

Foreword

We are all accustomed to looking around the world and considering that we are observing things that really exist, as they appear, regardless of whether we look at them or not. We think that things in the world are not affected by the way we think about them. We think that the world existed, as it appears to us now, before we lived and will continue to exist even after we are no longer alive. We believe that things in the physical world determine how we experience them. Contrary to our view, modern physical theory indicates that the mind directly influences the physical world.

The aim of this issue is to propose an account of some questions of contemporary philosophy on the relation between mind and world. Between mind and world there are many crucial relations studied by philosophers of mind. Among these are perception, action, the mind's bodily constitution and intentionality. How do we perceive the outside world? Do our sensory organs provide us with reliable information about the world or do they deceive us? Do the images that our mind produces correspond exactly to the physical objects they refer to? Does perception put us in contact with the reality in an indirect way? When I see an apple, I see it because it is there or not simply because it is there?

These themes were discussed during the study day entitled "Mind and World", which took place in Arezzo Campus of the University of Siena on November 23, 2023. This issue of *Arkete* collects a good part of papers presented during that event. They intend to contribute to reflection on the mind-world relations according to different analysis and research perspectives and, at the same time, to delve into some themes and questions of a metaphysical, psychological and epistemological nature.

In his paper, Mariano Bianca examines the relations between mental anything and ontic anything that belong to the non-mental world. To analyse these relations, he uses the notions of isomorphism and dysmorphism from which those of convergence and divergence derive. Afterwards, he presents a formal model of the connection between mind and the world and indicates the conditions necessary for a mental something to be able to relate to ontic anything: 1) ontic co-compatibility, 2) co-actuality, 3) co-spatiality, 4) co-conformability and 5) co-relationality. According to Bianca, this model allows us to address the theme of the relationship between mental knowledge and the world in an almost formal way, overcoming naïve realism and maintaining the objectivity of the world and that of the cognitive processes of the mind.

The purpose of Roberta Lanfredini's essay is to verify the plausibility of a concept that phenomenology considers highly counterintuitive and absurd, something analogous to a round square or a color that does not extend over an extension. This is the concept of physical intentionality; a concept that is opposed to the concept of mental intentionality that is crucial to phenomenology.

According to Lanfredini, recognizing the plausibility of this apparently oxymoronic concept will allow us to open a scenario on the relationship between mind and world that is profoundly different from that of classical phenomenology, while retaining, in an almost paradoxical way, its essential structure.

In my contribution, I intend to argue that our perception of the phenomenal world is epistemically referable to what exists, but does not correspond to what exists, since the human brain evolved to provide an image of reality that was not “true,” but first everything functional to the survival of the species. Perception is not a simple response to stimuli that come from the environment, but it is a higher-level cognitive experience that can provide us with indirect knowledge of the objects/events we relate to. Adopting this perspective, I will argue for a (non-correspondist) model of realist and representationalist perception.

In their article Baingio Pinna e Daniele Porcheddu present a new approach to perceptual organization that goes beyond the classical principles of Gestalt. By examining the interplay between similarity and dissimilarity in visual perception, they propose a more comprehensive framework for understanding how the visual system organizes and interprets sensory input. Their research uses phenomenological analysis of carefully designed visual stimuli to demonstrate that dissimilarity plays a crucial, and often primary, role in perceptual organization. Their findings suggest that the visual system prioritizes difference detection as an adaptive mechanism to quickly identify potential threats or opportunities in the environment.

Finally, Giacomo Romano revisits a reflection that dates to the times of Descartes, Locke, and Hume: it concerns the phenomena of perception and representation of internal states and processes, an ability possessed only by some animals of a restricted category. Romano argues that only some higher primates, perhaps only humans, seem to have the ability to experience a sense of “self”, of “I”, of one’s interiority, which encompasses the totality of internal states. Recalling that the existence of this sense of self has been a subject of debate ever since David Hume argued that perceiving anything as a “self” or an “I” was impossible, he notes that some philosophers of mind, known as illusionists, have taken up Hume’s challenge, proposing that the “self” and “I” are nothing more than a fiction, an illusion.

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