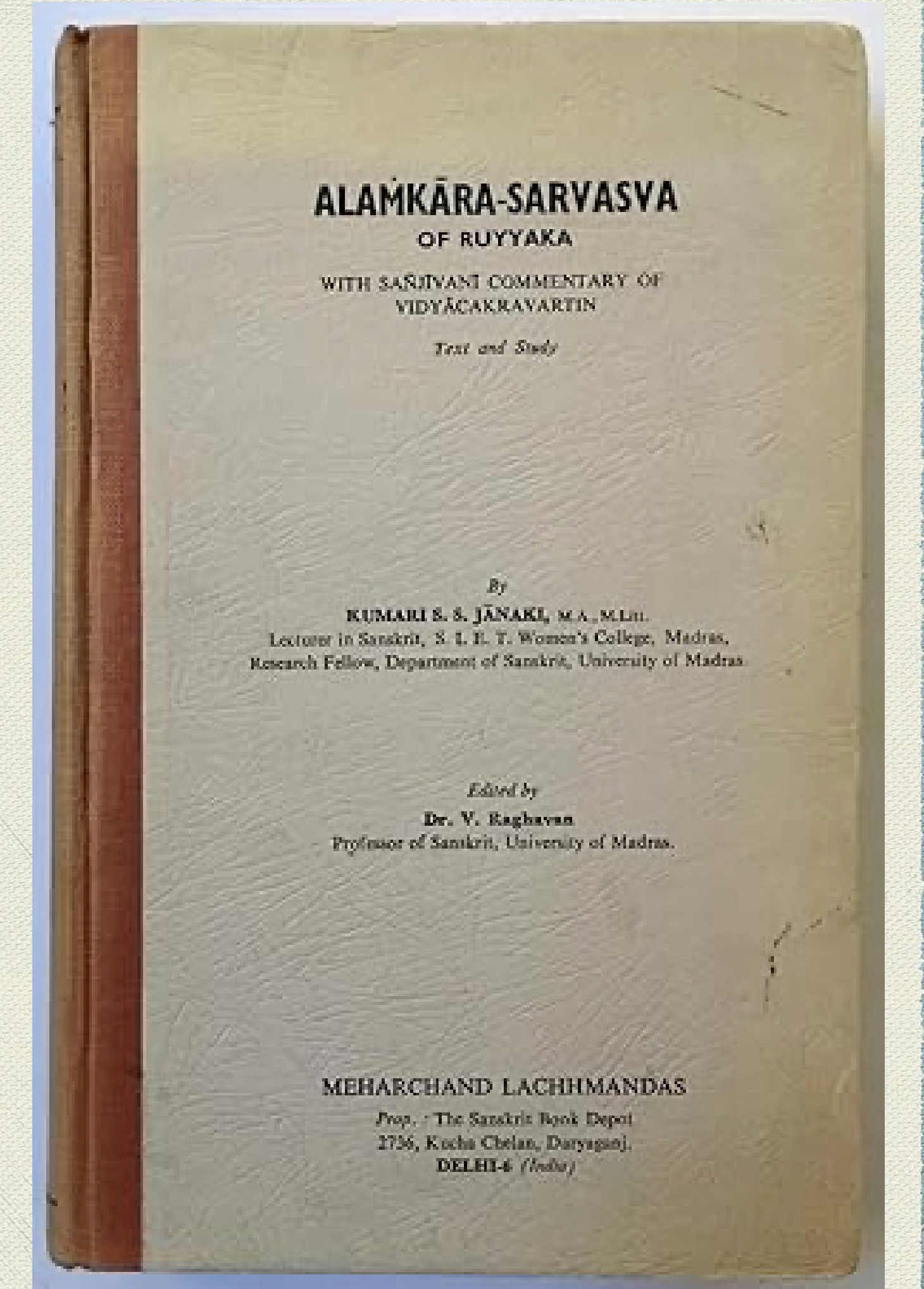


Seeing in the Theatre Audience Engagement as a Perceptual Process

Jonardon Ganeri

Vidyācakravartin on Seeing-In

In everyday [contexts], perceptual experience (*adhyavasāya*) is determinate and has two forms: correct and illusory. Neither has any relation to figuration (*alaṅkāra*). If you correctly identify a pearl oyster shell, or if you wrongly perceive it as silver—in neither case is there anything striking. What we take for figuration is a projection (*adhyāsa*) distinct from both the above, in which, while knowing [the distinction], we say, ‘This thing is *in* that thing’ (*etasmin tadeveti*). The result is an unearthly strikingness. (Vidyācakravartin 1965, 66; cf. Shulman 2012, 59)



Wollheim on Seeing-In

What is distinctive of seeing-in [...] is the phenomenology of the experiences in which it manifests itself. Looking at a suitably marked surface, we are visually aware at once of something in front of or behind something else. [...] I understand it in terms of a single experience with two aspects, which I call configurational and recognitional. Of these two aspects I have claimed that they are phenomenologically incommensurate with the experience of perceptions—that is, of the surface, or of nature—from which they derive, and what I had in mind was something of this order: Sometimes we experience a pain in the knee. This is a complex experience, but it is not to be understood by seeing how one part of it compares with having a pain, but nowhere in particular, and how the other part compares with being aware of one's knee and where it is. (Wollheim 1998, 220-1)



Sanskrit Philosophy of Theatre: *rasa*

Treatise on Drama (Nāṭya-śāstra) Bharata c.300 CE

Bhaṭṭa Lollata c.825
Śrī Śaṅkuka c.850

*Bhaṭṭa Tota, Literary
Investigations* c.975

*Abhinavagupta, New
Dramatic Art* c.1000



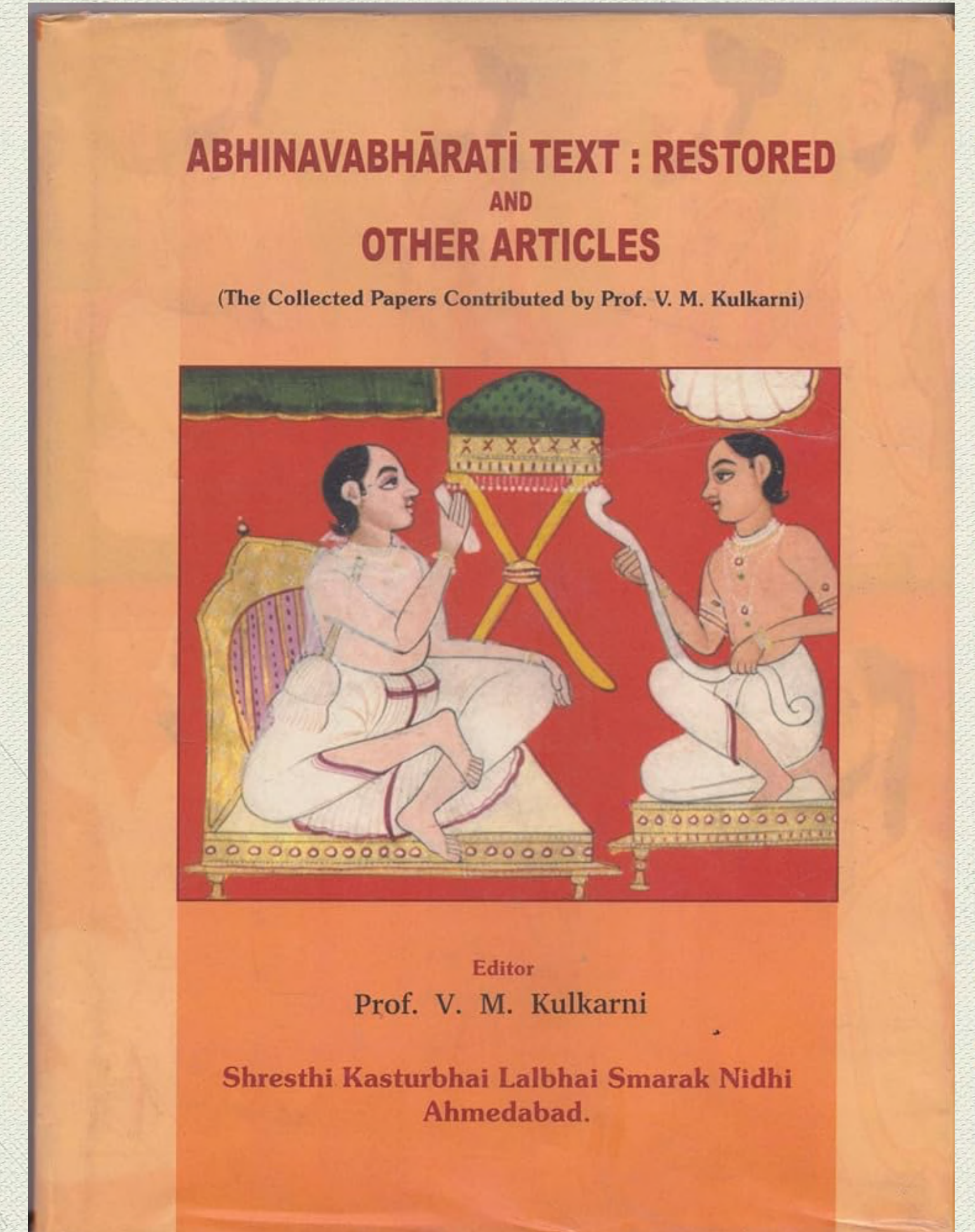
Seeing the Character in the Actor

The moment which I think produced most effect on the house was at the moment when Fazio is to be led off to execution in the prison. She [Bianca] has just been imploring the jailer to delay a few moments in the most passionate manner, when the bell tolls, the sound of which seemed to turn her into marble. She stood riveted to the spot—her eyes fixed, her cheek pale and ashen. Fazio embraces her, but she is entirely insensible of it, and he is led off the stage leaving her a solitary figure. She stood, I should think, five moments, a perfect statue, and the death-like stillness that reigned over the crowded audience, every person seeming to hold their breath, was very striking. “She stood the bloodless image of despair” until the bell tolled again.” (Walker 2006, 36-7)



Śrī Śaṅkuka

On the strength of signs—the causes known as factors; the effects consisting of the reactions; the auxiliary causes, namely, the transitory emotions—which, though artificial (*kṛtrima*), since they are acquired by human effort, are not admitted (*abhimānya*) as such, we apprehend as existing in the actor a stable emotion that is an imitation of the stable emotion in the main character, Rāma, say, and precisely because it is an imitation it is designated by the special term *rasa*. (*ABh.* vol. 1, p. 265; Pollock 2016, 81).



“Imitation” and “Inference” in Śrī Śaṅkuka

Sheldon Pollock: “Śrī Śaṅkuka’s “key argument in aesthetics [...is...] primarily an epistemological one (how *rasa* is apprehended) [...namely,:] because we cannot directly perceive emotion, we must infer it [... and he ...] understands *rasa* as an *imitation* (*anukaraṇa*, *anukṛti*, literally an ‘after-making’) in the actor of the stable emotion in the main character” (Pollock 2016, 78)

- “Imitation” (*anukaraṇa*): to say that an actor “imitates” the emotion of the character they enact need mean nothing more than they assume an expressive look, a look whose function in normal circumstances is to indicate that emotion (Lopes 2005, 73). Call it “Ś-imitation”
- “Inference” (*anumāna*): the state in question has a component of identification, the identification of the character being played and the emotion being expressed. Call it “Ś-inference”

Śrī Śaṅkuka: Seeing Rāma

In this inferential process none of the following notions arises in us: the actor is actually the happy Rāma; or the actor is not in fact Rāma and not really happy when we had first thought him to be the happy Rāma; or that he may or may not be Rāma; or that he is similar to Rāma. (*Abhinava-bhāratī* vol.1, 265, l.7-9; Pollock 2016, 82)

The perception [of the spectator] is quite distinct from cognitions that are true, false, dubious, or based on similarity, e.g. “He [the actor] is Rāma and Rāma is he,” “He is Rāma—but no, a later cognition rules out the first and shows us that he is not Rāma,” “He might or might not be Rāma,” and “He is similar to Rāma.” Rather, it is like looking at a painting of a horse. (*Kāvya-prakāśa* 4.28; Shulman 2012, 63).

Śrī Śaṅkuka: Use of the particle *eva* “in actuality”

Rather, it is like looking at a painting of a horse, and has the form: “Here is the happy Rāma.” To quote, “There is no appearance of doubt, or indeed of truth or falsehood—we have the thought, ‘This is him,’ but not ‘This is him in actuality.’” (*Abhinava-bhāratī* vol.1, 265, l.12 (Gnoli); Pollock 2016, 82)

cf. Dharmakīrti: “The restrictive particle *eva* excludes the non-connection, the connection with something else, or the permanent non-connection of the predicate-property, when attached to the predicate term, the subject term or the verb [respectively]. Even when not actually used, *eva*’s role is understood from the speaker’s intention, for [any] sentence has exclusion as its result. Examples [of the three cases] are: ‘Caitra is an archer’, ‘Pārtha is an archer’, and ‘A lotus is blue’.” (*Pramāṇa-vārttika* 4.190–2; see Ganeri 1999).

An Ambiguity in “Depicted Object”

In painting: Wollheim refers to a *configurational* aspect, which is, in the case of a painting, an awareness of the marked surface itself, and a *recognitional* aspect, discerning a depicted object in the marked surface (Wollheim 1987, 73).

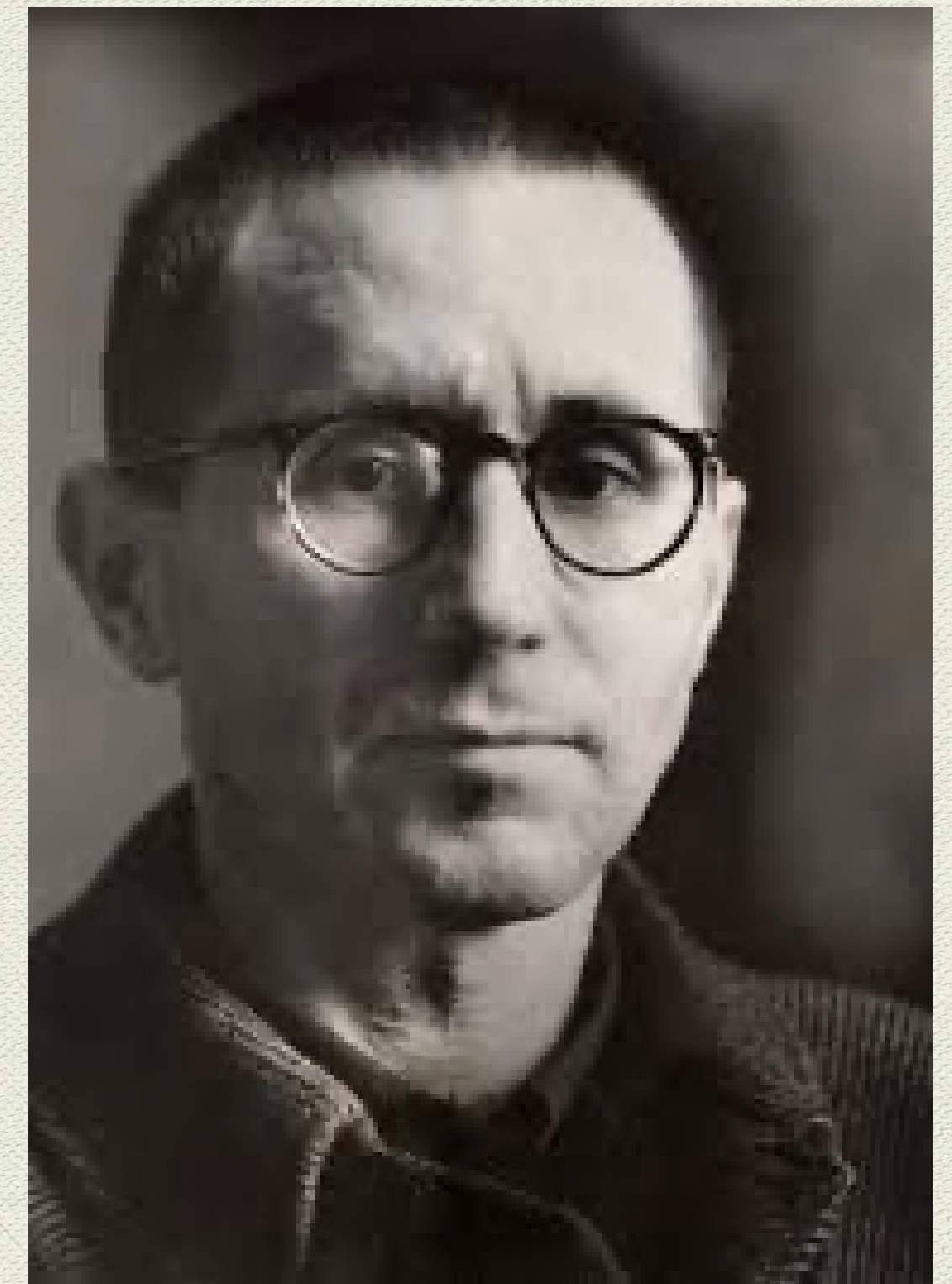
In theatre:

- the analogue of the configurational aspect is the awareness of the actor themselves
- is the analogue of the recognitional aspect an awareness of the **character** played by the actor, or is it rather **the real subject** of the play, the real or mythical Rāma himself, for example?

Anticipates Brecht's Nonaristotelian Drama

... it is a common truism of the [aristotelian] type of play that the audience, once it is in the theatre, is not a number of individuals but a collective individual, a mob, which must and can be reached only through its emotions [...whereas...] the latter theatre holds that the audience is a collection of individuals, capable of thinking and of reasoning, of making judgments even in the theatre; it treats it as individuals of mental and emotional maturity, and believes it wishes to be so regarded. ([1936] 1964, 79).

... the principle – that the actor appears on the stage in a double role, as Laughton and as Galileo; that the showman Laughton does not disappear in the Galileo whom he is showing [...] – comes to mean simply that the tangible, matter-of-fact process is no longer hidden behind a veil; that Laughton is actually there, standing on the stage and showing us what he imagines Galileo to have been. ([1948] 1964, 194).



An Analogy Between Painting and Plays

As to your argument about a cow's being "constructed" (*saṃyuḥyamāna*) of yellow and other colours of paint: if the sense meant here is "manifested," (*abhivyajyamāna*) that is patently false, because no real (*pāramārthika*) cow is being manifested by the paint as though by a lamp. All that is being produced thereby is a particular configuration (*samūha-viśeṣa*) similar to a cow. The painting is the domain of appearance (*pratibhāsa*), namely, that an entity similar to a cow subsists in a particular arrangement of red and so on similar to the arrangement of the parts of a cow. (*Abhinava-bhāratī* vol. 1, p. 278; Pollock 2016, 186-7).



Franz Marc 1880 (Guggenheim)

Husserl on the Perceptual Figure

We have three objects: 1) the physical image, the physical thing made from canvas, marble, and so on; 2) the representing or depicting object; and 3) the represented or depicted object. ([1904-5] 2005, 21).

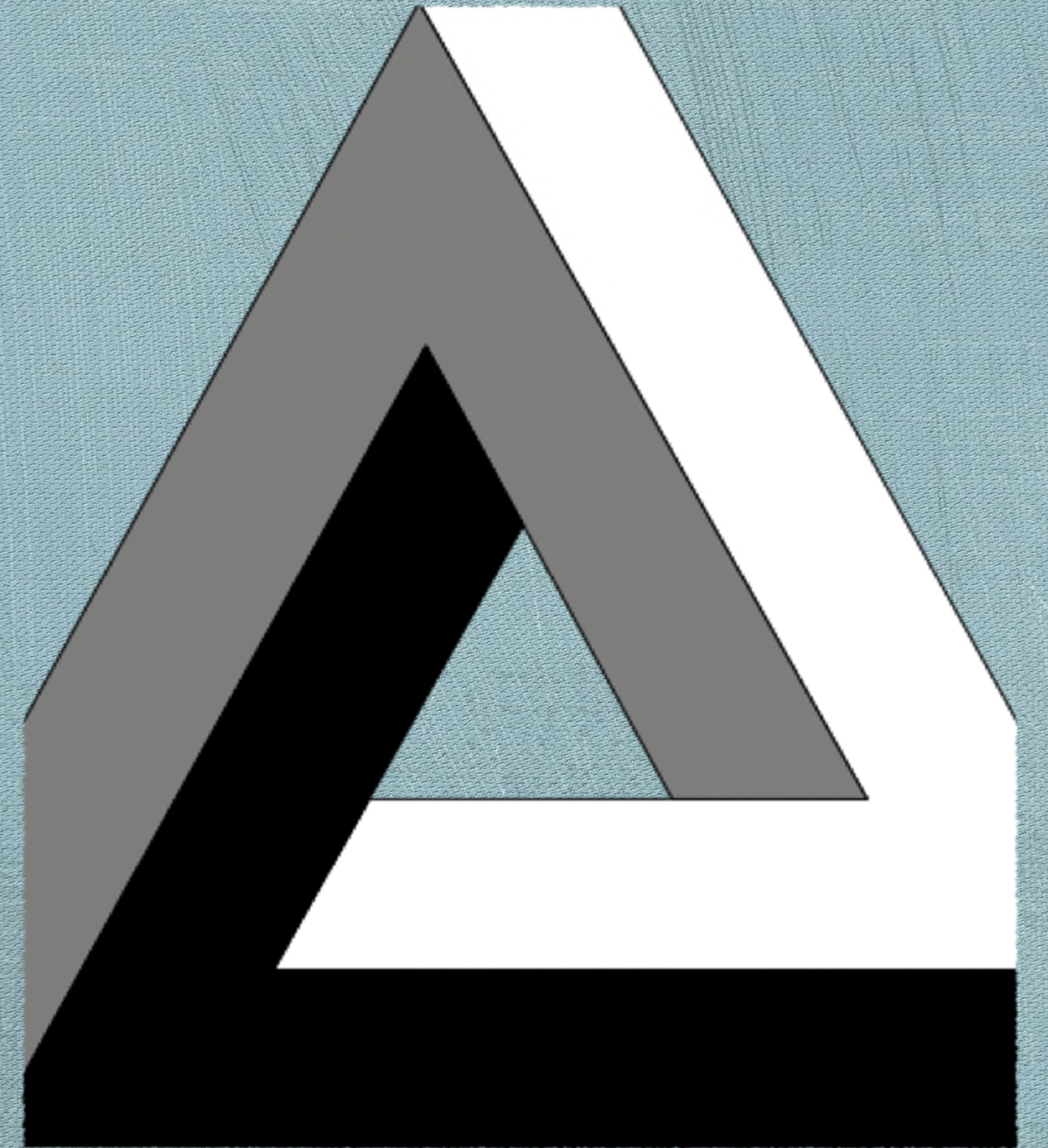
The different objects—the painted surface, the depicted subject, and the “perceptual figure” that is the image object—are also different focal points of attention: For example, if I contemplate the picture of Raphael’s theological subject hanging above my desk, the picture appears to me as a physical thing, as a thing hanging on the wall; I focus my attention on that. Then I change the direction of my contemplation and focus my attention on the image object: there then appears to me an achromatic little figure of a woman, about a foot and a half high, tinted only in black and white and surrounded by two cherubs, considerably smaller and tinted in the same way, and so on. In normal contemplation of the picture, I live in the image consciousness. In that case, I focus my attention on something entirely different: I see the form of a sublime woman, of superhuman size, two powerful and large young angels, and so on. I also say of these that they “appear,” but obviously this does not occur in the proper sense. I see the subject in the image object; the latter is what directly and genuinely appears. (Husserl [1904-5] 2005, 48).

Characters as Artificial/Virtual: Husserl, Wiesing, Nanay

[N]one of the positions in perception theory would be of the absurd opinion that there is no difference between the presentation of a real thing (for example in a shop window or on a tray) and the artificial presence of an image object. [...] The concept of real presence specifies presence in terms of a worldly kind of presentness with substantial attendance. That is why there can be a nonreal, artificial, presence—a presence, precisely, without substantial attendance. (Wiesing, 2009, 19–20).

“Artificial” (*kṛtrima*), or “fabricated/manufactured”: the word Śrī Śaṅkuka too uses to describe the nature of what is depicted onstage (ABh. 1, 274.6; 275,1). *kṛtrima* is best translated as “virtual”.

cf. Bence Nanay (Nanay 2018): an object “visually encoded” in the surface of a picture is a “virtual object”

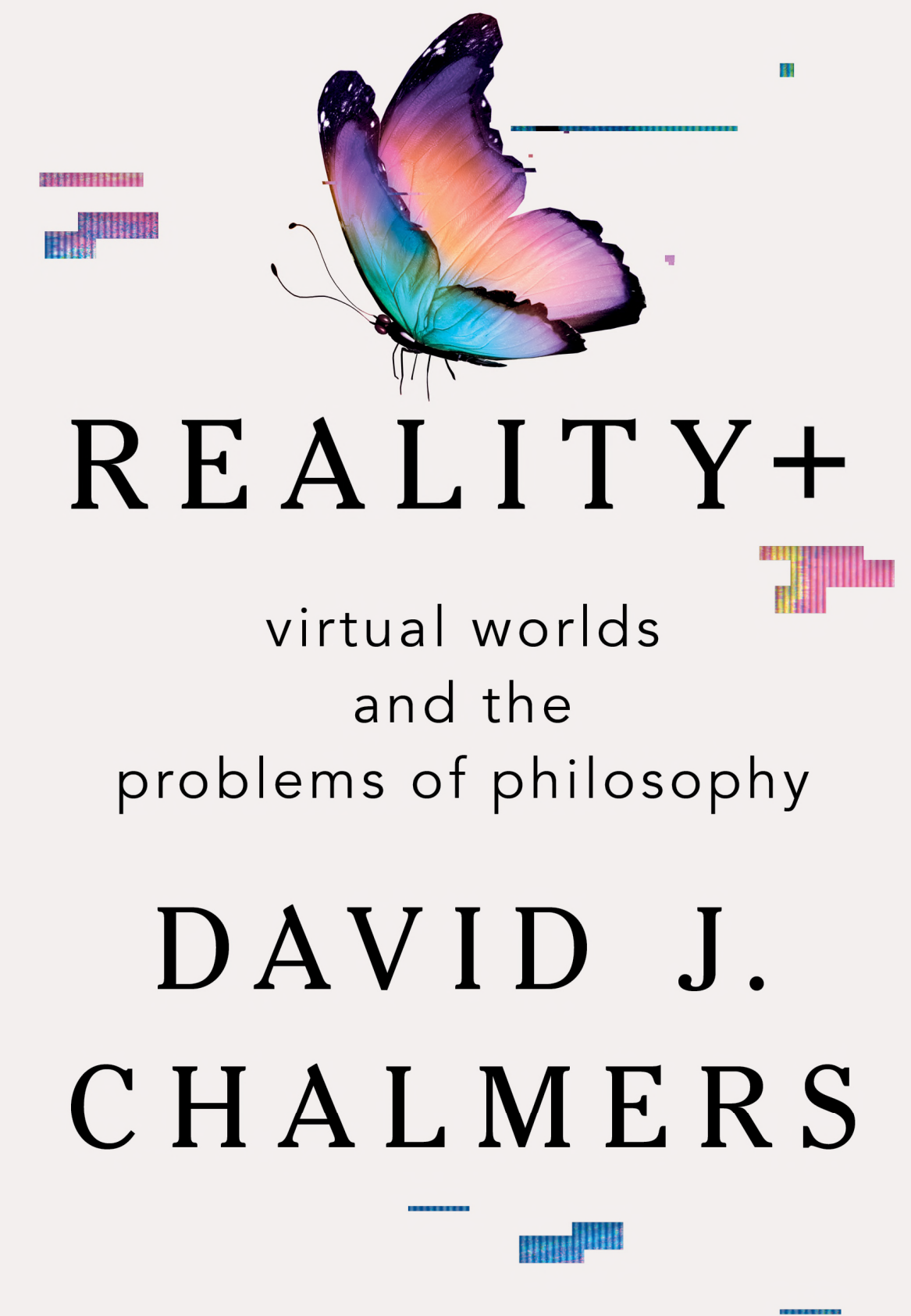


Virtual Depictions

Chalmers on Virtual Realism

“Do the objects we perceive in a simulated world exist? If I’m in a perfect simulation, does the tree outside my window really exist? My opponent says, “No, the tree and the window itself are mere hallucinations.” I say, “Yes, the tree and the window really exist.” At some level they’re digital objects, grounded in digital processes in a computer, but they’re no less real for that.” (115).

Chalmers defines virtual realism as the claim that “if we’re in a perfect simulation, the objects around us are real and not an illusion”.



How is the Absent Subject Experienced?

... when talking about picture perception, we need to consider not two, but three entities. They are the following: A) the two dimensional picture surface; B) the three dimensional object the picture surface visually encodes; and C) the three dimensional depicted object [...Of these...] B is a virtual object: it is fully determined by the marks on the picture surface given the rules of optics and it has only perceptible properties (2018, 170).

How does the representation of C influence the perceived color (and the cortical activity)? A straightforward proposal would be to say that it is the mental imagery of C that influences the perceived color. You have a (not necessarily very salient) mental imagery of the heart and this mental imagery (and the color red that shows up in it) influences your perceptual experience of the orange heart-shape (that is, it influences your perceptual phenomenology). Similarly, when you recognize Mick Jagger, you have a (not necessarily very salient) mental imagery of Mick Jagger and this imagery influences the way you see the caricature. [...] So this gives us the following picture: we have two perceptual states and (at least in some instances of picture perception) also a quasi-perceptual state: the perceptual representation of A and the perceptual representation of B, and we also have the quasi-perceptual representation (that is the mental imagery) of C. And in order to explain the phenomenology of seeing this picture as a caricature of Mick Jagger, we need to take all three of these perceptual/quasi-perceptual states into consideration. (2018, 176–7).

How is the Absent Subject Experienced?

Nanay: “quasi-perception through mental imagery”

Bhattacharyya: negative attention to the absent depicted subject

Aniconic Depiction: The empty throne as a depiction of the Buddha.



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Thank You!

