

The Nature of Visual Experience  
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1. Question: What is it for John to have a visual experience as of a red square?
2. Four kinds of answer:

*Naïve realist*

It is for John to stand in a certain relation to an external object which is red and square

*Sense datumist*

It is for John to stand in a certain relation to an internal object which is red and square

*Adverbialist*

It is for John to be a certain kind of participant in a certain kind of event which is occurring in a 'red square' manner

*Representationalist*

It is for John to be in a certain kind of state which has a 'red square' representational content

3. My answer: For John to have a visual experience as of a red square is for it to look to John as if he is seeing a red square, and for it to look to John as if he is seeing a red square is for whatever we mean by 'It looks to John as if he is seeing a red square' to be the case. So clarifying what we mean by this can help us answer the question.

- Other sentences would do just as well
- The method is general
- It is a collaborative effort
- The semantic theory places an important constraint on the metaphysical theory

4. What do we mean by 'It looks to John as if he is seeing a red square'?

- a. It looks to John the way it looks to John if he is seeing a red square
- b. There is an event, it is a looking event, John is an experiencer of it, and it occurs in the way  $w$  such that: looking events occur to John in way  $w$  when John is seeing a red square
- c.  $\exists e(\text{Look}(e) \wedge \text{Experiencer}(e, \text{John}) \wedge \text{Way}(e, [\text{the } w: \text{looking events occur to John in way } w \text{ when John is seeing a red square}])))$
- d.  $\exists e(\text{Look}(e) \wedge \text{Experiencer}(e, \text{John}) \wedge \text{Way}(e, [\text{the } w: [\text{gen } e: e \text{ is a looking event to John in which John is seeing a red square}](e \text{ occurs in way } w)])))$

5. Key points:

- We use 'as if he is seeing a red square' to definitely describe a way of looking
- Ways of looking are ways in which looking events occur
- Ways of occurring are determinates of a determinable
- Ways of occurring vary in their degree of generality
- We describe a way by means of a *generic*
- There can be contextual restriction within the generic
- We really should add 'maximally specific'

6. This gives us an *adverbial* answer to our question.

7. *Jackson's many property problem*

Jackson challenges adverbial accounts to license the inference from (a) to (b) without licensing the inference from (c) to (d):

- a. John has an experience as of a red square
- b. John has an experience as of a red thing
- c. John has an experience as of a red square and a green circle
- d. John has an experience as of a red circle and a green square

Sellars:

- a.  $\exists x(\text{Experience}(x) \wedge \text{Subject}(x, \text{John}) \wedge \text{Red}^*(x) \wedge \text{Square}^*(x))$
- b.  $\exists x(\text{Experience}(x) \wedge \text{Subject}(x, \text{John}) \wedge \text{Red}^*(x))$
- c.  $\exists x\exists y(\text{Experience}(x) \wedge \text{Experience}(y) \wedge \text{Subject}(x, \text{John}) \wedge \text{Subject}(y, \text{John}) \wedge \text{Red}^*(x) \wedge \text{Square}^*(x) \wedge \text{Green}^*(y) \wedge \text{Circular}^*(y))$
- d.  $\exists x\exists y(\text{Experience}(x) \wedge \text{Experience}(y) \wedge \text{Subject}(x, \text{John}) \wedge \text{Subject}(y, \text{John}) \wedge \text{Red}^*(x) \wedge \text{Circular}^*(x) \wedge \text{Green}^*(y) \wedge \text{Square}^*(y))$

A red\* experience is an experience of the kind brought about in normal perceivers in standard conditions by objects which are red on the facing surface.

Tye:

- a. ((Redly Coin Squarely)(Experiences))(John)
- b. (Redly(Experiences))(John)
- c. (((Redly Coin Squarely)(Exp))(John)  $\wedge$  (((Greenly Coin Circularly)(Exp))(John))
- d. (((Redly Coin Circularly)(Exp))(John)  $\wedge$  (((Greenly Coin Squarely)(Exp))(John))

My response: we should not try to license the first inference. Ainu Japanese do not look Japanese. So visual experiences as of an Ainu Japanese person are not visual experiences as of a Japanese person.

8. *A representational account?*

- a. Perhaps the account is a representational account: perhaps ways of looking are representational properties.
- b. Ways of occurring are not in general representational properties, so we need reason to think that ways of looking are.
- c. Perhaps here is a good reason: it can explain the fact that visual experiences...
  - are assessable for accuracy
  - can be inaccurate
- d. But there is a non-representational explanation too.
- e. And it generalizes (unlike the representational explanation) to an explanation of similar facts about all kinds of events: e.g. walkings.