

# Interpersonal comparisons of phenomenal character

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We're now going to turn to counterexamples directed specifically at interpersonal intramodal intentionalisms. These will all be cases in which a pair of subjects have experiences which differ in phenomenal character, but have the same content. Accordingly, these sorts of cases presuppose that it makes sense to compare the phenomenal character of experiences across subjects. Shoemaker and Stalnaker call the denial of this view 'the Frege-Schlick view.'

## 1 Does the Frege-Schlick view make sense?

No one (at least no one we are interested in right now) is denying that experiences have a phenomenal character. What is in question is whether it makes sense to compare the phenomenal characters of the experiences of distinct subjects.

But one might think that one could not question this without denying that experiences have phenomenal character. If experiences have phenomenal character, doesn't this just imply that we can compare the phenomenal character of any pair of experiences?

Stalnaker thinks not. The idea is that when we are talking about the phenomenal character of experiences, we are talking about relations between experiences of a single subject, rather than about an intrinsic monadic property of individual experiences.

One might worry that this makes no sense. Some examples from Stalnaker which indicate that it does: a relational theory of space; intrapersonal vs. interpersonal utility values.

## 2 Shoemaker's paradox

Stalnaker thinks that the Frege-Schlick view is supported by 'Shoemaker's paradox' (from Shoemaker (1981)). . This paradox results from a pair of assumptions: that interpersonal comparisons of phenomenal character are based on interpersonal comparisons of physical realizers, and that intrapersonal comparisons are based on discriminatory abilities of the relevant subject.

An alternative view (this is related to what Stalnaker calls 'the common sense view'): we have a clear even if difficult to articulate grasp of how an experience seems to a subject at a time. This is sufficient to understand what it would take for another experience of an arbitrary subject to have the same phenomenal character: it would have to seem *this way*. One can ask whether any experience which seemed this way would have the same physical realizer or not; but one doesn't have to explain what it would mean for an experience to seem this way in terms of sameness of physical realization.

## References

- Sydney Shoemaker, 1981. The Inverted Spectrum. *Journal of Philosophy* 74:7:357–381.
- Robert Stalnaker, 1999. Comparing Qualia Across Persons. *Philosophical Topics* 26:385–405.