

Intentionalist reply 2: Appearance properties

PHIL 93515
Jeff Speaks

April 23, 2007

One line of response is to deny premise (5). If you say this, then you think that the experiences of Invert and Nonvert have different contents because there are some properties *other than color properties* with respect to which the contents of their experiences differ; one is then free to endorse the claim that they have different phenomenal characters without giving up on intentionalism. The natural next question is: what are these properties?

Shoemaker (1994) gives one answer to this question. Shoemaker endorses the Lockean assumptions we sketched last time:

“For suppose Jack and Jill are spectrum inverted relative to each other. When both are looking at a ripe tomato, their experiences will be markedly different in phenomenal character . . . Yet I would want to say . . . that the experiences of both represent the tomato, and represent it correctly, as being red.” (26)

Yet Shoemaker endorses minimal intentionalism (which is entailed by what he calls ‘representationalism’). So he must find *some* difference in the contents of Jack and Jill; that is, he must find some property which is such that the experiences of one but not the other of Jack and Jill represent the tomato as having that property. And we know from the above that this property will not be a color property.

Moreover — if we take seriously the idea that these are really cases in which neither of the perceivers misrepresents — the properties those perceivers represent the object in question as having must be properties the object really has.

Shoemaker explains what these properties could be in the following passage:

“Once these desiderata for a solution to the problem have been made clear, it begins to be clear what sort of solution it must have. How can the experiences of Jack and Jill represent the tomato differently and yet neither of them misrepresent it, given that the same information about its intrinsic nature is getting to both? They can only because the different properties their experiences attribute to the tomato are *relational* properties. So the bare bones of the solution is this. Let Q1 be the quale associated with redness in Jack, and let Q2 be the quale associated with redness in Jill. There is a relational property consisting in producing or being disposed to produce experiences with

Q1. And there is one that consists in producing or being disposed to produce experiences with Q2. Jack's experience represents the tomato as having the first of these relational properties, and Jill's experience represents it as having the second of them. And in fact it has both. Neither property is the property of being red, which is also attributed to the tomato by the experiences of Jack and Jill. ...” (27)

Let's call the properties with respect to which the contents of these experiences differ 'appearance properties.' Then here Shoemaker gives us two possibilities for what appearance properties could be:

The property of now producing an experience with quale X.

The property of being disposed to produce an experience with quale X.

A problem with the 'occurrent' view is that nothing can have appearance properties, on this construal, unless it is being perceived. Shoemaker (2000) takes this to be a reason to opt for the dispositional view.

Egan (2006), §4 gives a nice discussion of the problems with different interpretations of the dispositional view of appearance properties; the problems are, in part about specifying in whom the objects are disposed to produce the relevant experiences. Egan suggests that we identify appearance properties with 'centering features.' If properties determine functions from worlds to extensions (the extension being the set of things that has the property) then centering features are functions from centered worlds (a world + a designated place and time) to extensions. Intuitively, a centering feature is what is expressed by 'is nearby.'

It's important to note one commitment of this view: we should be clear to distinguish the property, *_ is nearby Jeff Speaks*, from the relation, *_ is nearby _*. But centering features are neither properties nor relations. So, in addition to the above properties and relations, there is the centering feature *_ is nearby*. Is this odd?

Objections to 'appearance properties' defenses of intentionalism:

1. Whether appearance properties are relational properties, relations, or centering features, what Jack's experience but not Jill's ascribes to the tomato appears to be none of these, but rather an intrinsic property of the tomato. Shoemaker's reply: the example of 'to the right of'.
2. There is a sense, which is hard to express in an uncontroversial way, in which this view seems to make colors inaccessible to visual experience. This seems counterintuitive.
3. There is a threat of incoherence if we combine the present defense of intentionalism with the intentionalist idea that we can explain what it is to have a visual experience with a certain phenomenal character in terms of facts about the contents of visual experience. Let *R*-quale be the qualia that you and I experience which looking at ripe tomatoes. Then the intentionalist might want to find some content *p* which is such that what it is to have a visual experience with the *R*-quale is to have a visual experience with content *p*. On the present view content *p* would be (say) the property of producing an experience with the *R*-quale. So we have:

an experience has the *R*-quale \equiv_{df} the experience has the content
that some object is producing the *R*-quale.

But it is difficult to understand what the content of this experience is. If it is to explain what possession of the *R*-quale property is, it seems as though it can't contain that property as a proper part. But, at least if we understand the content of the experience in a Russellian way, it must. And, as Johnston (2001) argues, moving to a Fregean view of contents seems only to delay the incoherence. This seems like a general problem for attempts to give 'response-dependent' analyses of properties where the relevant responses are beliefs or other propositional attitudes whose contents include the property in question.

There is logical space for a number of different kinds of views of what's going on in these sorts of cases which are similar to Shoemaker's in that they find a difference in representational content in the perceptions of Invert and Nonvert which is not a difference in the colors their experiences represent objects as having. Thau, e.g., defends a view like this in *Consciousness and Cognition*. One could also hold a view which is like Shoemaker's in refusing to say that either Invert or Nonvert misrepresents the color of the tomato, but to say that one of them does misrepresent the appearance properties of the tomato, where as above appearance properties \neq colors.

References

- Andy Egan, 2006. Appearance Properties? *Noûs* 40(3):495–521.
- Mark Johnston, 2001. The Authority of Affect. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63:181–214.
- Sydney Shoemaker, 1994. Phenomenal Character. *Noûs* 28:21–38.
- Sydney Shoemaker, 2000. Phenomenal Character Revisited. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60:465–467.
- Michael Thau, 2002. *Consciousness and Cognition*. New York: Oxford University Press.