Ecological Psychology

Overall goal – understand perceiving the environment

Step 1 – Re-evaluate what can count as a stimulus.

Step 2 – Question the concept of "stimulus" itself

Back to William James --- Change itself can be a unit

Step 3 – Ask: What is there to be perceived?

Compare to Koffka –"Why do things look as they do?"

Remember Gregory and Beau Lotto? They are not identical, but they are similar in emphasizing that direct experience is not of the world --- leaving perception of the world a big mystery.

Tendency has been to build theories around experimental situations and assume results will apply to real world situations.

From Hyun et al JEP:HPP, 2009, vol. 35, p. 1140

"The input to the human visual system consists primarily of a series of static snapshots—most lasting only a few hundred milliseconds—separated by blinks and saccades. It is often useful to compare information that was obtained from a previous snapshot and stored in visual working memory (VWM)[1] with the information that is available in the current snapshot. The purpose of the present study was to characterize the processes involved in this comparison."

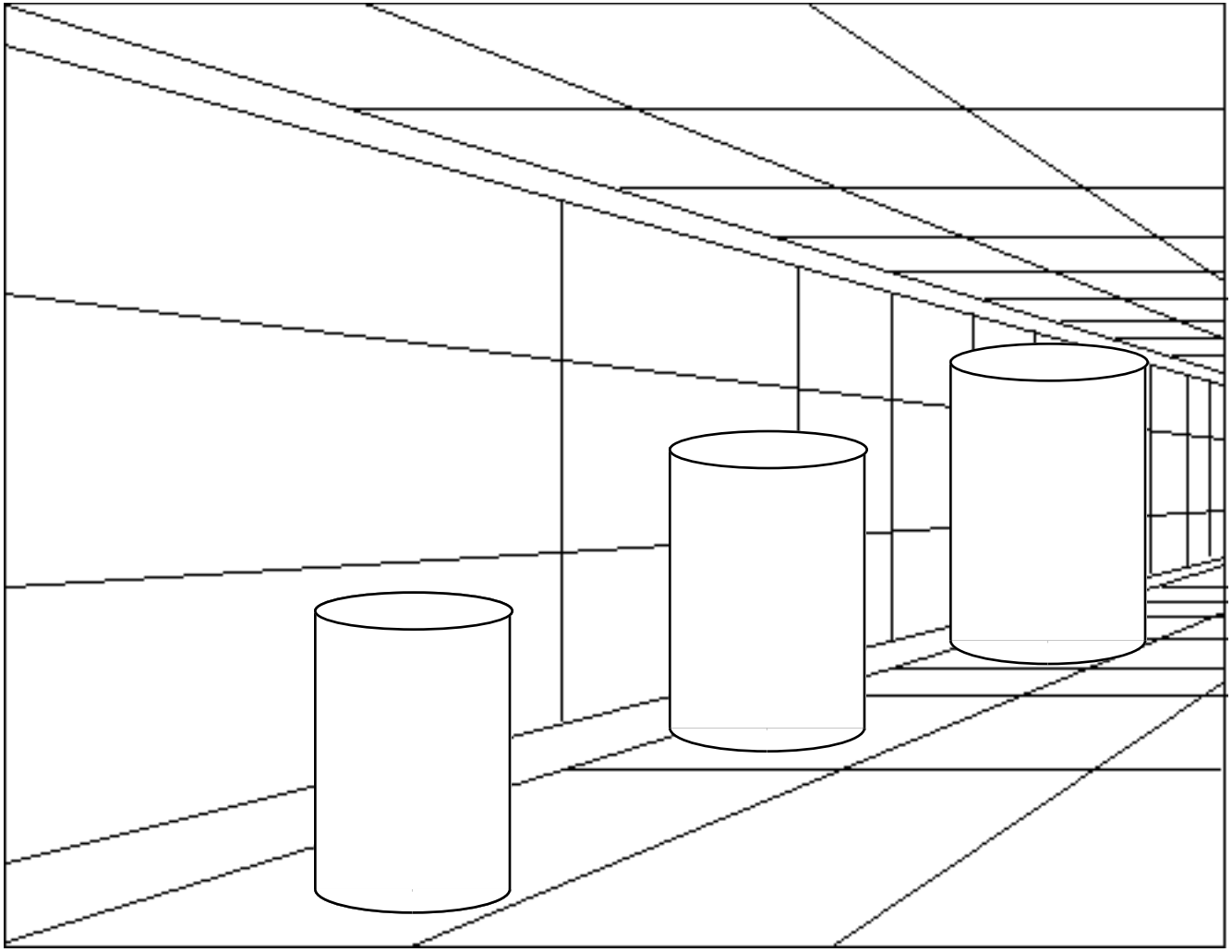
Ecological approach – The "real world" is different from the "non-real."

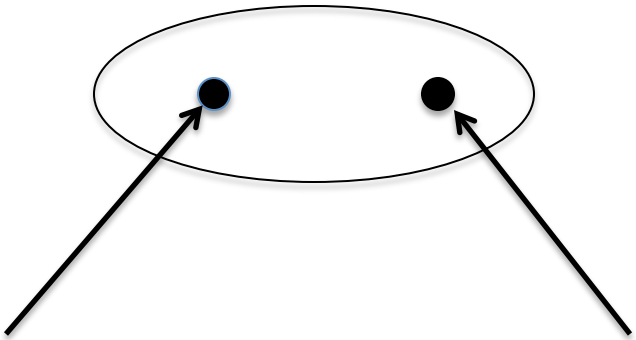
Ecological Realism

There are limits to ambiguity, how we can be fooled. Real things look different from non-real things and those differences can be discovered, within the capabilities of the exploring animal and the opportunities for exploration.

Scrutiny of persisting things.

Size Constancy – typically stated in terms of size of image; then there is a puzzle. Ecological approach – is something in the array actually constant? See below

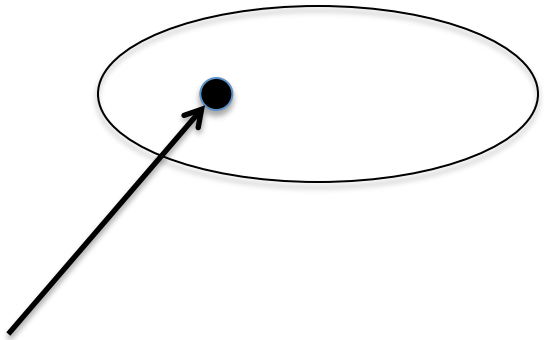




Point A “stimulating” eye

Point B

How does Point A get to Point B?



Point A “stimulating” eye

The eye could move OR
the point could move.

The result is the same RELATIVE to the eye.