

*How to Perceive the Past with your Eyes Shut**

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I can read with my left eye. I can read with my right.
I can read Mississippi with my eyes shut tight!
Mississippi, Indianapolis and Hallelujah, too!
I can read them with my eyes shut!
That is VERY HARD to do!

Dr. Seuss, *I Can Read with My Eyes Shut!*

1 Introduction

THERE IS A TENDENCY to assume that memory and perception are entirely distinct: that is, if x is a memory, then x is not a perception, and if x is a perception, then x is not a memory. My aim in what follows is to pose a (somewhat unsettling) challenge to this tendency.

The distinction between memory and perception is typically drawn in either one of two ways, each of which involves an appeal to a seemingly innocuous assumption about perception. The first is that we perceive only the present.¹ Most likely it is with this seeming platitude in mind that Alva Noë (2003; p. 96) maintains that perception is only of that which is “in the here and now” and David Lewis (1980; p. 79) suggests that one sees only when “before [one’s] eyes various things are present and various things are going on.”² The second is that in order to perceive, one’s sensory organs must be

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¹ Perhaps the most explicit such appeal is Sutton’s (2004) assertion, “We remember experiences and events which are not happening now, so memory seems to differ from perception.”

² Although it may seem plausible to admit of *auditory* exceptions to this general principle, such as hearing thunder from a distant storm, most philosophers (including Noë and Lewis) tend to assume that, at the very least, all *seeing* (often considered the paradigm example of perception) is of the present. Paying heed to this tendency, I will focus my discussion of this principle on the specific case of visual perception. But I see no reason to doubt that the arguments given would apply *mutatis mutandis* to other perceptual modalities as well.

operating at the time of perceiving. In other words, one must *use* one's sensory organs to perceive. This second assumption is quite widespread among both philosophers and cognitive scientists; for instance, Gilbert Ryle (1949; p. 246) claims that "A person can see things, only when his eyes are open, and when his surroundings are illuminated" and Leo Hurvich (1981; p. 26) asserts that "we see objects and colors only when our eyes are open and light enters them."

Apparently, each of these authors considers his statement to be more or less obvious, not a thesis to be stated and argued for. Indeed, not one of them provides an argument directly supporting either of these widely shared assumptions. Presumably, this lack of support goes unnoticed because a denial of these assumptions seems highly counterintuitive: in short, it sounds quite bizarre to say that we can perceive something not currently present, or that we can do so without using our sensory organs.

Despite this orthodoxy, there are good reasons to think that neither of these claims is as bizarre as it may at first sound. I begin, in §2, by arguing that there are cases of perception, such as gazing at the stars, in which we perceive the past. In §3, I introduce a thought experiment that develops Kendall Walton's thesis that to look at a photograph is to genuinely *see* whatever it is a photograph of, namely, a past scene. Then, in §§4-6, I consider reasons to think that we may also perceive past scenes in virtue of *remembering*. If correct, this indicates that, despite widespread assumptions to the contrary, one cannot draw a principled distinction between perception and memory.

2 Interstellar Perception

Let us begin with an argument in favor of perception of the past, one which takes seriously ordinary star-gazing.³ Consider the so-called "North Star", Polaris. Polaris is 650 light-years away, so its light takes roughly 650 years to reach us. So, when we look at Polaris now (in the twenty-first century), we are seeing it as it was in the fourteenth century. And if Polaris had suddenly exploded in 2003, we would not know it until the year 2653. This is because we cannot see Polaris as it is presently; we can only see it as it was, in the past. As a result, this is an instance of perception of the past.⁴

Note that this conclusion is in line with the causal theory of perception. According to this widely held analysis, to perceive something is to have experiences caused by that which is perceived.⁵ In order to rule out deviant causal chains, it has been suggested that these experiences must be counterfactually dependent on that which is perceived.⁶

³Robert Solso has suggested another argument for the claim that we can perceive the past. He writes, "One implication of the finite speed of light is that we always see the past" (1994; p. 8). The idea seems to be this: perception involves a causal transaction; causal transactions take time; so, it follows that there is always a sort of delay in perception. Although this may be right, it is unclear to me whether Solso's desired conclusion—namely, that we always perceive the past—is correct. Though I lack the space to fully address this issue here, it would seem that *if* Solso is correct, this only strengthens the argument given below. However, nothing in what follows presupposes this.

⁴Although the *light* of Polaris is present to the eye, we perceive *Polaris*, and not proximal arrays of light.

⁵The causal theory of perception has been defended by Grice (1961), Strawson (1974), Goldman (1976), and Jackson (1977), to mention only a few. For an argument that despite its apparent flaws, we ought to accept some version or other of the causal theory, see Coates' (2000) response to the non-causalist.

⁶See Lewis (1980). I realize that treating the counterfactual requirement as an amendment to the causal theory of perception may not solve the problem of deviant causal chains, as Davies (1983) and others have

Hence, an agent A perceives a perceptual object o if

- (α) A has an experience as of o , and
- (β) A 's experience is appropriately causally and counterfactually dependent on o .

This makes clear that gazing at Polaris is genuine perception of the past. For in such a case,

- (α_1) A has an experience as of Polaris, and
- (β_1) A 's experience is appropriately causally and counterfactually dependent on Polaris.

Clearly the match that occurs during such star-gazing is not a “lucky accident” but an instance of genuine perception. In such a case, we can legitimately be said to be in perceptual contact with what our present experience is of—namely, something in the past.⁷

3 Snapshot Perception

Let us engage in a bit of science fiction in order to further develop this point. Borrowing from (Grice 1962), let us suppose that Martians finally arrive on earth. Suppose further that they are physiologically and psychologically similar to normal human beings. The only significant difference is that Martians possess a more sophisticated perceptual system: they can “freeze” a given visual image (perhaps by arresting the patterns of light currently on the retina), allowing them to enjoy a given perception while the world around them continues to change.⁸

When they freeze a given image, do the Martians continue to perceive what it is an image of? It would seem so. After all, they are enjoying an experience that, all things being equal, is appropriately causally and counterfactually dependent on what it

argued. However, it would appear that no satisfactory solution has yet been given to the problem of deviant causal chains; Grice (1961), Goldman (1976), Jackson (1977), Peacocke (1979), Searle (1983), Davies (1983), Pendlebury (1994), Coates (2000), among others, have proposed solutions, though it remains unclear whether any of them is adequate. This is not the place to evaluate these proposals, so I will assume that the “right” sort of causal connection is, in addition to being counterfactually supporting, one that is *appropriate*. So, to perceive something is to have experiences that are appropriately causally and counterfactually dependent on what they are of, as stated in the text. Whether fleshing out the appropriateness condition has implications for the central argument of this paper is addressed in §5.

⁷It is worth mentioning that Lewis has challenged the idea that the stars we perceive in the night sky are in the past. He argues that star-gazing consists in perceiving something “not straight-forwardly past; for lightlike connection has as good a claim as simultaneity-in-my-rest-frame to be the legitimate heir to our defunct concept of absolute simultaneity” (1980; p. 83, n.9). Lewis appears to believe that if ϕ is seen now, then because it is within an observer’s light cone, ϕ is simultaneous with what is happening now— ϕ is “not straightforwardly past”, but present. If this is so, then an explosion of Polaris that occurred almost seven centuries ago is present so long as we see it now. But, presumably, such an explosion does not occur in the present. Indeed, it does an injustice to our concept of the present to apply it to that which occurred almost seven centuries ago: *pace* Lewis, we clearly consider such an event to be past.

⁸Of course, the frozen image is not an afterimage, which merely “overlays” a visual scene.

is of. So, if the Martians did in fact perceive the scene initially, because their frozen perceptions continue to satisfy the causal and counterfactual conditions that mark out genuine perception, it would seem to follow that they still perceive the scene seconds or minutes later when it is frozen in their perceptual field. Thus, such “snapshot perception” enables the Martians to perceive (indirectly but genuinely) a given scene long after it has occurred.⁹

One might object that the causal theory of perception can be modified to undercut the possibility of snapshot perception. But such a move appears to have undesirable consequences insofar as snapshot perception might not be wholly science fictional. Imagine creatures in possession of a perceptual system such that they perceive in virtue of rapidly processed frozen images of their surroundings. Such creatures would possess a peculiar sort of snapshot perception. Interestingly, these creatures may be *Homo sapiens*. Robert Solso (1994; p. 26) writes,

When we [human beings] look at an object [...] we do not see it all at once [...] but go through series of scans in which the eye momentarily stops on one feature [...] then darts on to another part [...] and then on to another [...] and so on. [...] Since this scanning/stop maneuver takes place over very short time periods, the subjective experience is that we are seeing [an object] all at once, when, in fact, our visual perception of it is built up from a series of discrete “snapshots.”

In short, homogenous visual experiences result from the rapid processing and subsequent binding of a series of initially discrete images. The fact that “discrete ‘snapshots’” play an important role in human vision suggests that we, like the Martians, enjoy a form of snapshot perception. Of course, ours are not produced voluntarily and occur too quickly to be noticed. But suppose for a moment that the discrete snapshots underlying human vision could be frozen, or processed at a speed at which we could, with practice, come to notice each snapshot individually. Since we would not deny that we perceive even if it came to light that our visual perceptions somehow relied on this type of snapshot perception, it looks as though we ought to consider snapshot perception a form of genuine perception.

That said, let us push our thought experiment one step further. Suppose that the Martians can pull up previously frozen images at will. In so doing, they put themselves in the same perceptual position as when they initially froze the images in their perceptual field. Accordingly, if they perceived what the images are of when they initially froze them, then it would appear to follow that they perceive what they are of when they pull them up at a later time.

This result enjoys support from reflection on similar cases in the actual world. For a start, Kendall Walton (1984, 1986, 1997) has convincingly argued that viewing photographs involves such snapshot perception. In most cases, photographs are appropriately causally and counterfactually dependent on what they are of.¹⁰ Walton observes

⁹Now, the Martians may not be perceiving *simpliciter*, if that is taken to mean direct (unmediated), as opposed to indirect (mediated), perception. But whether or not their snapshot perception is direct perception is beside the point, since indirect perception is still perception (see below).

¹⁰Walton (1986) recognizes that over—and under—developed or artistically altered photographs are a few

that unlike the content of a painting or sketch, which depends on what the artist believes that he or she sees, the content of a photograph “is determined by what is really there before [the photographer], regardless of what he [or she] thinks” (Walton 1984; p. 264). Because they have such “natural dependence” (i.e., counterfactual dependence not mediated by an agent’s intentional states) and thus preserve real similarity relations between objects, photographs, Walton argues, are *transparent*.

To see the force of this transparency thesis, consider relevant similarities between photography and other devices which clearly do not preclude but rather enable (indirect) perception. For instance, we would not deny that someone with eyeglasses perceives what her visual experiences are of. Even though the lenses act as mediating transducers, if appropriate causal and counterfactual dependence is maintained, then she still sees (albeit indirectly). Because mirrors also maintain such dependence, we should not deny that when looking at oneself in a mirror, one is in fact looking at oneself.¹¹ A periscope produces a similar result: so long as appropriate causal and counterfactual dependence is maintained, its mirrors act as mediating transducers which allow one to see (again, albeit indirectly). Since photographs also maintain appropriate causal and counterfactual dependence, they, like eyeglasses, mirrors, and periscopes, appear to act as mediating transducers that allow one to see (once again, albeit indirectly). As with other artificial or prosthetic devices that, because they maintain natural dependence while preserving real similarity relations between objects, enable one to see (indirectly but genuinely) things that one could not see otherwise, photographs, though imperfect, make a “contribution to the enterprise of seeing” (*ibid*, 251).

Interestingly, that looking through photographs is on a par with clear cases of perception is consistent with how we ordinarily speak about viewing photographs. Just as we are likely to assert that we see ourselves when looking in the mirror, although we do so indirectly, we are likely to assert that we see a photographed object, albeit indirectly. When viewing a photograph of the Taj Mahal, for instance, it is only natural to (non-metaphorically) say things like “I see the Taj Mahal.”¹² The same is true of film, television, and other so-called “moving pictures.” Consider watching a game on the television: we frequently and unhesitatingly say that we see the game, the players, the fans, the ball, the last-second-shot, and so on. In fact, we often think we see such things *better* via the television than can those (e.g., the referees) who are actually there, seeing them directly!

Obviously, photographs are of objects or events which occurred at some time in

instances in which this claim (to varying degrees) might not hold. Film and television are instances in which it could.

¹¹This is not to say that one never sees one’s reflection. One sees one’s reflection and *thereby* sees oneself. I should mention that, as far as I know, all parties in this debate in philosophical aesthetics accede that mirrors are transparent. See Walton (1997), Currie (1995), Carroll (1995), Carroll (1996), Cohen and Meskin (2004).

¹²Of course, the contextual nature of seeing-talk complicates things. Consider the question “Did you see the Taj Mahal?” In certain contexts, one can legitimately answer by saying, “Yes, I saw the Taj Mahal”, if, for instance, one was just shown a photograph of the Taj Mahal. But in other contexts, one can legitimately answer by saying, “No, I have never seen the Taj Mahal”, if one has never seen the Taj Mahal in person (regardless of whether one has or has not seen photographs of it). Incidentally, one with a propensity for linguistic analysis might say that on the present view, statements made while looking through photographs, such as “A sees *o*”, are to be analyzed as “A sees *o* in virtue of seeing the photograph.” An adverbial analysis is also available: “A sees *o* photographically.” Either way, A sees *o*. The same considerations apply *mutandis* to other types of perceiving-talk.

the past. So, if this transparency thesis is correct, photographs are a way in which we perceive the past. This makes plausible the somewhat surprising notion that our visual system is, in a way, just as sophisticated as the Martians. Human vision can be *extended* through the technology afforded by cameras, and so looking at a photograph is roughly equivalent to pulling up previously frozen perceptions.¹³ Viewing a photograph is engaging in Martian-like snapshot perception.

4 The Transparency of Episodic Memory

There is reason to think that photography is not the only real-life example of Martian-like snapshot perception. For memory can be very much like photography. Of course, memories are not photographs. But insofar as some memories function like photographs by capturing past scenes, the comparison is apt.

Consider first how we sometimes talk about our remembrances. For instance, we often say things like “I can still see the look on his face.” Such statements reflect a peculiar fact about memory: we often remember past scenes in such a way as to make them “present” to us once again. This is most evident in eidetic memory, as Ian Hunter has noted:

One of the pictures used by Allport [in his 1924 study of memory in children] depicted a street scene and contained, among other details, the German word *Gartenwirtschaft* written above the door of an inn in the background. The word was quite meaningless for the English children and was not usually reported at first [. . .]. But on being pressed to observe [sic] more closely, each of the thirty children whose eidetic imaging was strong saw [sic], often to his surprise, the small letters above the door. Three of these children spelled out the word without error, seven got no more than two of the letters wrong, and only five failed to give at least five letters correctly [. . .]. There was, of course, no question of the word having been memorized (quoted in [Zemach 1969](#); p.15).

Is it not appropriate to say, as Hunter does, that these children are ‘seeing’, or ‘observing’, the words in the picture?

Putting this question to the side for a moment, consider two noteworthy features of episodic memories, the class of memories of which eidetic memories are members.¹⁴ Episodic memories concern neither propositions nor embodied skills, but, rather, one’s experiences of past events and episodes.¹⁵ Tyler [Burge \(2003\)](#) has referred to episodic memory as a type of “experiential memory”, for through it we “re-live” experiences that

¹³ In light of the facts about photography cited in this section, this way of putting the point appears to be licensed by the view which [Clark and Chalmers \(1998\)](#) call *active externalism*.

¹⁴ Incidentally, there may be a third such feature, in addition to the two mentioned in the text. Suppose that, as [Noë \(2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2004\)](#) and [Jonathan Cohen and Aaron Meskin \(2004\)](#) have argued, perception is always egocentrically indexed. As [Burge \(2003\)](#) has pointed out, a given episodic memory has *de se* form, and is therefore egocentrically indexed, in three ways: “It is indexed to my having experienced the act or event, to my having been the agent or subject of it, and to my perspective as agent in the past act or event” (294).

¹⁵ Episodic memory, which involves a phenomenal experience of a particular past episode or event, is

we have previously had (see also [Martin and Deutscher 1966](#), [Brewer 1996](#)). This is the first interesting feature of episodic memories, namely, that they involve being in a state that is qualitatively identical or very similar to a specific past experience. For instance, when remembering one's childhood, one may have an experience as of the house in which one grew up or the yard where one often played. In such cases, past scenes become present to us once again.

The second noteworthy feature of episodic memories concerns their veridicality conditions. As C. B. Martin and Max Deutscher (1966), David Wiggins (1976), and others have argued, in order to count as a genuine memory, there must be an appropriate causal connection between a past scene and one's present experience. Presumably, this causal connection must be counterfactually supporting. This explains why it is that some episodic memories can be compared with photographs. Like photographs, genuine episodic memories involve experiences that are appropriately causally and counterfactually dependent on what they are of. In effect, like photographs, genuine episodic memories maintain natural dependence and preserve real similarity relations between objects.

Given this, some episodic memories appear to have much in common with eyeglasses, mirrors, and periscopes. It would seem that like these prosthetic devices, genuine episodic memories make a contribution to the enterprise of perceiving. In short, there seems to be reason to believe that genuine episodic memories, like photographs, are *transparent*.

Because this conclusion may strike one as surprising, I want to be clear about the sense in which it is reasonable to hold that some episodic memories are continuous with so-called "ordinary" perception. For one, there is the possibility of snapshot perception. Second, there is the way that we sometimes talk about our remembrances. In addition, as we have just seen, episodic memories are in ontologically relevant ways on par with "ordinary" perceptions. That is, in some episodic memories,

- (α_2) A has an experience (*qua* memory) as of *o*, and
- (β_2) A's experience (*qua* memory) is appropriately causally and counterfactually dependent on *o*.

That genuine episodic memories satisfy the causal theory of perception is at least *prima facie* reason to think that, in such cases, we can legitimately be said to be in perceptual contact with what our present memories are of.¹⁶

sometimes called 'direct', 'personal', or 'recollective' memory. It is typically distinguished from memory concerning facts (i.e., remembering *that*), which is often called 'semantic' or 'propositional' memory, and memory concerning embodied skills (i.e., remembering *how*), which is often called 'procedural' or 'habit' memory.

¹⁶In the next section, I express skepticism towards the ability of popular modifications of the causal theory to undermine this conclusion, and in §7 suggest that simply rejecting it on the grounds that it is plainly unacceptable invites unattractive consequences. Interestingly, if this conclusion is correct, it would explain Martin and Deutscher's (1966: p. 165) observation that "reliving something is not merely remembering it." Reliving something is more than just remembering: it is *perceiving*. I should mention that Eddy Zemach (1969) has argued in a very different manner for a more general version of this view; though I do not find his argument convincing, his defense suggests that heterodox views of perception may inhabit a surprisingly attractive region of conceptual space.

This returns us to the above passage on eidetic memory. *Prima facie*, some of the children described there were in fact perceiving. For what they achieved is comparable to the achievement of the Martians described earlier, who could see by calling up previously frozen visual images at will. Insofar as these children’s memories, retrieved voluntarily, were appropriately causally and counterfactually dependent on a past scene, one could say that these children were engaging in a process of Martian-like snapshot perception.¹⁷

5 Episodic Memory vis-à-vis “Ordinary” Perception

One might object that the causal theory of perception can be easily amended to undercut the thesis that remembering is sometimes perceiving. It is tempting to think that specifying precisely what sort of causal connection is ‘appropriate’ will show that memory cannot be genuine perception. But even the most sophisticated accounts of the unruly appropriateness condition in the causal theory of perception, accounts which typically involve an alleged solution to the problem of deviant causal chains, do not seem to pose a problem for this thesis. In fact, it would appear that some episodic memories are able to satisfy each of the conditions—e.g., causally relevant aspect (Searle 1983), differential explanation (Peacocke 1979), teleological function (Davies 1983), reliable mechanism (Pendlebury 1994), and so on—for perception introduced by these proposals, and that whatever sort of causal connection we decide is appropriate for perception will also obtain in some episodic memories.

I suggest, then, that one must look elsewhere than the appropriateness condition in the causal theory of perception in order to ground an objection to the above argument. To this end, one might appeal to either one or both of two intuitively relevant differences between memories and “ordinary” perceptions. These differences were noted above, in the introduction. The first is that the perceptual objects of “ordinary” perception, but not memory, are always in the present. But we saw in §2 that there are clear cases of perception, such as the perception of Polaris, in which we perceive something in the past. Accordingly, we are left only to consider the second difference, which is that “ordinary” perception, but not episodic memory, requires the use of sensory organs.¹⁸

¹⁷Perhaps the proper linguistic analysis of statements concerning episodic remembering, statements of the form “A can still see *o*”, is one of the following: either “A perceives *o* in virtue of remembering”, or “A sees *o* memorially”. Either way, *A* sees *o*. An important difference between these analyses will be discussed in §6. Note that although the preceding discussion has focused directly on visual perception, the argument given appears to hold *mutatis mutandis* for all other perceptual modalities, as noted above.

¹⁸Another *prima facie* relevant difference between “ordinary” perceptions and memories lies in their seemingly disparate phenomenologies. While experiences of the former type are typically vivid, lively, and forceful, experiences of the latter type are typically dull, languid, and weak. An obvious response is that, first, many episodic memories (such as those discussed in §6 below) are extremely vivid, lively, and forceful. Second, there appear to be many “ordinary” perceptual experiences that are *not* vivid, lively, and forceful (e.g., perceptions one has when in a drunken stupor), from which it follows that this cannot be a generally necessary condition for perception. Third, and finally, it is not clear that we should expect memories and “ordinary” perceptions to have similar phenomenologies, even if they are both genuine perceptions. Different forms of perception possess disparate phenomenologies; so, insofar as the view is that memory and “ordinary” perception are different forms of perception, we should not expect the phenomenologies to be

This difference looks to be merely incidental, not one that is ontologically relevant. Because episodic memories involve being in a state that is qualitatively identical or very similar to a specific past experience, episodic remembering requires the operation of certain perceptual processes at the time of remembering. Accordingly, in episodic memory, the visual system, say, is still working; it is just doing so without the eyes. One might respond that this is not genuine perception because the eyes are not being used. But it seems arbitrary to privilege the eyes in this way, making them more important than the rest of the visual system. What is important to seeing, it seems, is not so much the eyes themselves, but the proper functioning of the visual system. Although the eyes normally play a role in vision, there seems to be no reason to assert *a priori* that the visual system cannot function properly in the eyes' absence. In fact, it seems reasonable to suppose that it is possible to see without the eyes (as in, e.g., artificial and prosthetic vision).¹⁹ In light of this, it is unclear how one could defend a response that appeals to the absolute necessity of the eyes without either unduly disqualifying clear cases of perception or, worse, begging the question.

6 Constructive Memory?

There is one further objection worth considering. Walton (1984; p. 275, n.12) has suggested that one might avoid the heterodox thesis that certain memories are perceptions by noting that memory is *constructive*, suggesting that memories are more like paintings, whose contents depend upon an agent's beliefs, than photographs or perceptions, whose contents do not. If this were so, it would imply that episodic memories are not perceptions because they lack the requisite counterfactual dependence on their objects.

However, although it appears correct to say that beliefs *can* alter how one remembers things, there appears to be no argument that they *must* do so—at the very least, not that they must do so any more, or in a different manner, than in “ordinary” perception. In fact, empirical research shows that some memories contain at least as much detail of the remembered scenes as some “ordinary” perceptions do of the perceived scenes.

Consider first the eidetic memories of the children in Allport's study: even if these memories are constructive in nature, it seems that they contain enough of the detail of the remembered picture to count as veridical. Of course, they are by no means perfect.

similar.

¹⁹Let me attempt to describe such a case. Suppose that an apple is before Sue, and Sue is looking at the apple. Suppose that Joe has a visual experience as of that apple—that is, Joe's visual experience matches the apple. Now, Joe's brain is connected to Sue by a sophisticated mechanism that (let us suppose) preserves causal relations. So, Joe's experience is appropriately counterfactually and causally dependent on the apple. Joe sees the apple. If this is right, it shows that a perceptual object need not be “before one's eyes” in order for one to see it, and thus one's sensory organs need not operate at the time of perceiving in order for one to see.

Now, this case suggests another. Suppose that Joe is not connected to Sue, but someone else. Actually, the person to whom Joe is connected is Joe himself, in the sense that his present brain states are connected to his past brain states (causally, as it were). In such a case, the sophisticated mechanism that preserves causal relations is simply Joe's brain, and his present visual experience is simply an episodic memory of a past apple. If Joe sees the apple when he is connected to another person, then so long as appropriate causal and counterfactual dependence is maintained, there appears to be no reason to deny that Joe sees the apple when he is connected to himself.

But just as perception need not be perfect to count as genuine perception (e.g., one can still see without one's glasses or contact lenses), an episodic memory need not be perfect to count as a genuine memory (e.g., a groom can still remember his wedding scene even if he cannot recall the lacework on the fringe of his bride's dress). There is little room to doubt that for the children in Allport's study, a different picture would have caused correspondingly different memories, perhaps even so as to exhibit a strict isomorphism between the memories and the remembered picture. If so, it appears appropriate to say that their memories possess the requisite counterfactual dependence on their objects.²⁰

Second, empirical research on "flashbulb memory", where significant events are remembered in detail, also suggests that episodic memories, though imperfect, sometimes possess the counterfactual dependence necessary to achieve veridicality (Brown and Kulick 1977). In *Searching for Memory*, Daniel Schacter (1996; p. 196ff) points out that although flashbulb memories are not "etched indelibly in the mind", they can nevertheless be "highly accurate." For instance, many Americans remember with surprising accuracy the details of their experience when they were told in 1963 that President Kennedy had been assassinated. Although their memories of the surrounding events are often hazy, they can remember the scene in question in such a way that it is "present" to them once again.

To be sure, there are many cases in which this is not so. And there are many cases in which it is difficult, if not impossible, to judge whether or not a given memory possesses the appropriate sort of counterfactual dependence. But there are at least a few cases, such as those involving eidetic and flashbulb memory, in which a given memory contains the requisite amount of detail of the remembered scene. These do not appear to be isolated cases, for many have argued that memory is generally reliable, in which case it produces memories that are veridical more often than not.²¹ And given the arguments offered in §§4–5, a fair principle seems to be that, all things being equal, a given episodic memory is an instance of perception just in case it is veridical.

7 Conclusion

Part of the shock of Dr. Seuss' rhyme, in which the Cat in the Hat asserts that he can read with his eyes shut, comes from the simple fact that we typically read—and, more generally, *see*—with our eyes open. Indeed, insofar as most perception is "ordinary" perception, *most* cases of perception are of what is present and involve the operation of one's sensory organs. But we have seen that there are reasons to think that "ordinary" perception is not the only perception there is. Plausibly, some episodic memories are

²⁰ Indeed, as Martin Davies (1983; p. 417) points out, "very little in the way of matching is intuitively required for an experience to be a perception of an object." In addition, note that given the *prima facie* theory-ladenness of observation and the influence of top-down processing theories in cognitive science, many believe that "ordinary" perceptions are themselves constructive insofar as they counterfactually depend, at least to some degree, on the perceiver's beliefs and desires. If so, the objection under consideration suffers a still-birth. See Hanson (1958), Bruner (1957), Gregory (1966/1997), Fodor and Pylyshyn (1981) and Marr (1982) for discussions of the theory-ladenness of observation and/or top-down processing.

²¹ See, e.g., Harman (1973; 1986), Pollock (1974; 1986), Martin (1992), Dummett (1992), Plantinga (1993), Burge (1993; 2003), Chisholm (1997), Hamilton (1998), and Owens (2000).

instances of another form of perception, one that allows us to (visually) perceive the past, even with our eyes shut.

One might consider this conclusion highly counterintuitive, and reject it on the grounds that it is plainly unacceptable. In such a case, one may take the argument of this paper to be a *reductio ad absurdum* of the causal theory of perception,²² one which forces us to reconsider the plausibility of this widely held analysis.

However, it is not apparent that this is a defensible response. For the considerations outlined in the preceding pages—in particular, the possibility of snapshot perception, the way we sometimes talk about our remembrances, and the fact that episodic memories are in ontologically relevant ways on par with “ordinary” perceptions—suggest that an adequate analysis of perception *ought* to include some episodic memories. In light of this, I recommend that we not dismiss the argument of this paper without first considering where it leaves us.

If the argument is accepted, it seems that we can adopt either one of the following two positions. First, we could understand it as a defense of the claim that episodic memory is a form of perception, namely, memorial perception, which is related to but distinct from other forms of perception (such as visual, auditory, and olfactory perception). This position would do some justice to the seeming platitude that episodic memories are distinct from other, more “ordinary”, forms of perception, while at the same time acknowledging their ontologically relevant similarities. Accordingly, we would be in possession of a non-reductive account of episodic memory that places it alongside other forms of perception. However, it is also possible to understand the argument as a defense of the reduction of episodic memory to previously established forms of perception, such as seeing, hearing, and smelling. In other words, episodic memory is nothing but seeing, hearing, or smelling in a particular way, in which case an episodic memory of, say, a visual scene ψ just is a way of seeing ψ , namely, memorially. In addition to giving us a reductive account of episodic memory (presumably, a conclusion desirable to those who privilege ontological parsimony), this position makes the causal theory of perception look very impressive, for it endows this widely held analysis with broad explanatory scope and unique predictive success. Although neither interpretation is forced by the above argument, both leave us without a principled distinction between perception and memory.

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²²Or, at the very least, a *reductio* of many of the causal theory’s most plausible forms.

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