

## Phenomenal Externalism and Perceptual Appearances

Kang, Seokman\*

**Subject** Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Perception

**Key words** Perceptual Experience, Phenomenal Character,  
Phenomenal Externalism, Appearance Properties

### **Abstract**

Phenomenal externalism has it that the phenomenal character of perceptual experience can be constitutively determined by things external to the perceiving subject. Although many contemporary philosophers of perception endorse such view, there is no consensus on the nature of the mind-independent properties that purport to determine the way things perceptually appear to the subject. In this paper, I will critically examine two views of appearance properties: (1) the parsimonious view and (2) the extravagant view. These views are intended to capture how things perceptually appear to the subject with their novel accounts of appearance properties, but both of them face some serious problems. At the end, I propose an extravagant view that is immune to these problems.

---

\* Shinhan University

## 1. Introduction

Since Putnam's influential "Twin Earth" experiment, many philosophers of mind have argued that mental representation is determined at least partially by things outside our head.<sup>1)</sup> But even those who firmly believed that perceptual representation can be externally determined were still reluctant to accept its neighboring view of perceptual phenomenology. That is, the phenomenal character of perceptual experience, its sui generis property typically characterized by its subjective feels, must still be an internal matter that is solely determined by things inside our head.

This natural assumption about perceptual phenomenology, however, has been challenged by contemporary views of perceptual phenomenology.<sup>2)</sup> A standard version of intentionalism has it that the representational content of perceptual experience constitutively determines its phenomenology.<sup>3)</sup> According to the view, what it is like for the subject to undergo an experience that visually represents a red apple is constitutively determined by its representational content, which

---

1) For an exemplary work, see Burge (1979).

2) See Dretske (1996), Lycan (2001), Byrne and Tye (2006) for externalist challenges. For a dissenting view, see Pautz (2006).

3) Although there is more than one way to understand the notion of constitution or constitutive determination, I take the most common approach for the present project: the representational content of a perceptual experience constitutively determines its phenomenology if and only if the identity (or individuation) of the latter is metaphysically determined by the former. Although we can interpret it in some other ways, I do not think anything substantial hangs on this interpretive issue.

includes the apple and its visible properties. If this is the case, phenomenal externalism, the view that the phenomenal character of experience can be determined externally, is simply derived from the intentionalism and content externalism mentioned above.<sup>4)</sup> If things in our physical environment constitutively determine the representational contents of our experiences, and the representational contents, in turn, constitutively determine perceptual phenomenology, then perceptual phenomenology is constitutively determined by things in our physical environment. On the other side of the aisle, naive realists take a more direct approach to phenomenal externalism. According to them, what it is like for the subject to undergo the experience of the red apple is directly constituted by the apple and its visible properties. If naive realism is true, then some radical form of phenomenal externalism must be true.

In any case, phenomenal externalism has gained considerable support from both sides of the contemporary debate on the nature of perceptual experience. But the incredulous stare against the view still lingers. Ignoring special occasions of hallucination, our ordinary perceptual life is full of illusory or non-veridical experiences. Suppose that the red apple you are looking at has in fact a different shade of red. Its redness is actually rather dull but to make it look fresh, the supermarket has manipulated the lightings. In other words, the apple looks freshly red when it is not. There is nothing on the counter that

---

4) Another popular approach to the phenomenal externalism/internalism debate revolves around the question whether it is metaphysically possible for intrinsic duplicates to differ phenomenally. Externalists say yes while internalists say no. See Byrne and Tye (2006) for this approach.

has the property of being freshly red. Then what should a phenomenal externalist say about the resulted phenomenology? More specifically, what should she say about the property that is causally and constitutively responsible for the resulted phenomenology?

For the following discussions, I will refer to the kind of properties that constitutively determine perceptual phenomenology as *appearance properties* (or simply *appearances*). Admittedly, the term, appearance, was often associated with the realm of mind-dependent entities, such as sense-data and their mental properties. But following many contemporary phenomenal externalists, I will use the term as a placeholder for any mind-independent property that constitutively determines phenomenology. One natural question for the externalist project is then: what kind of mind-independent properties appearance properties are? Luckily for us, two possible answers to this question can be found in the current literature: the parsimonious and the extravagant views. The parsimonious view of appearances maintains that appearance properties are some basic visual properties of ordinary objects, such as color, shape, and location. The motivation for this view should be obvious. The view has to be the most favorable for its simple ontology if it can adequately explain visual phenomenology appealing only to these properties whose existence is relatively uncontroversial. For these are the properties that we commonly take ordinary objects to bear independent from any philosophical concerns. The second view, the extravagant view, however says that we must further allow a distinct kind of mind-independent properties, properties that are metaphysically distinct from intrinsic colors or shapes. As we shall see, the view maintains that appearance properties further include

the properties that are essentially taken to be relational or extrinsic in nature.

In this paper, I will critically examine both of these views and argue for a version of the extravagant view. To that end, I first discuss the parsimonious view. M. G. F. Martin, one of the adamant advocates of phenomenal externalism presents this view but as we shall see, the view suffers from a self-defeating problem as an externalist solution. I shall then present some concerns for different versions of the extravagant view currently available in the literature. Although these philosophers champion different metaphysical views of perception, their proposals for appearance properties share significant similarities. At the end, I shall propose my own view of appearance properties.

## 2. The Parsimonious View of Appearances

Let me first examine the prospect for the parsimonious view of appearances. One promising version of the view can be found in M. G. F. Martin's paper, "What's in a Look?".<sup>5)</sup> In the paper, Martin first aims to provide a semantic account for various looks statements, the statements of the form 'o looks F', such as 'the stick looks bent'.<sup>6)</sup>

---

5) Focusing on visual experience, Martin investigates a set of properties he labels as *looks*. Although his overall project in the paper centers on a semantics of looks statements instead of the nature of phenomenal character, I will ignore this minor terminological issue here. Then, our goal also can be to examine whether we can construct a promising version of the parsimonious view of appearances based on his semantic theory.

6) The verb in looks statements such as *look* or *appear*, is often taken to have multiple senses or uses: the phenomenal, comparative, and epistemic sense. See

Martin's goal here is to provide a minimalist semantics for the truth of these statements that does not require a special kind of properties in one's ontology. He says:

Our default approach should then be to see how far we can get just through appeal to what we need otherwise. And this is to adopt, for the moment, *Parsimony*: looks statements are made true just by properties of objects that we need to appeal to in order to explain the truth of sentences that are not explicitly looks sentences. (2010, p. 197)

To understand Martin's parsimonious project better, take the following statement about a straight stick, say, S:

(1) S is straight.

Note that (1) is not necessarily a statement about a look or an appearance of S. But what state of affair can make this statement true? Naturally, a state of affairs consisting of S and its shape property, straightness. This simple truthmaker, however, is not constituted by anything ontologically controversial. It only requires S and its familiar shape property being in one's ontology. But how about this next statement?

---

Chisholm (1957) and Jackson (1977) for how such senses or uses differ from each other. Martin's semantics can be considered minimalistic in a sense in which it only requires a comparative sense or use of these verbs without any other ontological baggage that seemingly comes with the phenomenal sense.

(2) S looks straight.

Unlike (1), (2) has the form of a looks statement expressing how S appears visually. But we can also ask the same question about its truthmaker. What part of the world can make (2) true? For some phenomenal internalists who say that visual phenomenology is exhaustively determined by the subject's internal matters, (2) must be made true by some psychological state of a sentient creature. Their view also requires the postulation of an intrinsic, mind-dependent property referred to by the adjective 'straight' in (2).<sup>7)</sup> According to Martin's minimalist semantics, however, we can understand the truth of (2) without postulating any such controversial property. Given his view, S has that particular look independent of the existence of any sentient being around. The look of S simply amounts to S, as a straight stick, being relatively similar to things that are standardly straight.<sup>8)</sup> These looks statements are typically taken to be comparative in nature, and the speaker and the audience of such statement communicate with each other by exploiting some worldly knowledge about the look of straight things compared.

Although Martin's presentation of his minimalist semantic is much more elaborate than the way I present it here, it should be clear by now that his semantic approach to looks statements provides a great

---

7) Roughly speaking, this is how Jackson (1977) argues for his version of the sense-datum theory, appealing to the phenomenal sense of looks statements.

8) Clearly, Martin's minimalist semantics for looks statements is more sophisticated than the way I introduce it here, taking also into account various context-dependent parameters about the specific look. These details are, however, insignificant for our purpose.

deal of support for the parsimonious view of appearances. For we can plausibly take statements like (2) to be a report of the phenomenal character of one's visual experience. Based on Martin's minimalist semantics, the phenomenal character of the visual experience involved in (2) is simply to be constituted by a familiar property like straightness.

The parsimonious view can enjoy this support, however, only if Martin's minimalist semantics for the above example involving S looking straight can be generalized. But it may well not be. Consider the following argument against phenomenal externalism:

- P1. Qualitatively different objects can look same to a normal perceiver.
- P2. If P1, then phenomenal externalism is false.
- C. Phenomenal externalism is false.

The most crucial premise of this argument is clearly P1. But there seem to be countless familiar cases that support P1. For instance, consider the following looks statement about the same stick from (1) and (2):

(3) S looks bent.

(3) can be true in various circumstance, one of which involves the stick being partly immersed in water. Contrast (3), however, with a looks statement about another stick, B, that is otherwise similar to S except that it is actually bent:

(4) B looks bent.

(4) can also be true in various circumstances. But most commonly, it will turn out to be true when someone simply holds it under normal lighting. The truths of (3) and (4) then suggest that S and B share the same appearance or look associated with their shape. For the phenomenal externalist, this implies that two visual experiences respectively involved in (3) and (4) have the same phenomenal character constituted by the same appearance property.

But why is this phenomenon (a case for P1) troublesome to the parsimonious view? To see, suppose that a normal perceiver, Chip, sincerely utters both (3) and (4) in the circumstances specified above. Further, he also possesses relevant worldly knowledge about the looks of standardly straight and bent things. But since the two sticks have different shape properties, the familiar shape properties we normally and correctly attribute to them, the view cannot acknowledge the two statements both being true. That is, she must say that the two visual experiences respectively involved in (3) and (4) have different phenomenal characters. For the phenomenal character of Chip's visual experience of S is constituted by the basic shape property of S while the phenomenal character of Chip's visual experience of B is constituted by the basic shape property of B. Given the plausibility of the claim that both (3) and (4) can be true and the abundance of similar cases just like them, this is clearly a serious problem.

Can there be any plausible response from the parsimonious view? Let me first refer to cases in which two objects with different basic

properties look same as a *phenomenally ambiguous case*. In other words, two visual experiences are phenomenally ambiguous just in case they have the same phenomenal character while presenting to the normal perceiver qualitatively different objects.<sup>9)</sup> Then, what should a proponent of the parsimonious view say about phenomenally ambiguous cases?

First, she might simply deny the metaphysical (or nomological) possibility of phenomenally ambiguous cases. If two objects have different sets of basic properties, then they must have different looks or appearances, strictly speaking.<sup>10)</sup> These must be cases in which even the most acute perceivers among us still fail to discriminate them phenomenally. Thus, the phenomenal character constituted by the basic properties of S is, in principle, different from the phenomenal character constituted by the basic properties of B under any circumstances although the subject of both experiences may always fail to recognize their shape-related differences.

Admittedly, we are often mistaken about how things are around us. We can be wrong about their colors, shapes, or locations. One might thus think that phenomenally ambiguous cases are simply those where

---

9) Here, I am further diverging from Martin's minimalist semantics by focusing on identity of appearances or looks rather than on similarity of them as he does. Again, I do not think anything significant hangs on this divergence.

10) In Martin's terminology, S and B cannot be visual duplicates since they respectively have different observational properties. Observational properties in his definition are "those properties for which necessarily no object that exemplifies them, and is characteristic with respect to look for that property, has a visual duplicate that lacks them" (Ibid., p. 203). Clearly, both the straightness of S and the bentness of B are observational properties in this sense.

we are mistaken about how things visually are to us. However, the above parsimonious response is not just concerned with how things are or their mind-independent looks. It is rather concerned with how they are to ordinary perceivers, that is, our phenomenal consciousness of them. Thus, the response in fact discredits our knowledge or beliefs about our own experiences when there are no other independent grounds to do so.<sup>11)</sup> It is true that the parsimonious view implies that a mind-independent environment can be part of the phenomenal character of one's visual experience. But the environment can be part of the phenomenal character via the subject being conscious of it. To take this parsimonious response seriously, there should be some independent explanation for why normal perceivers are systematically in error with respect to their own experiences. In particular, the proponent of the parsimonious view must explain why a normal perceiver like Chip sincerely utters (3) and (4) when the two sticks cannot have the same appearance.

As mentioned above, phenomenally ambiguous cases are ubiquitous. And, fortunately for us, Martin himself addresses these cases in his minimalist semantic framework. He says:

... I hypothesized that mundane comparative claims are often informative through exploiting worldly knowledge of the audience of the paradigm features associated with the comparans; associated with various adjectives *F*, we are to suppose that speakers commonly associate certain looks as paradigmatic of *F*s.

---

11) Clearly, none of visual experiences in phenomenally ambiguous cases that interest us here are hallucinations which may justify a treatment of an error theory.

The extension required for my proposal here is that we add to our stock of worldly knowledge *information about psychological states associated with Fs*. That is, just as I suggested that in your database of worldly knowledge about *Fs* you have an entry for looks that *Fs* have, so too you can have an entry for the psychological state, the visual experience, associated with paradigmatic cases of seeing an *F*. (Emphasis added: Ibid., p. 212)

Initially, Martin's minimalist semantics required that there be some relevant facts about mind-independent looks of things, and ordinary people commonly possess a variety of knowledge about them. But, to address phenomenally ambiguous cases, he further adds to the stock a different kind of facts and knowledge. This new kind of knowledge, however, directly concerns our own visual experience as this passage suggests. So, when Chip sincerely utters (3), that S looks bent, what he and his audience are comparing are not the sticks that have different shapes but the visual experiences of them while, presumably, exploiting their knowledge about their own previous experiences.

But what kind of knowledge is it? The most straightforward answer based on Martin's passage here seems to be that normal perceivers commonly possess a variety of knowledge about phenomenal characters of their own visual experiences. Consider these two looks statements again:

- (3) S looks bent.
- (4) B looks bent.

Given Martin's own solution for phenomenally ambiguous cases, both (3) and (4) can be true for a single ordinary perceiver even if S and B still differ with respect to their basic shape properties. Unlike the previous interpretations of them, (3) and (4) now can be taken to concern facts about how S and B (in their respective circumstances) strike the subject visually. So, (3) and (4) can be both true when S strikes a normal perceiver visually in the same way as B does.

But can this be a successful defense for the parsimonious view? One might think so presumably because the above account can now explain why looks statements like (3) and (4) can be both true without further postulating any new type of external properties as the view initially intended. Moreover, it also seems to be applicable to a wide range of cases. What make true the looks statements in phenomenally ambiguous cases turn out to be some relevant psychological facts about how objects strike the subject visually under certain circumstances. The phenomenal externalist, however, must be wary of such account. As an externalist, she takes visual phenomenology to be determined externally at least in ordinary cases. But the above account can easily be taken to show that phenomenal characters of visual experiences in phenomenally ambiguous cases are to be determined by some internal fact about the subject. For there is no fact about the environment to which one can appeal in order to explain the relevant phenomenology. This simply amounts to giving up a possible externalist account for phenomenally ambiguous cases like a straight stick looking bent. But there is nothing special about the above case that might motivate such different treatment, the treatment that can undermine the entire externalist project. The straight stick looks bent when half immersed in water to any

ordinary perceivers. In fact, many of phenomenally ambiguous cases involve similarly mundane visual experiences. While I am typing this paper, the ring of my coffee mug looks elliptical although it is perfectly round. My rectangular wooden desk looks trapezoidal from where I am sitting while the white wall behind it looks yellowish due to the lighting condition of the room. One can use all these ordinary visual experiences to construct a phenomenally ambiguous case and possibly pose it as a counterexample to externalism.

But one might think that at least some externalists might justifiably have such different treatments for phenomenally ambiguous cases. For there always seems to be something bad about at least one of the two visual experiences involved in these cases. When the subject looks at S, and utters (3), that S looks bent, his experience cannot be taken to be ideal especially if it can lead him to form a false belief about S's shape. This intuition can be used to invoke a version of externalism, such as intentionalism, that allows perceptual content to be fallible. Thus, intentionalist externalism might hold that when a visual experience is veridical, its subjective character is indeed determined by one's physical environment. But when it comes to a falsidical one like hallucination, they must propose a disjunctivist account of some sort for its phenomenal character whatever that might be.

This intentionalist strategy for phenomenal ambiguous cases, however, is hardly justifiable. As mentioned above, there are countless such cases involving everyday visual experiences. But let me return to my previous example involving my coffee mug. From different positions, its rim fails to look round to me, which makes that all my visual experiences of it are falsidical or inaccurate.<sup>12)</sup> More importantly, given the current

account, their phenomenal characters associated with its shape are not to be determined by any familiar properties the mug actually has. Only when I move myself to the top of its center, that is, when the ring is perpendicular to my line of sight, does it look perfectly round, and its shape property suddenly becomes part of the phenomenal character of my experience. This means that among countless possible experiences I can have of my mug, a very few of them turn out to be veridical. And only these few experiences, in turn, have phenomenal characters actually determined by some basic properties of the mug. Then the explanatory scope of phenomenal externalism becomes too narrow, bolstering the internalist intuition again. Moreover, some might worry that this particular externalist move is also in tension with the contemporary vision science. While arguing for a version of the extravagant view of appearance, Louis Antony observes:

What vision science tells us is that the character of falsidical experiences is determined by objective features of the environment to exactly the same degree as is the character of veridical experiences. In both cases, the input to the experience is fully

- 
- 12) One may resist this intuition about phenomenal character by saying that the rim does look round. This concern can be supported by a claim that we normally form a belief that the rim is round on the basis of the experience. But the opponent of the parsimonious view can address this concern in two ways. First, the statement that the rim looks round might not directly characterize the relevant phenomenology. In Jackson's terminology, this statement might involve the epistemic sense of looks. See Jackson (1977: Chapter 2) for relevant discussions. Second, the relevant perceptual justification does not necessarily suggest that the round must be involved in phenomenal character. It might well be the case that the property is represented in the experience without being part of phenomenal character or that the perceptual belief of the property is justified only inferentially on the basis of the experience.

determined by the properties of external objects responsible for structuring the light that hits our retina, and in receiving these data, we are fully open to those properties. (2011, p. 34)

Given the plausible assumption that the visual system plays an important causal role for the phenomenal character of one's experience, there should have been some difference between the causal processes underlying veridical experiences and those underlying falsidical ones to treat them any differently. Unless externalists can ascertain relevant differences in our visual processing, the current strategy is scientifically ill-grounded. Borrowing Antony's words, the visual experience I have when the rim looks elliptical is as open to the physical environment as my veridical experience is.

I thus conclude that phenomenal externalist cannot endorse the parsimonious view. Based on the current literature about appearance properties, however, this amounts to accepting an extravagant view, the view that ontologically allows a distinct kind of mind-independent properties other than those familiar ones like color, shape, and location. In the next section, I shall review different versions of such view derived from other philosophers' works. But, as it turns out, they all share a major drawback. Recall that our main goal is to account for the nature of appearance properties under the externalist framework, the external properties of which the subject becomes phenomenally conscious in virtue of having a visual experience. For the externalist, then, the correct account must adequately capture or explain how these properties manifest their nature in visual experience. But the extravagant views currently available in the literature fail in this regard.

### 3. The Extravagant View of Appearances

This paper began with the question on properties that constitutively determine the phenomenal character of experience with an introduction of two possible answers to the question: the parsimonious and the extravagant views. The previous section has shown, however, that the parsimonious view might turn out to be incompatible with phenomenal externalism. The only option left for an externalist, then, seems to be the extravagant view. In its initial form, the view has it that perceptual phenomenology can be constitutively determined by mind-independent properties other than just basic ones. To see how this view can be motivated, consider the following statements again:

(3) S looks bent.

(4) B looks bent.

As previously discussed, (3) and (4) jointly consist of a phenomenally ambiguous case. Although the subject is perceptually related to qualitatively different objects, they have the same phenomenal character. Unlike the parsimonious view, however, the extravagant view is not troubled by these cases. For the advocate of the view can say that S and B both look bent because S and B share the same appearance property that is metaphysically distinct from their basic properties including their basic shapes. Clearly, B can look bent in any normal circumstances since it is bent. But S also can have the same look in other circumstances although it is not bent. To distinguish this newly introduced property from other basic properties of S and B, let

us call it *BENT*.<sup>13)</sup> Then, (3) and (4) can simply be translated into the following statements:

(3\*) S is BENT.

(4\*) B is BENT

Since S and B are now taken to instantiate the same mind-independent property, BENT, any phenomenal externalist can acknowledge that the two visual experiences have the same phenomenal character. Moreover, this extravagant strategy can easily be generalized into other phenomenally ambiguous cases. For instance, the color of the surface of my otherwise white room can be phenomenally indistinguishable from the color of my yellowish shirt in natural light. But, as an advocate of the extravagant view, one can now explain this case by postulating an appearance property, YELLOWISH. Both my room and shirt are YELLOWISH, which constitutively determines the same phenomenal character.

But what can we say more about properties like BENT or YELLOWISH? Let us now examine various metaphysical accounts proposed by different philosophers. Here are some of the proposals:<sup>14)</sup>

---

13) From now on, any appearance property proposed by the current extravagant views shall be referred to by all capitalized names like BENT.

14) See also Hill (2009) and Antony (2011) for similar accounts. Hill calls a proposed kind of appearance properties *Thouless properties* inspired by a British psychologist, Robert Thouless. For Antony, as noted above, the postulation of appearance properties in her definition of the term is required for the world-determined aspect of illusory experiences.

If the way an object is presented [in visual experience] is understood as external and mind-independent, it can be understood in terms of the properties the object has given the situational features, that is, the object's situation-dependent properties. *Situation-dependent properties* are (nonconstant) functions of the intrinsic properties of the object and the situational features. This means that fixing the intrinsic properties and the situational features fixes the situation-dependent properties. Furthermore, situation-dependent properties are ontologically dependent on and exclusively sensitive to intrinsic properties and situational features. (Schellenberg: 2008, p. 60)

Red objects do not always look red, however, and objects can look such that we would judge them to be red without actually being red. In such cases the difference between an object's observable intrinsic properties and its appearance frequently arises because of conditions in the surrounding environment or the location from which the object is perceived. This provides some initial motivation for taking appearances to be properties of objects distinct from their observable intrinsic properties. Rather, we can think of appearances as relational properties that objects possess in virtue of their intrinsic properties and various environmental conditions such as illumination or the medium of light transmission. (Genone: 2014, p. 357)

Although each philosopher uses different names for these non-basic properties to which the subject can be visually related in phenomenally ambiguous cases, their proposed kinds of properties are particularly alike in their metaphysical nature. For them, BENT and YELLOWISH are as mind-independent as bent and yellow in the ontological sense of the term. Their existence does not depend upon an experience of any sentient being. But their instantiation is much more fleeting than the

latter kind. For instance, S would stop being BENT if I take it out of water. Similarly, my white wall will stop being YELLOWISH if I turn off the light and let some natural light in. But S's straightness or my wall's whiteness remains the same throughout these situational changes although they might fail to involve in my visual experience time to time. Their instantiations are not as sensitive to situational or environmental changes as BENT or YELLOWISH are. More importantly, these philosophers all identify appearances with complex relational properties of some sort that are ontologically distinct from the basic or intrinsic properties that ordinary objects are taken to have. Presumably, this is why the instantiation of appearance properties like BENT and YELLOWISH is more fleeting than that of basic properties. Due to its structural complexity of their nature, objects constantly gain or lose them according to relevant changes. These accounts are thus intended to capture the ways things are presented to the subject given a particular situational or environmental setting. Moreover, since objects to which we are perceptually related in visual experience are necessarily placed in a situation, the current construal of appearance properties can be easily generalized. At least one of the visual experiences in a phenomenally ambiguous case comes with some unusual story about how the object at hand is situated. For instance, Snell's law tells us about why S looks bent in a certain situation. It is because S is now partially placed in water that has a different refraction index than air. BENT, construed as a complex relational property of S, captures this story with ease.

There is no point arguing that ordinary objects like sticks and walls might not have these complex relational properties plausibly articulated

by the aforementioned philosophers. Relatively simple scientific investigations about one's environment would reveal that things have such properties given how they are situated. Therefore, the controversy surrounding the extravagant view is not about whether or not these properties exist or ordinary objects have them. It is whether such complex relational properties can constitutively determine phenomenal character and adequately capture how things perceptually appear to the subject. Clearly, even a sense-datum theorist like Bertrand Russell was fully aware of the existence of these complex properties. He says:

[t]his colour is not something which is inherent in the table, but something depending upon the table and the spectator and the way the light falls on the table. When, in ordinary life, we speak of the colour of the table, we only mean the sort of colour which it will seem to have to a normal spectator from an ordinary point of view under usual conditions of light. But the other colours which appear under other conditions have just as good a right to be considered real; and therefore, to avoid favouritism, we are compelled to deny that, in itself, the table has any one particular colour. (1912, p. 3)

Here Russell fully acknowledges that the way the table looks with respect to its color changes in relation to relevant situational features. But for some reason he still ends up postulating mind-dependent entities such as sense data as the bearer of these appearances. Why not simply accept that the intrinsic color of the table is only accessible to us under limited circumstances or that some color appearances are more complex relational properties sensitive to situational features?<sup>15)</sup>

The answer, as also suggested in Russell's passage, is that there is

no compelling reason for us to make a metaphysical distinction among the properties that constitutively determine visual experience. That is, visual phenomenology does not reveal any phenomenal difference between the basic properties and this newly proposed complex relational properties even if there is a natural distinction among them independent of our experience.<sup>16)</sup>

In other words, given our experience of S, its BENT is presented to the subject as much situation-independent as its straightness in more ordinary circumstances. YELLOWISH of which I become phenomenally conscious in my visual experience of the white wall does not manifest any more complexity or relationality than the same color of which I am phenomenally conscious when I look at my yellowish shirt in daylight. If there are reasons for us to take the straightness or yellowishness to belong simple, situation-independent properties, then those same reasons can be also applied to S's BENT or my wall's YELLOWISH. But since there is no right candidate among the intrinsic or situation-independent properties which can be identified with its bent or yellow appearance, the sense datum theorists like Russell were compelled to postulate a new kind of objects like sense data and their mind-dependent properties.

Clearly, the criticism I am raising against the current extravagant

---

15) He also has similar arguments with respect to shape and texture right after the quoted passage.

16) In pressing this line of reasoning, I am not denying, however, that visual experience cannot represent these complex relational properties or that it cannot perceptually relate the subject to them. My claim is only that no matter how this issue can be resolved, it does not seem that they cannot serve as appearance properties.

views is phenomenological. These complex relational properties fail to capture how appearance properties manifest themselves to the subject in phenomenally ambiguous cases although that is one of the main reasons why they are postulated as objects of perceptual experience. Complex relational properties are always there instantiated by ordinary objects, our bodies, and various lighting conditions. The reason why they gain philosophical interests now seems to be that the ways objects perceptually appears to ordinary perceivers vary along with their instantiation. However, they are not fit to capture how things perceptually appear to us in the same way the relational property of having the same height as Dale fails to capture how tall Chip looks even if Chip is as tall as Dale. Similarly, no complex relational property that S has with respect to water's refractive index can capture the relevant phenomenology or the way S looks in that particular situation.

But it is even more evident that Russell's solution to the problem is not an option for a phenomenal externalist. For the postulation of mind-dependent entities like sense data and their similarly mind-dependent properties amounts to giving up on her overall externalist project. In the next section, I shall introduce a variant of the extravagant view that is immune to these phenomenological worries.

#### 4. The Primitive Nature of Appearance

The current conundrum a phenomenal externalist faces is hardly novel. As mentioned above, this was exactly why some philosophers

like Russell were compelled to accept a sense-datum theory of perception. But is there any way that an externalist can get out of this? To begin with, note that the least controversial fact concerning the problem at hand is that there are some appearance properties that constitutively determine visual phenomenology when S looks bent or when my wall looks yellowish. Also, these properties can be phenomenally indistinguishable from more familiar properties like B's intrinsic bentness or my shirt's yellowishness. But philosophers have been troubled by this because there seem to be no non-relational or situation-independent properties that can be identified with them.

My proposed solution to this conundrum as an externalist is to reject one of its key assumptions. Many philosophers who face this problem assume, understandably, that there is no right candidate among mind-independent object that can be intrinsically or situation-independently bent or yellowish whenever objects look these ways. S surely is not bent intrinsically or situation-independently. This is probably why many phenomenal externalists have proposed mind-independent but situation-dependent properties for phenomenally ambiguous cases. But I propose that the externalist should postulate a kind of mind-independent entity instead that can be intrinsically bent or yellowish in these cases. Let me call these new entities *visual scenes* or *scenes* for short. We can then think of them as mind-independent objects that can instantiate various appearance properties. In many ideal cases, visual scenes can be simply ordinary objects like sticks and walls. When we see S as being straight, we can understand S as the sole visual scene to which we can be visually related and whose appearance property constitutes the phenomenal character of our

experience. But they can also be more composite objects consisting further of things that we normally take to be situational or environmental parts like light sources and/or different media. For instance, when S looks bent to a normal perceiver, the appearance property involved in his experience is not just instantiated by S alone. The visual scene to which he is now perceptually related is a composite object consisting of, among other things, S and water.

My current proposal can enjoy the advantages of accepting both the parsimonious and the extravagant view without their respective problems. Similar to the parsimonious view, the scene view can explain different phenomenal cases only with a single ontological type of properties. For when S looks bent to an ordinary perceiver, the relevant appearance property is identical to the intrinsic or situation-independent property that we point out by saying that B is bent. The subject becomes phenomenally conscious of the same property when he looks at S half immersed in water and B in the air. It is the same intrinsic, situation-independent property instantiated by different visual scenes. Similar to the extravagant view, on the other hand, my proposal can address various phenomenally ambiguous cases without endangering phenomenal externalism as shown in the above. But the clear difference between my proposal and the view is that my proposal introduces a further type of objects as the bearer of appearance properties to adequately capture the relevant phenomenology. As mentioned above, the main motivation for my view is phenomenological. That is, the visual scene view can best capture how appearance properties in phenomenally ambiguous cases manifest themselves to us.

There could be some worries for this rather preliminary proposal,

however. To prevent some hasty rejections based on misunderstanding, let me make some final remarks. In my explanation for the phenomenally ambiguous case involving S and B, I have argued that B is the sole visual scene to which the subject is related while S cannot be when both experiences involve the same appearance property. Is there any phenomenological reason for such different treatment? To make this concern more vivid, consider again the appearance property when my white wall looks yellowish. Its surface looks white to me whenever there is enough natural light. But it can also look yellowish when I turn on my yellow lamp. My view then predicts that visual scenes involved in these experiences change. When the surface looks white, the scene to which I am visually related is the surface and the surface only. But when it looks yellowish to me, the visual scene then consists of the surface and some other portion of my room including its light source. One might wonder, however, whether there is enough phenomenological difference between these two experiences that support such change in visual scene. Recall my criticism about the current extravagant views. I have argued that complex relational properties such as situation-dependent properties are not a good fit for capturing how things visually appear to us. But some might say the same thing about this proposal. When S is half immersed in water, it is not as if S and water are jointly bent to us. Rather, it is as if S is bent. Thus, if the current extravagant views are wrong about how these properties are presented in visual experience, my proposal, as the worry goes, turns out to be wrong about how objects are presented in visual experience.

I have two responses to this worry. First, a phenomenal externalist can always say that only properties constitutively determine visual

phenomenology even though we are perceptually related to objects (or visual scenes) as well. The idea is that multiple objects can have the same appearance and being perceptually related to them can all result in the phenomenally indistinguishable experience. All new smartphones of the same model might look exactly same even to an expert, but they are numerically distinct objects. A plausible explanation for this common phenomenon is that object and properties play different explanatory roles for perceptual experience. The second way to address the issue is to admit that identifying a visual scene even in a mundane case like S looking straight is more complicated than we initially expected. When the wall of my room looks yellowish due to my yellow lamp, my proposal holds that the visual scene that is yellowish is the surface of the wall and some other portion of my room. When S looks straight, however, the visual scene to which we are perceptually related is simply S. Maybe a visual scene consists of any external objects and media participating in the causal explanation of, or correlating with, the instantiation of a relevant appearance property. If this is the case, appearance properties are always instantiated by rather complex visual scenes.

Another possible worry about the proposal concerns one of the guiding principles for this paper. The principle I use whenever there is a controversy is to take visual phenomenology at its face value as long as a relevant phenomenology is consistent, systematic, and ubiquitous. But the advocates of the current extravagant views might simply want to reject this principle. One way to do this is to introduce the reality/appearance distinction even for appearance properties.<sup>17)</sup>

Under this strategy, appearance properties do not necessarily reveal

their true nature to the subject even if his experience is veridical.<sup>18)</sup> Thus, although some of appearance properties of which the subject becomes phenomenally conscious are complex relational properties that the object has with respect to other situational features, they can well be presented to the normal perceiver as simple, intrinsic, and situation-independent. In other words, appearance properties sometimes fail to appear as they are. Then perceptual experience is now taken to have a third part that is neither the conscious subject nor the external properties: the way they are visually presented or their experiential mode of presentation. Presumably, this further part also plays a constitutive role for visual phenomenology. For an advocate of the extravagant view must say that these experiential ways or modes of presentation are the reason why the intrinsic bentness of B constitutes the same phenomenal character as the complex relational property, BENT. Although they are metaphysically different kinds, they constitute the same phenomenal character.

This is the most promising way, I think, to reject my proposal and thus save the current extravagant view. But it must be noted that these experiential modes of presentation as possible phenomenal constituents are also a bad fit with phenomenal externalism. Even if they are not like mind-dependent properties that sense-data once purport to have, their nature is clearly dependent on the way we experience the external

---

17) See Russell (2007) for this familiar distinction. He thought, however, that the realm of appearance was occupied by sense-data while the realm of reality consisted of the collection of all physical objects that he called *matter*.

18) Clearly, the current strategy is more readily available to representationalists than naive realists. See also Hill (2015) for a similar line of defense as the representationalist advocate of the extravagant view.

world. If there are ways for normal subjects to be phenomenally conscious of properties, and these experiential ways, in turn are part of visual phenomenology, phenomenal externalism is in trouble. For this again suggests that two distinct mind-independent properties can make the same phenomenal contribution. Thus, the externalist must reject the postulation of such psychological residues for appearance properties. This is even more so if there is an alternative view that can adequately explain visual phenomenology without such problematic postulation. I have argued that my proposal can do exactly that.

## Work Cited

- Antony, Louise. "The Openness of Illusions." *Philosophical Issues*, vol. 21, Oct. 2011, pp. 25-44.
- Block, Ned. "Mental Paint and Mental Latex." *Philosophical Issues*, vol. 7, 1996, pp. 19 - 49.
- Brewer, Bill. "Perception and Content." *European Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 14, no. 2, Aug. 2006, pp. 165 - 81.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Perception and Its Objects*. Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Byrne, Alex. "DON'T PANIC: Tye's Intentionalist Theory of Consciousness." In *A Field Guide to the Philosophy of Mind symposium on Tye's Consciousness, Color, and Content* <[http://host.uniroma3.it/progetti/kant/field/tyesymp\\_byrne.htm](http://host.uniroma3.it/progetti/kant/field/tyesymp_byrne.htm)>
- Byrne, Alex, and Michael Tye. "Qualia Ain't in the Head." *No s*, vol. 40, no. 2, Jun 2006, pp. 241-55.
- Campbell, John. *Reference and Consciousness*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Chalmers, David. *The Character of Consciousness*. Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Chisholm, Roderik. *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study*. Cornell University Press, 1957.
- Dretske, Fred. "Phenomenal Externalism or If Meanings Ain't in the Head, Where Are Qualia?" *Philosophical Issues*, vol. 7, 1996, p. 143-58.
- Fish, William. *Perception, Hallucination, and Illusion*. Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Genone, James. "Appearance and Illusion." *Mind*, vol. 123, no. 490, Aug. 2014, pp. 339-76

- Hill, Christopher. *Consciousness*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Jackson, Frank. *Perception: A Representative Theory*. Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Levine, Joseph. "Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 64, no. 4, Oct. 1983, pp. 354 - 61.
- Logue, Heather. "Why Na ve Realism?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 112, part 2, Feb. 2012, pp. 211 - 37.
- Lycan, William. *Consciousness and Experience*. MIT Press, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Case for Phenomenal Externalism." *No s*, vol. 35, no. s15, Oct. 2001, pp. 17 - 35.
- Martin, M. G. F. "The Transparency of Experience." *Mind & Language*, vol. 17, no. 4, Sep. 2002, pp. 376 - 425.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Limits of Self-Awareness." *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 120, no. 1/3, Sep. 2004, pp. 37 - 89.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "What's in a Look?", edited by Bence Nanay, 2010, pp.160 - 225.
- Nagel, Thomas. "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 83, no. 4, Oct. 1974, p. 435 - 50.
- Noë, Alva. *Action in Perception*. MIT Press, 2006.
- Pautz, Adam. "Sensory Awareness Is Not a Wide Physical Relation: An Empirical Argument against Externalist Intentionalism." *No s*, vol. 40, no. 2, Jun. 2006, pp. 205 - 40.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Intentionalism and Perceptual Presence." *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 21, no. 1, Dec. 2007, pp. 495 - 541.
- Russell, Bertrand. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Reprint, Cosimo, 1912
- Schellenberg, Susanna. "The Situation-Dependency of Perception." *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 105, no. 2, Feb. 2008, pp. 55 - 84.
- Travis, Charles. "The Silence of the Senses." *Mind*, vol. 113, no. 449, Jan.

철학탐구 제59집

2004, pp. 57 - 94.

## 현상적 외재론과 지각적 외양 성질들

강 석 만 (신한대학교)

지각 경험의 현상적 특질에 대한 이론으로서 현상적 외재론은 많은 현대 지각 철학자들에 의해 지지받고 있다. 현상적 외재론이란 지각 경험의 현상적 특질이 경험자의 내재적 상태 이외에 외부 세계의 물체나 성질들에 의해서도 구성적으로 결정될 수 있다는 이론이다. 하지만 어떠한 종류의 물리적 성질들이 지각 경험의 현상적 특질을 구성적으로 결정하는지에 대해서는 아직 외재론자들 사이에서도 의견 일치를 보지 못하고 있다. 본 논문에서는 지각 경험의 현상적 특질의 질적 구성요소를 외양 성질이라 명명하고 ‘검소 이론’과 ‘사치 이론’이라는 두 가지 종류의 외양 성질 이론을 비판적으로 고찰한다. 나는 이 두 가지 외양 성질 이론들이 다양한 현상적 특질을 설득력 있게 설명하려는 그 목적에 비추어 봤을 때 각기 다른 이유로 한계를 가진다고 논변한 후 그러한 문제를 극복할 수 있는 이론적 토대를 제안하고자 한다.

**주제분류** : 심리철학, 지각철학

**주요어** : 지각 경험, 현상적 특질, 현상적 외재론, 외양 성질

강석만 : smk82@shinhan.ac.kr

투 고 일	2020년 7월 15일
심 사 일	2020년 7월 25일
게재확정	2020년 8월 13일