

BOOK REVIEW III

**ADP Kalansuriya : *On Perception : A Language-Game Made Explicit*,
Kalinga Publications, Delhi, 1999, pp 221**

The theme of the book under review is the concept of perception in the contemporary English analytical philosophy. The theme is particularly impressive in the sense that perception as a philosophical concept is a much debated one. The author traces the various implications of this term from the date since it has started gaining momentum, to say precisely from early in 1930s. Confining reflections on the topic to the English speaking world does not diminish its importance. However tracing from continental and early Greek philosophy would have thrown much light on the issue. This I mention without forgetting the fact that Greek philosopher Aristotle and British enlightenment philosopher David Hume have found proper place in the discussion though occasionally.

The main idea which the author wants to convey through this book is that 'perception' is an 'occurrence' caused by the occurrences of 'sensing' and 'noticing', of the bio-chemical system together with the environmental forces and physicality. Here the author analyses the concept of perception from the phenomenological, ontological and conceptual points of view. That is the roles of phenomenological (sensing) and ontological (noticing) complexities and their derivatives together account for the language game of perception as envisaged in this book. The language-game of perception paves way for the perceptual cluster or family of notions (which reminds us of 'Wittgenstein's idea of cluster of notions) such as sensing occurrence, noticing occurrence, perception, sense data and knowledge. With all these

points taken into account, the book aims to unfold an alternative, a language-game, asserting the logical impossibility of "perception as a direct affair" phenomenological, ontologically and conceptually. To reach this end the complexity of 'perception' is unfolded in and through an explicitness of the implicit phenomenological constant elements such as 'sensing occurrence' (affective occurrence), noticing occurrence (minding occurrence), and time interval which compose perception'. And conceptually the constant notion as 'designations of persons', the environmental world' and the reflections that hold between the notion of perception and those of 'body', existent etc. comprise perception. The book explains the first phase of language game or discourse of perception through an explanation of uses and logical boundaries of the concepts involved. D.M. Armstrong and J.L. Austin regard perception as a direct affair. But, this book explains the 'whys' and 'hows' of impossibility of direct perception both phenomenologically and conceptually. The author remarks. "Immediacy of perception or direct perception is rendered impossible due to its being causally conditioned." (p.7)

Perception used in an occurrence sense in the book differs from perception used in an exclusive achievement sense advocated by Gilbert Ryle. All perception in Rylean sense is achievement. Rylean notion of perception is based on the dispositional analysis which makes it difficult for us to think

- (1) an analysis of perception in an extra-linguistic sense (or in an occurrence sense)
- (2) its complexity
- (3) the cluster of exact perceptual notions together with an understanding of what can be driven from this complexity.

The author is of the view that the occurrence (episodic) sense of perception when conceived explicitly reveals the three constant elements-sensing, noticing, time factor-making the occurrence a complex one. Therefore the author has come to the conclusion that perception is extra-linguistic and notion of perception plays a prominent role in the augmented perceptual cluster of notions of which the key notion is that of knowledge.

The language-game as portrayed in this book divides the notion of perception into two - successful occurrence and unsuccessful occurrence. This is based on the idea that if all perceptions are successful then how shall we get into the other end of knowledge? Therefore there should be both successful and unsuccessful occurrences. But, according to the author only successful occurrence of perception plays a role in knowledge-talk. Further more, sensing, noticing, perception and knowledge form the cluster of perceptual notions. This way the author argues that the present perceptual talk shows ostentatiously itself. (This is certainly different from Ryle)

The book holds the view that all perceptions irrespective of their being successful or unsuccessful necessarily involve three constant elements of :

- (1) sensing occurrence (affective occurrence)
- (2) noticing occurrence (minding occurrence)
- (3) time-interval

These three are called as implicit constant elements. From this it is evident that perception is neither a direct affair nor a simple affair. It is an occurrence caused by the twin complex occurrences called sensing and noticing. The role of constant element called time interval is important in the occurrence of perception. Now the point is that if perception is an occurrence dependent upon sensing (sentient) and noticing (cognitive occurrences) then the so called physicality is considered only in a third position. In the beginning of this review I have discussed the twin complexities - phenomenological complexity of perception-occurrence and the conceptual complexity of perception-occurrence. From these complexities two things follow,

- (1) an emergence of logically sound base
- (2) and a logical derivative

This derivation which brings out with great importance in perception-talk the impossibility of perception as a direct affair is a salient feature of Kalansuriya's view of perception. The recent proponents of direct theories

in perception, as mentioned earlier, Armstrong and Austin, avoid explicitness concerning phenomenology, ontology and the conceptuality of the notion of perception.

Laying stress on the complex dependence of the occurrence of perception leads to the theme that perception is an effect caused by some other causes. This causation plays a significant role in this language-game of perception. Author expresses the view that for D.M. Armstrong perceptions are supportless and groundless and all perceptions are direct and simple. This support is nothing other than sense data or sense impressions from which perceptions/observations of physical objects are supposedly inferred. This implication of ground/support cause is conveyed through the words from Armstrong's book "*Perception and Physical World*" (p.20), where he says:, "Since sense-impressions do not stand between us and our immediate knowledge of the world, our theory is a Direct Realism". Austin also thinks on similar lines.

Author mentions the opinion of Russell and Strawson, as the whole story of causes of sensation is partly physical and partly physiological and makes it possible to think that we should regard perception much less direct than what it seems to be. For Strawson perception is dependent on facts about one's own chemical system. Author projects his alternative language-game in perfect agreement with Russalleian connotation of the direct perception. Armstrong and Austin fail to come up to this connotation of the notion of direct perception by Russell and Strawson. Author concludes that Armstrong's perception-talk in general is a failure to account for these significant perceptual facts.

The language of the book is indeed tough and ideas are so closely interwoven that any lack of comprehensibility will contribute to misunderstanding. However the constant reference to contemporary analytical philosophers makes a reading worth its while and to conclude that through this book the author has tried to give a new dimension to the concept of perception which will take our understanding of the concept to new heights, I feel that the author has been successful in this attempt.