

## Preface

This is a book about perception and consciousness. It is written for philosophers and for cognitive scientists, but also for artists, and anyone else who is interested in the way we manage to make—or fail to make—sensory contact with the world around us. In it I argue that perception and perceptual consciousness depend on capacities for action and capacities for thought; perception is, I argue, a kind of thoughtful activity.

Philosophy flourishes in the midst of scientific research, not only because philosophical problems are in good measure empirical, but because scientific problems are in good measure philosophical. This book is intended to contribute to the interdisciplinary *natural philosophy* of mind.

*Action in Perception* has been written against the background of ongoing collaborations (and friendships) with Evan Thompson, Kevin O'Regan, and Susan Hurley. I would not have written this book if not for these collaborations; I acknowledge my debt to them here.

I first got interested in perception as a B.Phil. student in Oxford in the late eighties. My interest was stimulated by the work of three philosophers whose work I read and with whom I had contact in Oxford: Peter Strawson, John Hyman, and Peter Hacker. The title of this book refers to Strawson's paper "Causation in Perception."

I began my own research on perception a few years later, as a graduate student at Harvard. Although this book bears only a distant relation to the dissertation I wrote there under Hilary Putnam, this preface is an appropriate place for me to express my gratitude to him: his insightful criticism, and his energetic example, continue to guide my own work.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to Daniel Dennett, who directs the Center for Cognitive Studies at Tufts, where I spent a postdoctoral year in 1995–1996. Some preoccupations of this book—for example, Gibson's

'ecological' approach to perception—were topics of our conversations. Dennett repeatedly challenged me to make explicit the significance of these matters for cognitive science. I try to meet his challenge in this book.

Many other people have helped me write this book, either directly, or indirectly.

For critical discussion (or correspondence) that has shaped my thinking, I would like to thank Adrian Cussins, Hubert Dreyfus, Sean Kelly, Philip Pettit, and the late Francisco Varela.

For helpful criticism of earlier versions of material in this book, or for critical exchange on related matters, I would like to thank Jonathan Cole, Edward Harcourt, Matthew Henken, Pierre Jacob, Tori McGeer, Dominic Murphy, Erik Myin, Judith Baldwin Noë, Luiz Pessoa, Jean Michel Roy, Kyle Sanford, Eric Schwitzgebel, John Searle, and Stephen White. Bence Nanay provided useful detailed criticism of the whole book, for which I am grateful. Thanks also to the members of my fall 2003 UC Berkeley seminar on consciousness and life.

I owe a special debt to several former teachers and colleagues: Stanley Cavell, David Chalmers, the late Burton Dreben, Warren Goldfarb, David Hoy, Hidé Ishiguro, Robert May, and Charles Parsons. As a philosopher and writer, I engage in imagined dialogue with them on a regular basis.

This book was written with financial support from a University of California President's Fellowship in the Humanities, with the help of a Charles A. Ryskamp/ACLS Research Fellowship, and also with the support of faculty research funds of the University of California.

I am grateful to the members of the Institut Jean Nicod in Paris for welcoming me among them and providing a stimulating environment in which to work on this book during the fall and winter of 2002–2003.

I cannot imagine having written this book without Miriam Dym.

I dedicate this book to my father, Hans Noë.

A.N.

Berkeley

May 2004