

Christopher Ranalli

*Experience of the World: Perception and Epistemic Value.*

What, if at all, is the value of sense-perception? One idea is that sense-perceptual is valuable insofar as it enables us to know about the world around us: to know facts about our world. But it might also be that sense-perception is of distinctive epistemic value because it puts us in what Johnston (1995) and Campbell (2002) call 'cognitive contact' with the world: a kind of epistemic contact with the actual objects and properties of the world, which reveals what those things are like, and not just truths about those things (Cf. Russell 1912). But what if we lack this kind of epistemic contact with the world? Would the value our engagement with it be diminished? In his (1974), Robert Nozick used the 'experience-machine', a machine which provides us with simulated experiences of our choosing, to argue that Hedonism is false. But we can also use his thought-experience to bring out the problem of the epistemic value of 'cognitive contact', since part of what diminishes the value of one's life confined to the experience-machine is that "there is no actual contact with any deeper reality, though the experience of it can be simulated". In this paper, I explore arguments for the view that without genuine 'cognitive contact' with the world, our perceptual knowledge of the world lacks intrinsic epistemic value.