

Mind-Dependence

Lecture 2: Undoing the P-S Distinction

1. Colour Appearance vs Reality

A colour is part of how a thing looks. We know that how things appear or look might come apart from how things are. Example: the Müller-Lyer lines look to be of unequal length, but they are of equal length. In this case, the way the object appears is illusory. But not all appearances are illusory. A cube may look cubical and actually be cubical too.

The Modern View of colour assumes that colour appearances are illusory. The tomato may look red to us, but the quality of redness is not instantiated by the fruit. Instead, redness, if it exists at all, exists only as a mind-dependent quality. Hence, colours are not Primary Qualities, i.e. mind-independent ones.

2. The Paradox of Conflicting Appearances

Consider: the same water can feel cold to one hand and hot to another. If the heat or cold were in the water and not the mind, the water would have to be hot and cold at the same time. But one and the same body cannot simultaneously be both be hot and not hot (i.e. cold).

In its most basic form, this ‘paradox of conflicting appearances’ consists of three jointly inconsistent claims:

1. **Variation:** x appears F and x appears G
2. **Veridicality:** The F appearance and the G appearance are veridical
3. **Incompatibility:** Nothing is both F and G

Many choose to resist (2) Veridicality, and so deny that both appearances are veridical. But then it seems *ad hoc* to say of one of them that it is veridical while the other is illusory. We have no reason to think there is any relevant difference between them. And so we are forced to say that both appearances are illusory.

3. Berkeley’s Undoing

“let any one consider those arguments which are thought manifestly to prove that colors and tastes exist only in the mind, and he shall find they may with equal force be brought to prove the same thing of extension, figure, and motion” (Principles §15)

Berkeley presents two arguments to undo the distinction between Primary and Secondary Qualities:

Same Argument, Same Conclusion: Paradoxes of conflicting appearances arise just as much for the Primary Qualities as they do for the Secondary ones. “Great and small, swift and slow, are allowed to exist nowhere without the mind, being entirely relative, and changing as the frame or position of the organs of sense varies.” (§11)

Inseparability Argument: We never perceive nor can we conceive of the Primary Qualities independent of the Secondary ones.

4. A Simple View of Colour?

On this view, redness, for example, is not a disposition to produce experiences in us. It is, rather, the ground of such a disposition. But that is not because redness is a microphysical property—the real nature of the property is, rather, transparent to us. (Campbell 1994)

A Naïve Realist about colour agrees with Berkeley: colours have as much reality as the Primary Qualities. But contra Berkeley, they argue that colours are mind-independent. The dispute:

1. Colour qualities (Secondary Qualities) are mind-dependent
2. Colour qualities (Secondary Qualities) are just as real as Primary Qualities

	MODERN	BERKELEY	NAIVE
(1)	Y	Y	N
(2)	N	Y	Y

5. The Argument from Colour Constancy

The Naïve Realist about colour claims that, though the appearance/reality distinction is fine, it cannot be used to deny reality to the colours.

Constancy Argument: “To say that colours are mind-independent is to say that colour is one thing, our experience of colour another; as such, Mind-Independence entails a distinction between appearance and reality. Colour constancy is evidence of this appearance-reality distinction” (Allen 2012).

References

- Allen, Keith. 2012. “Revelation and the Nature of Colour.” *Dialectica* 65: 153–76.
- Campbell, John. 1994. “A Simple View of Color” in John Haldane and Crispin Wright (eds.), *Reality, Representation and Projection* (Oxford: Clarendon Press) pp. 257-69.

Maarten Steenhagen (ms2416@cam.ac.uk) | February 2017