central thesis were true in this sense, then, it would have no tendency when combined with any theory of meaning to support the conclusion that all our statements are ultimately about mind-dependent entities; and the veil of perception argument would fail too: after recognizing these data for what they were, we could use them to confirm a realist hypothesis about the ordinary world.

This 'inner eye' or rather 'internal taste' theory would not, therefore, serve the phenomenalist's turn; perhaps what he needs is rather the view that a sense-datum is an intentional object. There is a construction with, if not a sense of, such verbs as 'see' according to which in 'I see a table', the phrase 'a table' functions as an internal accusative, in which whatever I see is necessarily exactly as I see it, but it is not necessary that what I see should be there. With this construction I can see pink elephants, though there are none, I can hear the telephone bell ringing, when it is not, as well as when it is, and I can feel that the ground is rocking not only when there is an earthquake, but also when I have just come off a ship. A sense-datum in this sense need not be simple: it may be described by a noun or a noun-phrase or a 'that'-clause, and the words used will normally belong to the language of material objects. These sense-data do have some of the features traditionally ascribed to them. They are exactly as we perceive them, and they are in a very clear sense mind-dependent: they exist only as the contents of experiences. It is not surprising that they obey a logic very different from that obeyed by independently existing things. If I see two lines at right angles without seeing either that they are equal or that one is longer than the other, my sense-datum will be a pair of lines of which neither is longer than the other, but which are not equal in length either; similarly I can have as a sense-datum a row of less than twenty books, which, how-

ever, is not a row of nineteen books, or of eighteen, or of any other definite number. And so on. It would be surprising if independent entities had this queer logic, but it is just what we should expect from items that are governed by intentional operators. Introduced consistently in this way, sense-data are unobjectionable, and I see no objection to saying that they alone are perceived directly, meaning intentionally, as intentional objects, and hence infallibly in a rather special, indeed trivial, way: 'what we see' in this sense is by definition just as we see it. Of course we hardly need the argument from illusion to introduce *these* sense-data: the mere logical possibility of error is enough to distinguish what I perceive 'intentionally' from what is there. I shall consider later whether these intentional sense-data will help either of the phenomenalist's continuation arguments; but first I want to show how we can go wrong if we combine this approach, which is in itself unobjectionable, with another one.

In another construction 'perceive', 'see', 'hear', and so on require existing objects: in this construction I can see a table only if there is a table there: 'I hear a bell ringing' entails 'There is, independently, a bell ringing which I hear.' This construction is incompatible with the intentional one. It is not, of course, that they cannot both hold at once: whenever I see a table correctly, recognizing it as such, it is true both that I see a table 'intentionally', and that there is a table which I see. But the term 'a table' cannot play both roles at once: the same entity cannot be both an intentional object and an existent one. But failure to maintain this distinction can lead to either of two opposite mistakes.¹ On the one hand it may lend an unwarranted support to a kind of naïve realism: it may suggest that there is something necessarily absurd about the quite coherent sceptical doubt, 'Perhaps things are not as they seem', which might be expressed by saying 'Perhaps what I see is never what I see.' It is true that the two uses of 'what I see' could hardly coexist in a language unless its users took it for granted that these uses would normally coincide: but it would be fallacious to convert this into a linguistic argument for the truth of the realist view.² On the other hand, and more importantly, this

¹ Both mistakes are noted by G. E. M. Anscombe in 'The Intentionality of Sensation', in *Analytical Philosophy* (Second Series) edited by R. J. Butler, pp. 158–80, especially at p. 171.

² There is at least a hint of this fallacious argument in J. L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, p. 98.

confusion of constructions may generate the conception of sense-data, ideas, and so on as semi-independent entities: independent enough to be the existent objects, not merely the contents, of perception, and yet still in some obscure way mind-dependent, not wholly real. It is this conception, I think, that plays the key role in the phenomenalist's use of the veil of perception argument, and it is worth seeing how the argument from illusion contributes to it. While tramping across the desert I see, with the intentional construction, an oasis. Then, by confusion with the existent object construction, there must be, somewhere, the oasis which I see. But it is either an illusion or a delusion: there is no material oasis anywhere near. So there must be, as the existent object of my seeing, a non-material oasis and, bringing in again the intentional construction, it must be mind-dependent. By analogy, it is reasonable to suppose that there are similar mind-dependent existent objects of all my perceptions, even the non-illusory ones—after all, these also have mind-dependent intentional objects. And now I am enclosed in a circle of mind-dependent objects: how can I ever break out? A parallel argument may help to show up the confusion in this one. I ask, in the intentional construction, for an apple. Then, by the existent object construction, which also holds for verbs of asking, there is an apple for which I ask. But perhaps there is no material apple anywhere around. So there must be an internal mind-dependent apple, an apple-like desideratum, for which I am asking in the first place. Extend this analysis to all cases, even those where there are apples about, and I am in the predicament of asking always for mind-dependent desiderata, unable to get past them and ask for a real apple, however plentiful apples may be.

This is, I believe, the most important version of the central thesis. It rests essentially upon the argument from illusion, but also upon a confusion between the two ways of thinking about perception that are crystallized in the two incompatible constructions. It invents direct objects of perception, and confers on them a suggestion of mind-dependence. But whereas it is clear what 'mind-dependent' means as applied to intentional objects, to the mere contents of experience, it is not clear what it would mean when applied to what are also existent objects. And it is these objects of mixed status and confused origin that most clearly give rise to the veil of perception problem.

Another possible meaning of 'perceive directly' is 'perceive innocently' or 'without interpretation'. It is this meaning that

leads to the notion of *sensing* as a process more primitive than perceiving. Thus what I see 'directly' in this sense is not a book on a table but a blue expanse surrounded by a brown one. Here again we must be using the intentional construction, for with the existent object construction I could still be seeing a book on a table, even if I did not recognize it as such. We have, of course, lost this perceptual innocence. We lost it in infancy. Or perhaps we never had it, having inherited, as a sort of original sin, the instinctive tendency to interpret what we perceive. But, by a great effort, we may occasionally regain it. Here, then, is another possible and acceptable meaning of 'perceive directly', one which gives us as the intentional objects of a hypothetical and perhaps occasionally recovered direct perception such traditional sense-data as colour-patches, sounds, and smells.

We can list, therefore, several possible interpretations of the 'direct perception' mentioned in the central thesis, with corresponding views of the sense-data that are so perceived—'inner eye' or 'internal taste'; intentional object; incoherent semi-intentional object; and perceptual innocence. The first view is probably mistaken, and in any case does not provide mind-dependent objects; the third is logically indefensible. But the other two are defensible, and it matters not in the slightest how far ordinary language countenances either of these senses of 'directly perceive'; all that matters is whether either of these defensible views will serve as a premiss for either of the continuation arguments.

Examination of arguments from meaning for linguistic phenomenalism

Let us take first that which derives linguistic phenomenalism by combining the central thesis with an empiricist theory of meaning. But here we have a choice between a verificationist theory of meaning and a constructive one. Is the meaning of a statement determined by the ways in which it could be verified or confirmed or supported? Or can a statement acquire a determinate meaning from being made by the use of a sentence whose component parts and pattern of construction have been given meaning separately? Despite obvious problems of formulation, I think that theories of each kind can be coherently stated, and also that the constructive theory can incorporate what might look like a fragmentary verification account, namely that we may give meaning to some sentences-in-use in the first place by indicating what would make them true, but can go on to show how separate meanings for words, phrases,

and sentence-structures can be sorted out from these sentence-meanings, to be recombined in novel ways to provide meanings for further sentences for which we can no longer point directly to what would make them true.

The constructive theory of meaning, which I think is the correct one, combined with the intentional object view of sense-data as the contents of experiences, leads only to conclusions which are harmless and indeed obviously right. Whatever we assert about the world must be built up out of features—qualities, relations, propositional structures, or what have you—which are to be found somewhere within the contents of our perceptual—including introspective—experiences. This conclusion remains indeterminate until we have found what kinds of building up are possible, but there is no reason to question its truth. But equally, it has no tendency to support linguistic phenomenalism. Our statements must be about things identified and described in ways that occur as contents of experience, but this does not mean that they must be *about* experiences, that they can assert only that certain experiences do or would occur. To reach this phenomenalist conclusion, we should need to add two further premisses: the first, that it is part of every content of experience that it is perceived, the second Berkeley's rule that it is impossible to abstract this content from its being perceived. This second premiss is both false and foreign to the spirit of the constructive theory of meaning which we are for the moment using; the first is not only false but necessarily so, since if it were true there would be an infinite regress of perceivings: if being perceived were part of the x which is perceived and which, being an intentional object, is just as we perceive it, then what we perceive must include also that we perceive that we perceive x , and so on *ad infinitum*. What we perceive, as an intentional object, is mind-dependent; but mind-dependence is not part, let alone a non-detachable part, of what we perceive. Mind-dependence, therefore, will not be carried over by a constructive theory of meaning into the meaning of everything we say.

What if we add the requirement of perceptual innocence? Since our actual perceptions are usually not innocent, we cannot have a factual premiss that we perceive, 'intentionally', only colour patches and the like, and consequently we cannot thus support the conclusion that the meanings of all our statements *are* constructed out of components of this sort. But the phenomenalist might *propose* that, perhaps for greater clarity, we should strive after perceptual innocence, and therefore

recommend that the meanings of all our statements should be revised so as to be built up only out of such pieces as we can see, hear, feel, and so on without interpretation. Such a proposal-variant of the central thesis, combined with a theory of meaning, will commit us only to a proposal-variant of the corresponding conclusion. There may be discussion whether this proposal is a good one, but the main thing is that it seems relatively harmless: it would be a longer job to construct a description of the ordinary real world on this basis, but not an impossible one. Nor would this proposal transform a real world into a mind-dependent one.

While rejecting the suggestion that what we perceive is perceived *as* mind-dependent, we should perhaps consider the possibility that what we ('intentionally') perceive *is* mind-dependent not only in the sense in which this is obviously true, that it occurs only as the content of an experience, but in the further sense that it is *unlike* what exists anywhere else. Though Berkeley was wrong in saying that an idea *can be* like nothing but an idea,¹ it is barely possible that an idea never *is* like anything else. Some of the contents of our perceptions, the secondary qualities as we perceive them, probably are unlike anything that exists on its own, and it is conceivable that they should all, or almost all, be in the same boat. The suggestion that this held even for propositional structures would indeed be what I have called elsewhere *operationally self-refuting*:² it could not be coherently put forward; but even this does not rule it out completely. If all or almost all our intentional objects were mind-dependent in this further sense, then all our beliefs about an independent world would be infected with an error so pervasive that we could hardly call it error: our statements would be not so much false as completely unable to get a grip on the world. In these circumstances it might be prudent to forgo the liberty to talk about independently existing things which our language would still, on the constructive theory of meaning, grant, and deliberately confine ourselves to talking about experiences. Linguistic phenomenalism may be put forward as a proposal on the assumption that this possibility is, or might be, fulfilled. This possibility cannot be ruled out, as some have tried to rule it out, by *a priori* arguments.³ Ordinary error is indeed parasitic upon correct judgement, in that the basic form of

¹ *Principles*, § 8.

² In 'Self-Refutation—A Formal Analysis', in *Philosophical Quarterly*, xiv (1964), pp. 193–203.

³ e.g. G. Ryle in *Dilemmas*, pp. 94–9.

ordinary error consists in ascribing to a successfully identified subject the wrong member of a pair of alternative descriptions both of which we have found exemplified elsewhere. But the fact that it is impossible that all our perceptions and all our beliefs should be erroneous in this way does not prove that our perceptions and beliefs could not be infected with the more radical sort of error that made them simply unable, as I said, to get a grip on the world. On the other hand, we have no reason to suspect that anything like the extreme form of this possibility is fulfilled, and our initial argument from simplicity can be adapted to show that it is most unlikely. Even this proposal-variant of linguistic phenomenalism, therefore, has few attractions.

The verificationist theory of meaning seems to me utterly implausible; still, it has had a considerable vogue, so we should inquire what difference it would make. On this view, when we retrace the steps by which statements are or could be supported, we also discern what they really mean. All statements must really be about whatever those basic ones are about which are the terminal points in the process of confirmation. Empiricist assumptions would lead us to say that all our factual statements rest ultimately on perceptual judgements; but these are mainly judgements about the characters and arrangements of everyday things, observed directly in the ordinary sense. This verification theory *would* therefore reduce statements about scientific entities to statements that are mainly about Austin's 'moderate-sized . . . dry goods', but it does not, without some further assumptions, reduce statements about material objects to statements about sense-data.

But the phenomenalist might resort again to a proposal: we should go behind what are now the terminal points of confirmation, and treat material object statements as themselves calling for verification by something more basic. These somethings might be more basic in either of two ways: they might be statements that mention only the objects of innocent sensation, or they might incorporate the perceiver, or both. Specimen basic statements of the three kinds would be: 'There is a blue expanse surrounded by a brown one', 'It looks to me as if there were a book on a table', and 'It looks to me as if there were a blue expanse surrounded by a brown one'. The motive for the proposal, however implemented, would be the search not exactly for certainty but for greater thoroughness of verification and support. The second proposal could be summed up by

inverting the slogan of a rival verificationism, and saying that an 'outer object' stands in need of inward criteria.¹ The first proposal, without the second, even when combined with a verification theory of meaning, would not lead to phenomenalism; the world to whose description it would confine us would be much impoverished, even dubiously three-dimensional, but still a world, containing unsensed and independently existing sensibilia. But the second proposal, with or without the first, but combined with a verification theory of meaning, would commit us to linguistic phenomenalism, but of course only as a proposal, as the recommendation that we *should* not mean by our statements anything more than that certain experiences do or would occur. Being a proposal, it cannot be false, only good or bad: but it is one which I should find it fairly easy to reject. The greater thoroughness of basic confirmation would be purchased at the excessive cost of confining ourselves to statements which by themselves present a most improbable world picture, as our initial argument about simplicity shows. And in any case the phenomenalist conclusion-proposal follows from the premiss-proposal (to incorporate the perceiver in the statements we treat as basic) only with the help of a verification theory of meaning which can, I believe, be rejected on other grounds.

Examination of the 'veil of perception' argument

The 'veil of perception' argument can be dealt with much more briefly. There are questions about our present position, about how we got there, and about its justification. In our present position there is no problem of how to break out of a circle of mind-dependent entities; as the previous discussion about meaning shows, we are out of it already. Our statements and the perceptual judgements and beliefs they express are usually about independently existing things, not about mind-dependent ones. The fact that the contents of our perceptions are, as intentional objects, mind-dependent does not mean that any inference is needed before we can say how things are. There is an interesting question how we were able to reach this position, starting perhaps with more innocent perceptions and gradually learning to interpret them. But this is a genuine question in genetic psychology, and there is no need to twist it into a rhetorical question in philosophy. The question how we

¹ Cf. L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, i, § 580. For the implicit verificationism, see Judith Jarvis Thomson, 'Private Languages', in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, i, (1964), pp. 20-31, especially at p. 29.

can retrospectively justify this interpretation is easily answered: our everyday judgements can be regarded as a system of hypotheses which would explain very adequately our innocent perceptions. No doubt this is neither how we ordinarily think about these judgements nor how we arrived at them, but it is legitimate so to regard them if the question of their justification is raised. And the same answer can be given if we choose to take as the evidence not the contents of our innocent perceptions but the fact *that we have* whatever perceptions, innocent or otherwise, we actually have. Once the problem of meaning is overcome, as it is by the constructive theory, we can treat the realist view of the world as an hypothesis which explains that evidence and is confirmed by it—an hypothesis interpreted realistically, not as a mere convenient way of speaking. The veil of perception problem, then, ceases to be a difficulty as soon as we sort out the defensible versions of the central thesis. It seems insoluble only when we adopt the incoherent view of sense-data, mixing up intentional objects with existent objects, and perhaps incorporating in the mixture the 'inner eye' and 'perceptual innocence' views as well.

Conclusion

In short, I believe that we both should and with safety can give the phenomenalist considerably more rope than some recent discussions would allow him. Rather than attempt bluntly to rebut his central thesis, we can see in what senses it might be accepted. If we tidy up the notion of mind-dependence, and show that only intentional objects are mind-dependent in any clearly stutable way, and adopt a constructive theory of meaning, we take all the sting out of the phenomenalist's counter-argument, and thus permit the initial argument from simplicity to operate with overwhelming force. The best case that the phenomenalist can make out is for linguistic phenomenism as a recommendation only, and even this rests both on a verification theory of meaning and on the perverse tolerance of an improbable conclusion for the sake of greater security at the start.

But perhaps the phenomenalist will say that my whole discussion is unfair in that I have used a fundamentally realist ontology and logic throughout: I have repeatedly assumed that some answer can be given to the question: What simply is there? Of course, phenomenism itself is usually so presented: we are invited to be realists about minds, if not about material

things. But perhaps a stronger version of phenomenalism would decline to say at all what simply is there, and would insist on working entirely within the contents of experience. But, as I have mentioned, the contents of experience, considered on their own, obey a queer logic, and this is what would betray them. It would reveal them as the mere intentional objects that they are, force us to reintroduce as independently existing things the minds that 'intentionally' perceive them; and then the whole argument goes through as before. Logical considerations bring out the unavoidability of the realist question; considerations of simplicity then support the realist answer, an answer which the phenomenalist counter-argument proves, on examination, to be powerless to undermine.