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## A Simple View of Colour

*John Campbell*

### I

Physics tells us what is objectively there. It has no place for the colours of things. So colours are not objectively there. Hence, if there is such a thing at all, colour is mind-dependent. This argument forms the background to disputes over whether common sense makes a mistake about colours. It is assumed that the view of colour as mind-independent has been refuted by science. The issue, then, is whether the view of colour as mind-independent is somehow implicit in the phenomenology of colour vision. I want to look at the background argument which controls this dispute.

We can see this argument at work in the dispute between Mackie, who presses the charge of error in the phenomenology, and McDowell, who resists the charge. They take the issue to be the characterization of colour experience. For Mackie's Locke, 'colours as we see them are totally different . . . from the powers to produce such sensations'.<sup>1</sup> Further, if we take the appearances at face value, we will not take colours to be microphysical properties of things: they do not appear as microphysical properties. Still, if we take the appearances at face value, we will take it that we are seeing the properties of objects in virtue of which they have the potential to produce experiences of colour. The perception reveals the whole character of the property to us. Since it is not just a power to produce experiences in us, there is a sense in which this property is mind-independent; and according to Mackie, the mistake of common sense is to suppose that there are any such non-physical mind-independent properties. McDowell, on the other hand, insists that vision presents colours as dispositions to produce experiences of colour. After all, he asks, '[w]hat would one expect it to be like to experience something's being such as to look red'—that is, as having the dispositional property—'if not to experience the thing in question (in the right circumstances) as looking, precisely, red?'<sup>2</sup> For Mackie and McDowell, the legitimacy of our ordinary talk about colours turns on this issue about phenomenology. They agree that we do have colour experiences, and that objects have the powers to produce these experiences in virtue of their microphysical structures. They agree there is no more going on than that.

The only issue between them is whether this is enough to vindicate the phenomenology. The question is whether it seems that there is more to colour than dispositions to produce experiences of colour, whether it seems that colour is mind-independent.

I shall take the view of colours as mind-dependent to find clearest expression in the thesis that they are powers of objects to produce experiences in us. I shall not be concerned with more rarefied theses of mind-dependence, which might be applied to properties quite generally.

The view of colours as mind-independent must acknowledge some role for colours in colour-perception. I shall equate this view with the thesis that they are to be thought of as the grounds of the dispositions of objects to produce experiences of colour. This is not a kind of physicalism about colours. To suppose that it must be is to assume an identification of the physical and the objective which the thesis may question. It may instead be that the characters of the colours are simply transparent to us. Of course, we often have to consider cases in which the character of a property is not transparent to us; but there may also be cases in which transparency holds.

The background argument with which we began needs elaboration. It does not as it stands provide a convincing argument for the assumption that colours are mind-dependent. A simpler view of colours thus remains in play. 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. This view of colours would be available even to someone who rejected the atomic theory of matter: someone who held that matter is continuous and that there are no microphysical properties. The view of colours as mind-independent does not depend upon the atomic theory. Nevertheless, without there being a commitment to any thesis of property identity, someone who holds this simple view may acknowledge that colours are supervenient upon physical properties, if only in the minimal sense that two possible worlds which share all their physical characteristics cannot be differently coloured. It is usually supposed that if common sense accepts this position, it is mistaken: to defend common sense is to clear it of the charge of accepting the view. But we shall see that we do not have any reason to abandon this Simple View.

## II

The central line of objection to the Simple View depends upon a particular conception of what is required for a property to be mind-independent. This attack depends on supposing that a mind-independent property must be one that figures in an 'absolute', or 'objective' description of the world. The defining feature of such a description of reality is that understanding it does not require one to exploit anything idiosyncratic about one's own position in the world.

Colours, conceived as the Simple View conceives them, cannot figure in any such description. The Simple View acknowledges that to understand ascriptions

of colour, one must have, or have had, experiences of colour. There is no other way of grasping what a particular colour-property *is*. The character of the property is, though, transparent to this way of grasping it.

This is a forceful line of argument for the mind-dependence of colours. But it proves too much. If it were correct, it could be extended to show more than that colours are mind-dependent. We could also use it to show that *particularity*—a physical thing's being the *particular* thing that it is—is mind-dependent. It is much easier to see what is going wrong when we apply the above line of thought to the case of physical things. So I shall spend most of this section on this case, returning at the end of it to draw the comparison with colour.

The possibility of massive duplication shows that the subject can never fade out of the picture in singular reference. There is no 'absolute' or 'objective' conception which refers to particulars. The point needs some glossing, though. The possibility of massive duplication makes it vivid that we use spatio-temporal locations to differentiate things—that is what makes the difference between identifying particulars, and identifying types. But we can identify spatio-temporal locations only by appeal to their relations to things. How then does the apparatus of singular reference get off the ground? The possibility of massive duplication rules out its being by purely qualitative singling-out. One answer is that one uses one's own location, as what ultimately anchors one's singular reference to *this* sector of the world rather than to a duplicate. Yet this cannot be right. One cannot locate all other objects by reference to oneself, for one's own location is itself identified by appeal to the objects one perceives. One is not oneself somehow a uniquely firmly anchored spatial thing. In fact, the conclusion is correct, that the subject can never fade entirely out of the picture in singular reference, but not because one has always to identify things by appeal to one's own location. The point is rather that the demonstratives we need to get reference to physical things off the ground invariably *introduce* the subject: his identifications of objects always provide a frame of reference by which the subject can triangulate his own location, or else they depend upon a range of identifications of objects by references to which the subject can triangulate his own location.

One might conclude from this that particularity is mind-dependent. One might conclude that what makes a physical thing the *particular* thing that it is, is, ultimately, its relation to a mind. If we want to resist this conclusion, we have to explain how particularity can be mind-independent even though there is no 'absolute' or 'objective' way of identifying particulars.

The mind-independence of particularity is what explains a modal datum. Intuitively, it would seem that I can make sense of the idea that all the things around me might have existed, and might continue to exist, even if I simply had not been around to think about any of them. But in thinking this thought, I am, of course, using the fact that I am demonstratively linked to those things: for the thought I have is a thought about *those very* objects. This also, however, provides rooms for the thought of my own location with respect to them: so what makes it possible for me to abstract away from that? At this point one

might appeal to the existence of other thinkers than oneself, who can identify those very objects whether or not I am around. But we surely want to underwrite the possibility that many of the particular things around us might have existed even if there had been no sentient beings. It is here that it can seem so appealing to invoke ways of identifying those particulars from *no* point of view. Yet there is no such way of identifying a particular thing.

We have to abandon the notion of an 'absolute' or 'objective' description of reality, which identifies particular things. We need another tack. We have to appreciate how fundamental in our thinking is our grasp of a simple theory of perception. This theory provides us with the idea that our perceptions are caused by a pair of factors: by the way things are in the environment, and by one's meeting the enabling conditions of perception—being in the right place at the right time, suitably receptive, and so on. The problem about the mind-independence of particularity is the result of operating as if we had a range of thoughts relating to what is there anyway, which we can as it happens employ in a simple theory of perception. Operating in this way, we naturally have some difficulty in explaining how it is that we find it intelligible that things are thus and so anyway. The correct response is to acknowledge that *what makes it the case* that our thoughts concern what is there anyway, is that they are embedded in a simple theory of perception. This embedment is internal to those thoughts: it is what constitutes them as being the thoughts they are.

Simple predicates of physical things are themselves explained in terms internal to this theory. The *stability* of predications of enduring objects, and the framework of expectations into which they fit, make sense only in the context of this simple theory.

This simple theory, being so fundamental, has an autonomous role to play in controlling our grasp of modal truth. It is this simple theory that makes it intelligible to us that our perceptions concern a world of objects which are there independently of us. The independence of the particulars is grasped once the subject understands that perception of them requires not just their existence, but the meeting of these further, enabling conditions of perception. The existence and character of the particulars is quite independent of whether these further conditions are met.

Of course the theory is *corrigible*, and it is always open to us to make new discoveries about the essential character of the world. The fact remains that our grasp of modal truth, including our conception of what sorts of things there are, is controlled by our developing grasp of this theory.

This point about spatial thinking marks a contrast between it and thought of abstract objects. For abstract objects in general, it is plausible that there is a canonical level of singular thought which controls our grasp of modal truth. Thus for numbers we have the numerals: modal truths about numbers are ultimately responsible to what is transparently conceptually possible at the level of thought expressible using numerals. The reason why it is not essential to any number that it be the number of the planets is that it is transparently conceptually possible that 9, for example, should not be the number of planets. The reason why 9 is essentially greater than 7 is that it is transparently

conceptually necessary that 9 is greater than 7. As Quine once put it, making sense of modality here means 'adopting a frankly inequalitarian attitude towards the various ways of specifying the number'.<sup>3</sup> In the spatial case, however, there is no level of singular thought which can play this role. The position of a number in the number series individuates it, and is essential to it, if anything is, and that is precisely what the numerals capture. In contrast, what individuates a physical thing is its location at a time: and that is the very paradigm of a contingent property. How is it that individuation and essence can come apart like this? The reason for the asymmetry is the role which is played by a simple theory of perception in the spatial case, in controlling our grasp of modal truth. This simple theory has no parallel in the case of abstract objects.

What holds for spatial things here, holds for their properties. The mind-independence of a property of physical things is just a different issue to whether it can figure in an 'absolute' or 'objective' conception of reality: it has to do rather with the embedment of the property in a simple theory of perception.

We can put the point by asking how we are to explain the modal datum for colours, that objects might have been coloured exactly as they are even had there been no sentient life. The proponent of the dispositional analysis takes it that in explaining this datum we have to appeal to an 'absolute' or 'objective' conception of the world, which can only be a physical characterization of it. And there is also an appeal to the global supervenience of colour on the physical, so that the datum is explained as amounting to the fact that the world might have had just the physical structure it actually does even had there been no sentient life: and that structure is one which has the power to produce particular colour-experiences in us, as we actually are. On this approach, the modal datum would simply not be intelligible to someone who rejected the atomic theory, taking matter to be continuous. But there is an alternative way of explaining the modal datum. The alternative is to point out that the experience of a colour is characteristically the joint upshot of the operation of a pair of factors: the object's having that colour, on the one hand, and on the other, the satisfaction of a whole range of enabling conditions of perception: for example, that the lighting is standard, the percipient is appropriately situated and oriented, and so on. All the modal datum comes to is that this pair of factors is genuinely distinct. Whether the object has the colour is one thing, and whether anybody is in a position to see it—indeed, whether anybody is there at all—is another. Grasping this point does not require an acquaintance with the atomic theory of matter. At this point, though, it may be said that colours, conceived as the Simple View conceives them, can play no role in the causation of perception.

### III

One line of argument against the Simple View is that on it, colours become epiphenomena. We can put the point in terms of the intuitive notion of an 'explanatory space'. The suggestion is that common sense and science are

jostling for the same 'explanatory space'. They are attempting to give causal explanations of the same phenomenon: perception of colour. One explanation we might give of colour perception is in terms of wavelengths and physiology. But on this view, to suppose both explanations are correct would be to suppose that the colour-experience is causally overdetermined. The only reasonable alternative is to take the colours to be epiphenomena.

The dispositional analysis is an attempt to resist this conclusion while hanging on to the idea that the two ways of explaining colour perception can be driven, in an easily understood way, into a single 'explanatory space'. On the dispositional theory, the relation between the two accounts is analogous to that between an explanation of the dissolution of salt in terms of its solubility, and an account of the underlying chemistry of salt and water. These two accounts do not compete; rather, the explanation of dissolution by solubility merely holds open the place for the scientific account. So too, on the dispositional analysis, the explanation of colour perception in terms of colour does not compete with the scientific account, but more modestly, just holds open the place for it.

The obvious response to this whole line of thought is to question whether talk of colours and talk of wavelengths really do occupy the same 'explanatory space'. We have, on the one hand, the causal explanation of colour perception by colour, and on the other, the explanation of visual processes by wavelength. The obvious model for the relation between the two accounts is the relation between the following two types of causal explanation: the explanation of one psychological state by appeal to others—the explanation of a desire by appeal to a further belief and desire, for instance—and the explanation of one neural state by appeal to others. There is surely some connection between these two types of explanation, but it is not easy to characterize, and it is not evident that we should think of them as occupying a single 'explanatory space'.

Another line of attack on the role of colour in causal explanation comes from Locke. In some moods, he held that causal explanation must be mechanistic. The transmission of motion by impulse is inherently intelligible, and all other phenomena are rendered intelligible by being shown to be merely complex cases of the operation of impulse. An attempt at causal explanation which did not reduce the phenomena to contact phenomena would, on this view, have failed to render them intelligible. So it would not explain. If we think of colours on the simple view, as the grounds of dispositions to produce experiences of them, we must acknowledge that they have no role to play in this type of explanation. They have no role in mechanistic science. This criticism, though, is not devastating. There is a wide range of causal explanations which are not themselves given at the level of basic physics—in zoology, in economics, in meteorology, and by common sense, for instance. And we have abandoned the view that basic physics must be mechanistic.

The obvious model is, again, causation in the mental. Many philosophers would want to view psychological explanations as causal, while acknowledging that they are not given at the level of basic physics. There is, of course, a problem about how psychological explanation is related to description of the world in

terms of physical law. The very same problem arises for the simple view of colour properties as non-dispositional causes of our perceptions. The problem is how causation at this level is related to descriptions of the phenomena in terms of basic physics. But the problem here is no worse than in the case of causation in the mental, and it can surely receive a parallel solution.

Just to illustrate, a simple, familiar solution in the case of the mental would be to hold that mental events are physical events, and that the nomological character of causation shows up at the level of description of these events as physical. Just so, one might hold that a thing's being red is a physical event, an experience of redness is a physical event, and that the nomological character of the causation between them shows up at the level of physical description.

It is sometimes charged that this view allows for a systematic relation between explanations at the level of the supervening properties—psychological properties of colours—and genuinely causal explanations, but that it does not show how explanations at the level of the supervening properties can themselves be causal explanations. Another way to put the point is to ask how there can be more than one 'explanatory space', if all causation is physical causation.

This is a problem for all causal explanations given by the special sciences and common sense. We are certainly not in the habit of proceeding as if the only causal explanations are those given in terms of basic physics. Nor does it seem that any causal explanation not given in terms of basic physics must be one which appeals to properties which are dispositions, or properties which are functionally defined. Suppose, for example, that a round peg fails to enter a round hole. We explain this by saying the peg and board are made of a rigid material, and that the diameter of the peg is greater than that of the hole. This is not explanation in terms of basic physics, but it is causal explanation. And there is no reason to suppose that the roundness and size of the peg are anything other than categorical properties of it. Equally, when we explain an experience of redness by appeal to the redness of the object seen, this may be causal explanation though it is not at the level of basic physics, and even if the redness is not a disposition or a functionally defined property of the object.

There are many models which might be given for the relation between the two 'explanatory spaces'. Here is one. A thing's possession of a higher-level property can be related to a range of physical properties like this: in each nearby possible world in which the thing has the higher-level property, it also has some one or another of that range of physical properties. Suppose now that we causally explain someone's having an experience of redness, by appeal to the redness of the object seen. In each nearby world in which the object seen is still red, it has one or another of a range of microphysical properties. In each such nearby world, the particular structure the object has in that world initiates a causal sequence ending, so far as we are concerned, in a physical event which is also an experience of redness. So the explanation in terms of redness adds modal data to a description of the physical sequence. It says that in nearby worlds in which the physical character of the thing was varied but its redness maintained, an experience of redness was still the upshot. This is, of course,

only a sketch. But there seems to be no difficulty of principle about providing such a picture of the relation between the 'explanatory spaces'.<sup>4</sup>

#### IV

One source of resistance to the Simple View is suspicion of the idea that colours can have any substantive role in causal explanation, suspicion grounded on their lack of what we might call 'wide cosmological role'. The argument is that even if the causal relevance of colours stretches somewhat beyond the explanation of perception, it certainly is not possible to state laws concerning colour which have the sweeping generality of laws concerning mass. As it stands, this line of argument is quite unconvincing. The special sciences make copious reference to properties which do not have a wide cosmological role, but they are none the less engaged in causal explanation.

We might in particular remark that we appeal to the colours of things not just in explaining particular perceptions of them, but also in explaining the evolution of the mechanisms of colour vision. The reason why our visual system was selected for just was, in part, its utility in identifying the colours of things. That is the point of the system. Of course, it is rarely helpful to know the colour of a thing simply for its own sake: an interest in colour is typically serving some further end of the organism. But it is precisely the identification of *colour* that has this instrumental value. There is, then, a rich role for the appeal to colours, conceived as the Simple View conceives them, in explaining the development of the mechanisms of colour vision.

It might be noted further that, even in explaining the perceptions of a single individual, there is a certain richness in the structure of our appeal to colours. It is not just that we explain an individual perception of redness by the redness of the thing perceived. We also explain the relations between our experiences by the relations between the colours of the things seen. For example, the similarity between two experiences of redness may be causally explained by the similarity in colour of the objects seen. The similarity and difference between an experience of light red and an experience of dark red are explained by the similarity and difference of the colours seen: by the fact that the objects seen have the same hue combined with varying quantities of white and black. And so on.

There is, though, a further question lying behind this suspicion about the Simple View. The challenge is the more extreme one, not merely that colours simply lack wide cosmological role, but that the attempt to use colours in framing causal hypotheses yields only pseudo-hypotheses.

We can begin by putting the point as a sceptical problem. On the dispositional analysis, there is no question but that objects have the colours we ordinarily take them to have. Looking red in ordinary circumstances just is being red, so there is no room for doubt about whether something that ordinarily seems to be red is red. It might be charged against the Simple View, though, that precisely because it rejects the identification of redness with the



power to produce experiences of redness, it has to regard the sceptical question as posing a real problem. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that colours lack 'wide cosmological role'. We can bring this out by contrasting the case of shapes. Suppose someone asks whether objects really have the shapes we ordinarily take them to have, on the strength of their appearances. For example, suppose he asks whether bicycle wheels, though they look circular, might not in fact be triangular. The question can be dealt with by attempting to ride the bicycle: for ordinary motion, only circular wheels will do. Triangular wheels would give a very different effect. In contrast, consider the case in which someone asks whether this bicycle, though it looks white, really is white. Here there is no such auxiliary test we can use. Colour has no effect on the motion of the bicycle. The dispositionalist may hold that rejecting the dispositional analysis gives one a quite unreal sceptical problem, which one is forced to take seriously: do things have the colours they ordinarily seem to?

The proponent of the Simple View cannot evade the problem by saying that he takes whiteness to be whatever is the ground of the disposition to produce experiences of whiteness. That would indeed finesse the sceptical question—but it would also yield a view on which ordinary colour vision leaves us in the dark as to *which* property whiteness is. On this view, colours are hypothesized causes of our perceptions, rather than properties with which ordinary observation directly acquaints us.

As I have explained the Simple View, though, it holds that the characters of ordinary colour properties are transparent to us, and that ordinary colour vision is enough for us to know *which* property blueness is, for example. The charge is that on the Simple View, the ordinary percipient is left in the position of knowing which property blueness is, without having any guarantee that that property is the usual cause of his, or anyone's, perceptions of blueness.

The sceptical problem might be pursued by constructing an alternative explanation of ordinary colour perceptions, and asking whether the Simple View has the resources to rule it out. For example, it might be proposed that we live in an environment in which blueness is the ordinary cause of our perceptions of redness, greenness the ordinary cause of our perceptions of yellowness, and so on. To complete the construction of the alternative explanation, we should have to include stipulations about how the relations between the colours affect the relations between experiences of them. For instance, it might be said that one object's being bluer than another is the usual reason why an experience of it is an experience as of a redder object than is the experience of the second thing. And so forth. The dispositional analysis can rule out the proposal as absurd. We have yet to see whether the Simple View can do so.

The line of objection certainly ought to be pressed by someone who holds an error theory about ordinary colour vision. Someone like that takes the Simple View to be implicit in the phenomenology, but insists that the Simple View is entirely mistaken: nothing like colour figures in the causal explanation of perception, only the microphysical properties of things. If it is not only intelligible, but true, that our ordinary explanations of colour experience are

altogether wrong, then it is legitimate to invite the proponent of the Simple View to consider various alternatives to his own preferred line of explanation, including deviant coloration.

At this stage, though, the objection to the Simple View need no longer be put in terms of scepticism. The problem can be reformulated as an attempt to construct what is sometimes called a 'switching objection' to the causal hypotheses offered by the Simple View, with the intention of showing them to be pseudo-hypotheses.<sup>5</sup>

It may help to make the strategy clearer if I first give an example of a 'switching objection' from a quite different area, and then show how a problem of that form is here facing the Simple View. The example I have in mind is the objection raised by Strawson's Kant to Cartesian dualism. The Cartesian assumes that one is immediately acquainted with one's own enduring soul. The objection is that whatever constitutes this 'immediate acquaintance', it is equally consistent with a whole series of hypotheses, for example: (i) that there is a sequence of momentary souls, each of which transmits its psychological states to the next in the sequence, as motion might be transmitted along a series of elastic balls, and (ii) that at any one time, one's body is connected up to a thousand qualitatively indistinguishable souls, all of which speak simultaneously through the same mouth.<sup>6</sup> This is not at all a sceptical problem. The strategy is rather to discredit the Cartesian by showing that the conceptual materials he introduces enable us to generate a variety of incompatible hypotheses, all of which must be acknowledged, by his own standards, to be equally legitimate.

The suspicion is that a parallel strategy can be used to discredit the causal hypotheses offered by the Simple View. Given the conceptual materials it introduces, the argument runs, it is possible to introduce a whole variety of causal hypotheses, all of which must be acknowledged, by the standards of the Simple View, to be equally legitimate. And, this line of thought concludes, that shows that these causal hypotheses are merely pseudo-hypotheses. We have already seen the kinds of alternative hypotheses that might be introduced, in which perceptions are said to be caused by quite unexpected colours, and the relations among the perceptions explained by quite unexpected relations among the colours of the objects seen.

This whole line of objection rests on the supposition that perceptions have their contents, as experience of this or that property, quite independently of which properties of things in the environment they are responses to. That assumption is questionable.

Again, the analogy with particulars is instructive. Recall the thesis that what makes a thing the particular thing that it is, is its relation to a mind. Consider how a proponent of this view might go about constructing a 'switching' objection to the assumption that particularity is mind-independent. The argument would be that, on that assumption, the course of one's experiences is consistent with a wide range of hypotheses as to *which* things are causing one's perceptions. The point could be stated as being, in the first instance, a sceptical problem: how can I be sure the very things I take to be causing my

perceptions are causing them, rather than it being some range of qualitatively indistinguishable duplicates? There is obviously a variety of individual rival hypotheses that could be stated here. The 'switching' objection then is that by the standards of the view of particularity as mind-independent, all of these hypotheses have to be viewed as on a par with each other, and with the ordinary supposition that the things which seem to be causing my experiences are causing them. The only way out, the objection runs, is to suppose that particulars are individuated precisely by their relations to minds: that what *makes* a thing the *particular* thing it is, is the way it is related to the minds which apprehend it, so that there is no possibility of those minds being wrong about which particular thing it is.

This line of argument is not persuasive, and it seems evident that what has gone wrong is the supposition that one's experiences of things have their contents, as experiences of those *particular* things, independently of the question of which things they are responses to. That is what makes it possible for the question to arise, whether the experiences really are brought about by the things they are experiences of. But this is a mistake: the experience's being an experience of *that* thing is made so by its being brought about by that thing. So even though particularity is mind-independent, there is no possibility of the experiences being in general brought about by things other than the things they are experiences of. The answer to the 'switching' point is not that particularity is mind-dependent, but that experience is particular-dependent.

A parallel response can be made to the use of a 'switching' argument to show that colour is mind-dependent: namely, that what constitutes experiences being experiences of the particular colours they are is their being responses to just those features of the environment. Of course, it is not that illusion is impossible. It is rather than an experience's being an experience of a particular depends upon the subject's being able to use his colour vision to track that particular colour. So there is no possibility of setting up alternative causal hypotheses to explain colour vision: they simply bring with them changes in the characterization of the experiences to be explained.

## V

Colour predicates seem to be in some sense 'observational'. I want to end by sketching a way of bringing this out. The point I want to make is that in the case of 'observational' predicates, there seems to be an epistemic dimension in the way the phrase 'looks  $\varphi$ ' operates. In some cases, part of the effect of saying that a thing looks, for instance, round to someone is to say that if that person took the appearances at face value, without engaging in any reasoning, he would think that the thing is round. The phrase is connected to what one would judge without reflection. This certainly seems to hold for a whole range of 'looks  $\varphi$ ' predications, such as 'looks old', 'looks expensive', 'looks efficient', and so on. But in the case of 'observational' predicates, there seems to be an epistemic aspect to the phrase 'looks  $\varphi$ '. It is possible for something to look old to a

person who is in fact very bad at judging how old things are—someone whose unreflective judgements of age never constitute knowledge. In contrast, consider the phrase 'looks round'. Someone to whom a thing looks round must be someone who has the ability to tell whether things are round, unreflectively, on the strength of perception alone. It is not that such a person must be immune to illusion. Rather, the point is that without the capacity to tell, on occasion, unreflectively, that a perceived object is round, there is no basis for supporting that things ever look round to the subject. A parallel point seems to hold for colour predicates. Someone to whom things sometimes look green is someone who has a capacity to track greenness.

This line of thought can be pressed further, to resolve a dilemma over the characterization of colour experience. On the one hand, one may feel reluctantly compelled to acknowledge the possibility of inverted spectra—systematic differences between the qualitative characters of different people's colour experiences which do not show up in verbal or other behaviour. On the other hand, recoiling from this possibility, one may, in effect, deny the qualia and insist that if two percipients agree extensionally when they discriminate and group objects by colour, then their experiences just are the same, and there is no further question about qualitative similarity or difference. The Simple View allows a different approach. On it, we can say that the qualitative character of a colour-experience is inherited from the qualitative character of the colour. It depends upon which colour-tracking capacity is being exercised in having the experience. So if you and I are tracking the same colours, our colour-experiences are qualitatively identical. This view does not allow for the hypothesis of spectrum inversion; nor does it deny the qualitative character of colour vision.<sup>7</sup>

## Notes

1. J. L. Mackie, *Problems from Locke*, p. 14.
2. J. McDowell, 'Values and Secondary Qualities', in T. Honderich (ed.), *Morality and Objectivity*, p. 112.
3. W. V. Quine, 'Reply to Professor Marcus', in *The Ways of Paradox*, p. 184.
4. This adapts the account of 'programme explanation' given in F. Jackson and P. Pettit, 'Functionalism and Broad Content', *Mind* 97, pp. 381–400, and 'Structural Explanation in Social Theory', in D. Charles and K. Lennon (eds.), *Reduction, Explanation and Realism*.
5. For a helpful taxonomy of such arguments, see C. Peacocke, 'The Limits of Intelligibility', *Philosophical Review* 97.
6. P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, p. 168.
7. I am indebted to Bill Brewer, Justin Broackes, Quassim Cassam, David Charles, Bill Child, Adrian Cussins, Philippa Foot, Elizabeth Fricker, Michael Smith, and Timothy Williamson. My focus on these issues was changed by Barry Stroud's John Locke lectures in 1987.