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## REJOINDER TO PROFESSOR FREEMAN

by

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There are a number of points upon which I believe both Professor Freeman and I agree. For example, empirical inquiry can never, without paradox be used in support of the contention that we *never* perceive things as they are. This comes to light via Professor Freeman's contrasting what it is, we as the audience are supposed to have seen with what has actually or "really" occurred, viz., we saw the trapezoid window oscillate through an arc of about 100°, but "it does not oscillate, it *really* rotates through a full circle," etc. What is paradoxical of course about using experiments such as those included in Ames' work in behalf of so startling and far reaching a conclusion, is that the experimenter himself must be under the same perceptual handicap as is everyone else. Thus, he cannot tell us what really occurs insofar as his account is based upon his perceptions. Further, since there is no one in a position to perceive things as they really are, it follows either that the distinction between things as they appear or seem and things as they are has no empirical application, since it is never possible by means of perception alone to determine whether one or the other of the contrasting expressions has been correctly applied, or that there is a criterion of correct application, but that the criterion, since it is non-perceptual, is therefore non-empirical and hence, transcendent. Choosing the second alternative might at the outset seem acceptable and seem to provide us with grounds for taking a Kantian tack, if only we could give (a) an acceptable account of the kind(s) of transcendental knowledge we allegedly possess and (b) show how the account provides a solution to the problems of perception, i.e., the problem of accounting for what Professor Freeman terms veridical perceptions on the one hand and hallucinations, dreams, illusions and errors on the other. Now why I am less than optimistic that a transcendent line could be satisfactory is that it fails to do this job. For such a criterion must not only allow us to sort out things as perceived from things as they are, but also permit us to distinguish perceived oases from perceived mirages of oases; perceived rabbits emerging from stage magicians' top hats from perceived illusions of rabbits emerging from stage magicians' top hats, perceived rats crawling walls from hallucinations of the same, perceived apples from perceived wax apples, etc. Such a criterion must also account for such distinctions as looking tired or ill and being tired or ill; looking Jewish or Irish and being Jewish or Irish; sounding like a nightingale and being a nightingale, tasting like turtle soup and being turtle soup. A transcendent criterion that purports to distinguish between things as they really are and things as they seem must also indicate how it is possible to discriminate between that which is real as contrasted with that which is bogus or counterfeit, that which is real as contrasted with that which is sham, or insincere, and it must allow us to distinguish the real from that which is synthetic or artificial. Further, such a criterion must

## REJOINER TO PROFESSOR FREEMAN

provide an account not only of the possibility of making such distinctions, but it must also account for the obvious *fact* that we do make such distinctions sometimes correctly and on the basis of empirical, that is perceptual considerations.

The preceding considerations, when fully spelled out, provide, I believe, sufficient grounds both for the rejection of any attempt to distinguish between reality and appearance on transcendental grounds, and for all attempts to interpret any empirical or experimental data in favor of the kind of solipsism the Ames material seems to suggest.

I also agree with Professor Freeman that a more satisfactory way out of the dilemma posed by solipsism on the one hand and a transcendental theory of veridical perception on the other is by means of what he calls 'critical realism'. And I agree with Professor Freeman that critical realism is a metaphysical theory insofar as it is intended to compete with other metaphysical theories and provide solutions and dissolutions for problems that other metaphysical theories cannot deal with in an adequate manner. But the point at which I disagree is where Professor Freeman says, the principle of critical realism, since it is not a falsifiable scientific hypothesis can be affirmed "only as a *metaphysical postulate*, accepted as self-evident truth, not on empirical grounds, but as an article of metaphysical faith—a faith that comes not from the eyes, but from the head and heart."

I find this claim perplexing because Professor Freeman, just prior to the quoted claim, also said that it is part of the critical realist position that not only is it the case that perception is mostly veridical, but in those cases where it is not, "this can be proven," for the oddity is like that of the Pope's who, I believe, maintains that it must be taken as an article of faith that the existence of God is capable of rational proof.

However, we need not be ultimately and finally stuck with this oddity, for a claim to prove, or to be able to prove, is always an empirical claim (even if the putative proof is itself not an empirical proof) and is, itself as amenable to proof or disproof, certifiability or falsifiability as is any other empirical claim. If it is a question of fact that it can be proved that the base angles of an isosceles triangle are equal, and it is equally a fact that as of now Fermat's last theorem is incapable of proof and if it is a fact that science can prove a causal connection between the presence of oxygen and the maintenance of life, while it is also a fact that scientists cannot prove more than statistical dependency between the presence of cholesterol in the blood and coronary disease, it seems to me to be equally a question of fact, hence an empirical question whether the critical realist can prove that in most cases perception is "veridical" and that in those cases where it is not, this too can be proven. Further, I believe that this empirical claim is true and proven true, by the best possible evidence. The critical realist can point to the success of the science of optometry in being able to systematically diagnose, hence explain and remedy countless cases of non-veridical perception, neurophysiology, of course will tell us a good deal about why the drunkard and acid-head hallucinates, the gemologist and geo-physicist can tell him why it is easy to mistake garnets for rubies and the magician can tell us why it looks as

though a rabbit actually comes out of his hat. Further, the critical realist does not always need to rely on science for his inductive proof. One does not have to be a scientist to distinguish between real and wax fruit, a duck and a decoy, nor does one have to be a scientist to recognize that the actor on stage is shamming pain or that attempts to identify persons by sight in bad light, in haze or across excess distances, are bound to be less reliable than attempts made by normally sighted persons in normal lighting conditions across reasonably small distances. It is of course no wonder that I took a perfect stranger for my friend having caught a glimpse of him while I was a bit soused, in the dark and being some one hundred yards from him. It is, also no mystery that I don't make such mistakes in a state of perfect sobriety with normal vision in broad daylight and while people are only nine feet from the tip of my nose.

The explanation of Professor Freeman's paradox derives from his accepting as a truism of scientific methodology the claim that the failure of a crucial experiment or series of them to falsify an hypothesis does not establish its truth, but only confirms its status as tentatively probable, and his extension of that putative "truism" to the problems of perception in general. For first, although the so-called truism does indeed express the laudable non-dogmatic ideals of experimental science, its incorporation into a serious methodology and epistemology of experimental, let alone other forms of empirical science, only works havoc with the law of the excluded middle. For if it is possible to conclusively falsify an hypothesis, *its contradictory must be true*. Further, when the so-called truism is extended to other kinds of empirical claims, the results are highly misleading at best. Something has gone wrong when we are forbidden to say that we know it is true that there are no winged elephants or thousand year old living human beings simply because it is a logical possibility that we may not have exhausted all possibly relevant cases. It would border on the ludicrous and be positively malicious if we told someone that it is a mere tentative probability that he will be killed should he drive his sports car into a stone wall at 140 miles an hour. What more in the way of decisive proof that the person I see before me is indeed a living, breathing human being than that he can be seen to be sitting, breathing, talking, and yawning, etc. Should more be wanted, and should he, morality, and the law allow, we might pinch him, stick him with pins, cut him open, and watch him bleed. We might check his fingerprints, then determine that he is indeed, the second son of Mr. and Mrs. Smith, etc. If this is not proof, does not definitely establish truth, then, of course, nothing counts as proof. Similarly, I cannot conceive of what could be more decisive proof that what I think is a human being sitting in front of me is not really so, then either (a) walking 'round his other side and finding him (or it) cardboard backed and propped up with a stick or (b) opening his head and being inundated with sawdust.

It is equally misleading to construe making and checking perceptual statements, as the formulation and testing of hypotheses. For although the logician tells us that it is possible to treat categorical sentences as hypothetical, such treatment obscures the important facts that a great many of the claims we make based upon perception are not universal, nor are they general or nomothetic, and

## REJOINDER TO PROFESSOR FREEMAN

since there is nothing recondite about them, they need not be formulated as tentative. In brief, the logician's translation device functions at the cost of obscuring one of the most important functions of hypothesizing in ordinary (including ordinary scientific) discourse, namely to indicate the guarded nature of the assertion. There are of course, sometimes good reasons for making guarded assertions, e.g., if they are universal and nomothetic, further testing may be required, if they are simple perceptual claims, conditions may be such as to indicate some lack of certainty on the observer's part. But it is incorrect to assume or believe that conditions are never such or even that they are so infrequent that one can never or rarely make straightforward, categorical statements on the basis of perception. And it is misleading to use hypothetical forms of sentence formation under those conditions.

We may conclude then that a solution to the problem of perception, if there is a problem at all, neither requires a transcendental criterion, nor a commitment to a metaphysical theory as an act of faith. What is needed, as Austin pointed out is a modicum of attention, to the circumstances and conditions under which we make, accept and refuse to accept claims based upon perception. Elaborate theory has its place and acts of faith may have theirs. But not here.