

Conflicting Grammatical Appearances

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Abstract: I explore one apparent source of conflict between our naïve view of grammatical properties and the best available scientific view of grammatical properties. That source is the modal dependence of the range of naïve, or manifest, grammatical properties that is available to a speaker upon the configurations and operations of their internal systems—that is, upon scientific grammatical properties. Modal dependence underwrites the possibility of conflicting grammatical appearances. In response to that possibility, I outline a compatibilist strategy, according to which the range of grammatical properties accessible to a speaker is dependent upon their cognitive apparatus, but the properties so accessible are also mind-independent.

...let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition...

—Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*: Bxvi.

1. Introduction.

Our naïve view is that the grammatical properties with which we engage in coming to comprehend others' speech are present in the environment independent of our engaging with them. Crudely, we conceive of them as mind-independent properties. That aspect of the manifest image of grammatical properties appears to contrast with their scientific image, as developed within theoretical linguistics. According to the scientific image, grammatical properties are dependent upon the psychological systems responsible for our engagement with them. In what follows, I shall consider a strategy for revealing the putative conflict between the manifest and scientific images to be merely apparent. Although I have some sympathy with that strategy, I shall not attempt to provide a detailed defence of it here.²

¹ I am indebted to important work on colour (which he spells 'color') by Mark Kalderon, especially in §4 below. See his forthcoming and ms.. An earlier version of some of this material was presented at a conference on the Philosophy of Linguistics at the ICU, Dubrovnik. Thanks to Keith Allen, Alex Barber, Mark Cain, Michael Devitt, Gareth Fitzgerald, Steven Gross, Jennifer Hornsby, Keith Hossack, Dunja Jutronic, Peter Ludlow, Fraser MacBride, Nened Miscevic, Paul Pietroski, Geoffrey Pullum, Barbara Scholz, Gabriel Segal, and Barry C. Smith, for helpful discussion of these and related matters. I am especially grateful to John Collins, Mark Kalderon, and Charles Travis, for extensive discussion, guidance, and support.

² In a longer work from which the present paper is excerpted, I attempt to articulate the manifest and scientific images of grammatical properties, and offer a preliminary defence of the strategy for reconciliation sketched below. See my msb.

2. Conflicting Appearances

I shall follow Michael Devitt in distinguishing between, on one side, properties, configurations, and operations of the psychological systems supportive of linguistic competence and, on the other side, the putative objects (“products”) of competence, strings and the grammatical properties that they instance.³ Our naïve view is that the grammatical properties that are manifest to us in our ordinary linguistic transactions appear to be elements of our environments, independent of our particular engagements with them. By contrast, the grammatical properties characterised in theoretical linguistics appear to be properties of our internal systems, and to have no independent existence without the mind. In the face of the apparent conflict between the two views of grammatical properties, the two most obvious responses are the following. First, we might reject the naïve view of grammatical properties in favour of the sophisticated view provided by science. Thus Chomsky writes:

...the language [and its grammatical properties] has no objective existence apart from its mental representation.⁴

Second, we might attempt to reject the scientific image, or at least seek to provide an interpretation of linguistic theory that is more favourable to the manifest image.⁵ But the availability of a third option reveals that the apparent conflict may be only apparent. Taking the third option, we might attempt to distinguish between the grammatical properties that are recognised in science and those that participate in the manifest image. From the perspective of the third option, the first option involves an unmotivated inward collapse of presented—manifest—grammatical properties into properties of the system through which the manifest properties are presented—scientific grammatical properties. And the second option involves an unmotivated outward collapse, of the system properties discerned through scientific inquiry into

³ See Devitt, 2006b, ch.2. For discussion of related distinctions see Martin, 1998; Siewert, 2004.

⁴ Chomsky, 1972: 169, fn3. Compare:

Particularly in the case of language, it is natural to expect a close relation between innate properties of the mind and features of linguistic structure; for language, after all, has no existence apart from its mental representation. Whatever properties it has must be those that are given to it by the innate mental processes of the organism that has invented it and that invents it anew with each succeeding generation, along with whatever properties are associated with the conditions of its use. (Chomsky, 1972: 95)

I should emphasise that I have no quarrel with Chomsky’s claim taken as applying only to language as it is studied in scientific linguistics. And it is far from obvious that Chomsky intends here seriously to take a stand on the metaphysics of our ordinary grammatical engagements. That being said, it is clear that such stands have been adopted on the basis of his work, and work it has initiated.

⁵ See, e.g., Burge, 2003b; Devitt, 2006b; Fodor, 1981; Higginbotham, 1997; Katz, 1981; Rey, 2003a, 2003b; Wiggins, 1997. For opposition, see especially Collins, 2004.

properties presented through operations of the system. In the remainder, I shall consider the prospects of the third option.

I shall assume that seeking a complete divorce between the two sorts of grammatical properties would be a way of rejecting, or rethinking, the scientific image. It would be a way of denying that theoretical linguistics provides an account, however partial, of the systems sustaining our ordinary engagement with manifest grammatical properties. But for present purposes, all that is required in order to make out an appropriate role for those systems is that cases of genuine awareness of grammatical properties are underwritten by appropriate operations or configurations of those systems. Crudely, we would not be in a position to discern the particular range of manifest grammatical properties that we can were it not for the scientific grammatical properties that each of us instances.

Why have many philosophers and linguists felt that recognising the mind-dependent nature of the grammatical properties found within the scientific image is incompatible with according mind-independent reality to the properties that we appear to find within the manifest image? Here, some reconstruction is required, for where the motivations are made explicit they often rest on highly questionable assumptions. One instance of such a questionable assumption is, of course, that there is a single range of grammatical properties that is ostensibly presented to ordinary awareness and also investigated in theoretical linguistics. For another instance, it is sometimes suggested that, since manifest grammatical properties themselves play no role within scientific inquiry, there are no such properties; or, that if there are such properties, then they have a lesser status than those found within the scientific image.⁶ But in the absence of additional considerations, there is no reason to accord that sort of significance to the distinction between properties that do, and those that do not, find a place in developed science.⁷ In a related vein, Georges Rey seeks to exploit the fact that, from the perspective of the physical sciences, manifest grammatical properties appear motley, as evidenced by the variety of ways they can be instanced:

In addition to dialectical and regional differences, there are differences merely in pronunciation between people due to, e.g., age, gender, anatomy, speech impediments, personality, social class, and, even within a single person at certain stage of life, differences due to, e.g., social style (auctioneers, sports announcers, advertisers cramming in qualifications on the radio), auditory circumstances (singing, whispering in a small room, bellowing to a crowd), emotional intensity and relative inebriation. (Rey, 2007: 11 XXXX)

But the claim that manifest grammatical properties are mind-independent is based upon comparison with paradigm groupings that seem no better behaved from the perspective of the exact sciences. Unless there is reason to think grammatical properties impose an especially disparate grouping of physical properties, when compared, for example, with colour or shape properties, such considerations have little force.⁸

⁶ See, e.g., Smith, 2006.

⁷ It is possible to develop this sort of concern in a way that dovetails with the discussion of Case 2 below. But for reasons offered there, the developed concern is not compelling.

⁸ With admirable consistency, Rey views both shape and colour properties as also mind-dependent. For three reasons, I shall continue on the assumption that he is

Rey also argues that the particular forms of classification imposed by the grammatical systems have no analogue in the mind-independent environment. Thus, for instance linguistic texts tell us that a sentence has “an elaborate tree structure”.

But what thing in space and time possesses such a structure? Not, evidently, any *noises* anyone makes: none of the wave forms produced by people when they speak have a tree structure in the way that, for example, a real tree, or river, or network of neurons might, or (to take an example of an artefact for which a type/token relation could be defined) in the way that parts of an automobile have the structure of an internal combustion engine. (Rey, 2007: 5XXXX)

But once we distinguish between properties of the linguistic system—scientific grammatical properties—, and the properties whose presentation those system-properties underwrite—manifest grammatical properties, this type of concern loses its patina of conviction. The environmental distinctions that our grammatical systems enable us to discern need not take precisely the form of the configurations and operations of those systems. All that is required is that the environment sustains an abundance of properties sufficient to match the distinctions we are enabled to draw through the offices of our linguistic systems.⁹

Although some standard forms of argument are not compelling, it is possible on their basis to develop some more pressing concerns. An underlying theme to the objections articulated by Rey, and others, can be articulated as follows. We have no more grip on manifest grammatical properties than is provided either by our ordinary engagements with them, or by scientific inquiry into the bases of those engagements. Since the distributions of grammatical appearances fail to coincide with any scientifically interesting environmental classifications, our assessments of the genuineness of an apparent presentation of some grammatical properties must be based solely upon our best accounts of the internal bases of those apparent presentations. Unless our best accounts of those internal bases suggests a particular appearance to be in some way deviant, the appearance should be viewed as genuine. The sort of variation amongst speakers noted by Rey can now appear quite threatening. For it raises the spectre of divergences, or even conflicts, amongst the various appearances presented to speakers without any independent tribunal through which those appearances might be differentially assessed. In particular, our best account of the bases of our access to grammatical appearances makes space for systematic divergence—divergence that is faultless from the perspective of our best

wrong, at least with respect to shape properties. First, the idea that objects are not really shaped, or that their specific shapes are dependent on human cognition, is extremely counter-intuitive. Second, I would be happy, for present purposes, if grammatical properties turned out to have the status of shape properties, rather than that of, say, after-images or obvious fictions. Third, theses that seek to treat a wide range of putative elements as mind-dependent are best pursued at their weakest points, so that Rey’s more general thesis should be engaged with respect to shape, rather than colour or grammatical properties.

⁹ See also Rey 2005, 2005. Rey is unusual in being so explicit about his motivations. However, I take the concerns he expresses to be representative of the concerns of those who reject manifest grammatical properties on the basis of reflection upon scientific inquiry. See also, e.g., Smith, 2006.

accounts. Perhaps the most commonly pressed form of such divergence is that between what appears to speakers in their ordinary engagements with language and what appears from the external perspective supplied by scientific inquiry (a version of Case 2 below).¹⁰ But similar concerns can be developed on the basis of divergences in what is available from the internal perspectives of different speakers.¹¹

More generally, the concerns about conflicting appearances, and the other concerns articulated by Rey, are reflexes of sensitivity to the modal dependence of the range of manifest grammatical appearances available to each of us on the particularities of our language systems. Once we allow that scientific grammatical properties—system properties—play an essential role in explaining our ordinary grammatical transactions, we appear compelled to accept that the specific range of manifest grammatical properties available to each of us is dependent upon the particular configurations and operations of our idiosyncratic language systems. And once we accept that, we seem to be forced to accept that the manifest grammatical properties available to each of us are, not mind-independent as they are according to naivety, but rather are mind-dependent. From that perspective, Rey's first objection is simply an acknowledgement that manifest grammatical properties are invisible from an external—God's eye or scientific—perspective; one's ability to discern them is dependent upon properties of one's cognitive apparatus. And his second objection points to the fact that the similarities and differences amongst manifest grammatical properties to which we are responsive—as recorded in the hierarchical structural representations that sustain those responses—are dependent upon our specific cognitive constitutions, rather than upon environmental similarities and differences that are salient from all perspectives. Although the deep source of such concerns is sensitivity to a modal dependence of the range of manifest grammatical properties with which we can engage upon properties of our minds (or representational systems), it is difficult to engage constructively with such an amorphous thesis. I suggest, then, that the best way of articulating the pattern of concerns that lead many philosophers and linguists to despair of mind-independent grammatical properties is through reflection upon cases of divergent, or conflicting, appearances. In pursuing that course, I shall draw upon work in other areas—especially work on our awareness of colour properties—where such concerns have been more fully developed.¹²

2.1. First Case

Jo and Kim are presented with the string in (1).

- (1) I had a book stolen

¹⁰ For recent discussions, see Stainton, 2006; Smith, 2006.

¹¹ Chomsky exploits this sort of concern in his numerous engagements with anti-individualist views of linguistic competence. See, e.g., Chomsky, 1975: 50ff.; 1980: 118–9; 1993: 18–19; 2000: 164–194. Stainton, 2006, discusses the question whether such concerns can be used to undermine ordinary classifications of linguistic expressions.

¹² Those who are unimpressed by any such concern may still be interested to see how some of the bases of the concern can condition the development of a view of grammatical properties as mind-independent.

On the basis of the way (1) appears to her, Jo judges it to have a construal naturally continued as in (2).

(2) I had a book stolen *for me*

By contrast, on the basis of its genuine appearance to her, Kim judges the string to have a construal naturally continued as in (3).

(3) I had a book stolen *from me*

We now have the basis for a first argument from the different ways that (1) appears to Jo and Kim, respectively, to the conclusion that neither way is revelatory of naïve properties of the string:

1. A single environmental element, the string in (1), presented in a particular circumstance at a time, appears to Jo to have the construal continued in (2) and appears to Kim to have the construal continued in (3).
2. A single environmental feature, the string in (1), cannot, in a single circumstance of presentation, have the construal continued in (2) and the construal continued in (3).
3. From 2, the appearance made available to Jo—the (2) appearance—and the appearance made available to Kim—the (3) appearance—cannot both be veridical, or both be supportive of correct judgement made solely on their basis.
4. Thus either the (2) appearance is illusory, or the (3) appearance is illusory, or both appearances are illusory.
5. There is no non-arbitrary means of deciding in favour of one appearance over the other as being uniquely veridical, or as uniquely supporting correct judgement.
6. From 4 and 5, both the (2) appearance and the (3) appearance must be illusory.
7. Thus, the environmental element, the string in (1), is neither as it appears to Jo—it fails to support the construal in (2)—nor as it appears to Kim—it fails to support the construal in (3).

We may assume that there is no interesting distinction to be drawn between Jo's intuition and Kim's with respect to their respective places within systems of stable and systematic responses to environmental features. So, we appear to be forced to accept premise 5.¹³ Even so, the argument as it stands is not compelling. The central premise—the exclusion principle in premise 2, according to which a string cannot

¹³ Important ground for doubting the move from the unavailability of reasons for differential treatment to the unacceptability of differential treatment are expressed by Byrne and Hilbert, 2004, forthcoming; Kalderon, ms. For present purposes, we can treat the move as a defeasible inference to the best available view of this case.

bear the properties attributed it on the basis of both the appearance in (2) and that in (3)—itself lacks force. Although one cannot consciously intuit both appearances at once, it is clear that both can be available to one at different times. And there is no obvious reason why the genuineness of one such appearance should exclude the genuineness of the other. Our ordinary conception of grammatical properties—perhaps by contrast with our ordinary conception of specific colour properties—fails to rule in general against the possibility of a single object of awareness sustaining a range of different such properties. That is, we do not take clear awareness of some specific grammatical properties of a string immediately to foreclose on the string’s bearing other specific grammatical properties.

We now face two questions. First, how must we view grammatical properties in order for them to fit this aspect of our ordinary conception, so that different grammatical properties do not necessarily exclude one another? And, second, is that way of viewing grammatical properties—as consistent with one aspect of our ordinary view—compatible with also viewing grammatical properties as naïve? It is here, rather than in the presented argument from conflicting appearances, that considerations in favour of a sophisticated view are to be found. The claim on behalf of the sophisticated theorist will be that the best explanation of this element of our ordinary view of grammatical properties is furnished by a sophisticated view of our engagement with them.

As Mark Kalderon (forthcoming) points out, rejection of the second premise of the presented form of argument from conflicting appearances requires an account of how the targeted properties, and our awareness of them, can have three features. Specialised to the case of grammatical properties, the three features are the following.

1. *Pluralism*. It must be explained how it is possible for a single environmental element—e.g., a sound or ink pattern—, when presented at a particular circumstance and time, to bear (or seem to bear) more than one grammatical property.

2. *Compatibility*. In particular, it must be explained how it is possible for the string in (1), as presented at a particular circumstance and time, to bear (or seem to bear) both the property that appears in (2) and the property that appears in (3), despite the fact that it is not possible for a subject to be aware of both properties at the same time.

3. *Partiality*. We are therefore owed an explanation for why the (2) appearance and the (3) appearance exclude one another at a particular circumstance and time of presentation—for why they cannot simultaneously be intuited by a single subject. And the explanation must not depend upon genuine incompatibility between the properties revealed through those appearances.¹⁴

The view that grammatical properties are sophisticated—or mind-dependent—is then taken to be sustained by its capacity to account for *Pluralism*, *Compatibility*, and *Partiality*, and by the comparative incapacity of the naïve view to sustain such an account, at least in full generality.

According to the sophisticated view, *Pluralism* is explained as an effect of the interaction of non-linguistic features of the environment with a flexible representational system, or with a range of such systems. Since representational systems can vary somewhat independently of environmental impacts, the very same

¹⁴ See Kalderon, forthcoming: 9–12.

environmental feature can induce one exercise of such a system to form one type of representation whilst inducing another exercise of such a system to form another type of representation. *Partiality* is explained by appeal to a contingent feature of the representational systems involved. The outputs of those systems, at least as they impact upon conscious awareness, are supported by the system's entry into a particular state that excludes their occupancy of other states that would be supportive of different takes on a presented string. Finally, since the appearance of incompatibility has been explained through inconsistent demands upon the representational system, an explanation of *Compatibility* need only show that possession of a capacity to enter one of the required states does not rule out possession of a capacity to enter the other required state. Since the appearance of incompatibility is, in this case, explained through the inconsistency of divergent *exercises* of capacities, rather than inconsistencies in the operative capacities themselves, there is no principled difficulty in providing such an account.

Can the naïve view provide an equally compelling account of this case? Consider an approach to *Pluralism*, *Compatibilism*, and *Partiality* along the following lines. First, space is made for the possibility of a single range of environmental elements supporting a plurality of grammatical properties. Just as we can be willing to allow that each grammatical property can correspond with a plurality of physical realisations, so we may be willing to accept that a plurality of grammatical properties can share a single physical realisation. It may be that special features of the metaphysics of grammatical properties rule this out. But it is a feature of the relation between physical and other properties in many ordinary cases—for one instance, the relation between the physical properties of a sample of H₂O and its possessing both liquidity and transparency. It cannot be assumed in advance of detailed argument that grammatical properties are any more tightly bound to their physical realisations.

The second feature, designed to sustain *Compatibility*, involves a special case of the first feature. It must be possible for the specific physical properties in question—those possessed, say, by an utterance or inscription of (1)—to sustain the specific grammatical properties in question—those supportive of the readings in (2) and (3). Again, we cannot simply assume that this is impossible. And, to this point, we cannot take it that the impossibility of an individual intuiting both grammatical properties at once shows those properties to be incompatible. That will depend upon whether an account can be given of the impossibility of conjoint awareness of grammatical properties that does not turn on property incompatibility.

The third feature of the account, designed to sustain *Partiality*, is therefore of critical importance. An account must be provided for how awareness of some grammatical properties can depend upon viewing-conditions, broadly conceived. In particular, it must be explained, not only how it can be that not all grammatical properties are accessible in a single viewing, but also how meeting the conditions required for awareness of one range of properties can be incompatible with meeting the conditions required for awareness of another. Since the conditions in question are not general conditions on perception—for instance, requirements on angle or distance of viewing—it is plausible that they are conditions specific to grammatical awareness. It is plausible that the conditions will be a matter of special *psychological* requirements on the availability to a subject of one or another property.

In the case at issue, there appears to be no difficulty in providing an account of *Partiality* based upon special psychological requirements. Indeed, it seems that the account offered by the sophisticated theorist can be carried over almost intact. Recall that, on the latter account, *Partiality* is explained by appeal to a feature shared by the

representational systems responsible for awareness of grammatical properties. The outputs of such systems, at least as they impact upon conscious awareness, are supported by the system's entry into a particular state that excludes their occupancy of other particular states that would be supportive of different takes on a presented string. If awareness of environmental properties can similarly be dependent upon the constrained operations of the representational system, so that awareness of one range of properties can rule out awareness of another, then we can have an account of *Partiality* that is compatible with naivety. As we shall see, the naïve view will need to contend with harder cases. But the present case appears amenable to a treatment analogous to that of other cases involving limits on the allocation of perceptual resources—for instance, limits on the allocation of attentional resources. Thus, just as attention to one pattern in a group of marks can occlude another pattern, so attention to one construal of a presented string can occlude another construal.¹⁵

2.2. *Second Case*

The next case involves Kaja and Kim. Kaja is a monolingual speaker of Croatian, Kim a monolingual speaker of English. They are presented with an utterance of the string in (4):

(4) Jana san

In this case, Jan is able to construe the string in what is, broadly, the same way that Kim would construe (5).

(5) Jana sleeps

By contrast, Kim is unable to find any natural construal for (4).¹⁶

An argument from conflicting appearances can again be constructed from the second case. The new case differs from the earlier one in two main ways. First, the earlier case involved conflict between two incompatible appearances, while the new case involves conflict between an appearance and the absence of an appearance.

¹⁵ The strategy sketched here, and developed in the remainder, for sustaining the compatibility of conflicting appearances with mind-independence has a long and distinguished history. Burnyeat, 1979, and Kalderon, forthcoming, ms, trace it back to Heraclitus. More recently, the strategy has been discerned in Kant, by Allison, 2004; Bird, 1962; Savile, 2005; Even more recently, versions may be found in Broackes, 1999 (a discussion of Aristotle); Cornman 1971, 1975; Dummett, 1993a; Gibbard, 1996; Harman, 2001; Hilbert and Kalderon, 2000; Hyman, 2005; Kalderon, forthcoming, ms; McDowell, 1998, especially chs.1–11; Mizrahi, 2006; Price, 1932; Shoemaker, 2003, 2006; Travis, 2002, 2004, 2006; Wiggins, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c. Doubtless, the list could be extended. Despite its pedigree, the strategy is rarely treated as an electable candidate. Part of the explanation for this may be that it has all too often been conflated with the relativist or mind-dependent strategies that it was designed to supplant.

¹⁶ An alternative case, in line with worries about the invisibility of manifest grammatical properties from the scientific perspective would involve Kim's inability to find theoretically interesting environmental correlates for (an optimal regimentation of) Kaja's pattern of judgements.

Second, the earlier case involved appearances that are not available simultaneously to a single subject but that may be available to a single subject at different times. The present case differs in that the appearance in question may be present or absent to one of the subjects at different times—that is, Kaja can intuit or fail to intuit the properties of (4) at different times—but, as things stand, the appearance is wholly inaccessible to the other subject.

In effect, we have already considered the sophisticated theorist's account of this sort of case. On that account, the appearance of a string is determined by the state of particular representational faculties, or faculty types. Kaja's ability to intuit the relevant appearance of (4) is a matter of the capacity of her representational faculties—or, more generally, of faculties of that type—to enter the required state. And since there are limits on the range of states attainable by a faculty, we can explain the absence to Kim of the appearance as a matter of the incapacity of her representational system to enter the required state. What, if anything, precludes an analogous account being offered by the naïve view?

The most significant difference between the two cases concerns principled or systematic limits on the accessibility of grammatical properties to subjects that instance particular types of representational faculties. That is, in the new case, the availability of property instances is due to what Charles Travis (2002) has called *special psychological design*. In the new case, the properties are only accessible to subjects that instance one of a limited range of psychological systems or cognitive perspectives—perspectives that are not, or need not be, shared by all possible thinkers. Does that difference make a difference to the comparative ease with which naïve and sophisticated views can cope with the new case?

It might be held that mind-independent features of the environment must be accessible from any—or, at least, from more than one—cognitive perspective.¹⁷ And it might be held that properties can be assessed as to their comparative mind-independence by appeal to the range of perspectives from which they are accessible. Such views clearly strike a chord with some thinkers. Can more be said for them than that?

We have seen that the basic manoeuvre available to the naïve view in the face of cases of conflicting appearance involves treating what might otherwise appear to be disagreements concerning the contents of the environment as really turning on the limited availability to subjects of a plurality of properties. Understood in that way, the fact that a feature is only accessible from a limited range of perspectives has no immediate bearing on the intrinsic status of that feature. Rather, limited availability is viewed as a matter of relations between environmental features and the cognitive perspectives of those who are granted or denied access to them.

¹⁷ The condition has also been taken to constrain what is accessible to science. For instance, according to Bloomfield:

...we can distinguish science from other phases of human activity by agreeing that science shall deal only with events that are accessible in their time and place to any and all observers...[further disjuncts suppressed] (Bloomfield, 1938: 231).

On the additional assumption that only what is accessible to science is mind-independent, Bloomfield's claim can underwrite an argument against mind-independent grammatical properties. See also Williams, 1978: 64–67; Travis, 2004.

It may be worth considering related views of the bearing of contingent differences amongst cognitive perspectives on the abilities of their possessors to gain access to particular environmental features. First, consider David Wiggins' approach to our access to objects. On Wiggins' view, objects are individuated, not only by their occupancy of a particular spatio-temporal region, but also by the sortal concepts or properties that they instance. Thus, objects of different sorts—for instance, a statue and a lump of clay—can occupy the same spatio-temporal region. In response to the charge that his view makes object-individuation mind-dependent—a matter of our using our sensitivity to concepts in order to carve up a homogeneous reality—Wiggins writes as follows:

Our claim was only that what sortal concepts we bring to bear upon experience determines what we can find there—just as the size and mesh of a net determine, not what fish are in the sea, but which ones we shall catch (Wiggins, 2001: 152)

For present purposes, Wiggins' main point can be taken to be the following. Special psychological design—in this case, the range of concepts to which a thinker is sensitive—need not play any role in constituting the objects we are able to perceive, or think about, through that design. Rather, its role may be confined to determining which objects are available to be perceived or thought about by a subject, given their peculiar cognitive perspective. In short, the role of special psychological design can be *selection* from amongst the range of mind-independent elements, rather than the constitution or generation of a range of mind-dependent elements.

However, as well as emphasising the logical independence of questions about the metaphysical status of properties from questions about the conditions of access to those properties, Wiggins makes two further important points. His second point is that, since perceptual or cognitive access to objects is, in general, dependent upon suitable sensitivity to the persistence conditions determined by the sortal concepts that those objects instance, the idea of a form of access to objects that is independent of special psychological design is chimerical—unless, that is, there is at least one sortal concept that is possessed by every possible thinker. Hence, availability from all cognitive perspectives—or even from more than one perspective, as typed by sensitivity to particular concepts—cannot sustain a satisfactory standard for mind-independent existence. Wiggins' third point is that exercise of sensitivity to a particular concept does not guarantee success—that is, does not guarantee that any particular exercise is guaranteed to reveal elements of the environment. It is one thing for one to possess, and to exercise, the sort of special psychological design required in order for one to perceive, or think about, objects of some sort. It is another thing for objects of that sort to be there to be perceived or thought about.

How might such an account be provided for the case of environmental properties? Consider the following account of property selection:¹⁸

¹⁸ The suggestion is almost a quotation of Sidney Shoemaker's sympathetic outline of a selectionist view of colour properties, except that I have replaced mentions of colour with mentions of grammatical properties and systems. See his 2003: 259–60, cited in Kalderon, forthcoming: 26–27. For discussion, see Kalderon, forthcoming, ms; Mizrahi, 2006; Shoemaker, 2006.

For any ordered set of properties we can define a similarity relation such that the degree of similarity of two properties in the set is determined by how close they are to each other in that ordering. Perhaps most of these should count only as relations of “quasi-similarity.” But what determine which of these relations count as “real” or “genuine” similarity relations? A first step towards an answer is to say that such a relation is a genuine similarity relation if it makes properties similar to the extent that their instantiation bestows similar causal powers. But what sorts of causal powers are relevant will vary depending on our interests. In the case of grammatical properties, the relevant powers include the powers to affect the grammatical experiences suffered by competent speakers. Powers to affect grammatical experiences will be grounded in powers to affect the operations and configurations of grammatical systems. And given that a grammatical system realizes a repertoire of grammatical experiences standing in certain similarity relations, there is an obvious sense in which its physical nature determines what properties bestow the powers to produce in the possessor of the system experiences belonging to that repertoire, and what relations among these properties bestow similarities with respect to these powers. In this sense the nature of the grammatical system “selects” what properties are to count as grammatical properties, and what relations among them are to count as similarities with respect to these properties.

For our purposes, the central features of this second selection-based account are the following. First, the mind-independent environment accommodates an abundance of properties, so that Pluralism and Compatibility are not ruled out. Second, differently configured systems will respond selectively to some amongst the abundance, so that particular systems, or configurations of those systems, can be viewed as *selecting* the properties to which they are responsive. Third, whether the properties discerned count as *grammatical* properties depends on how their discernment is exploited—for example, by the roles it can play in other activities of the system. It may be that the properties that one type of subject exploits for grammatical purposes—for example, in order to understand what people say—are put to use by another type of subject for different purposes—e.g., in order to avoid sound patterns that are harmful to that type of subject.¹⁹ Although the properties discerned through grammatical experience are mind-independent, their role as grammatical properties is a matter of the function of their discernment in the cognitive and active life of those who discern them. The selection-based account has a number of attractive features. We should, however, enter five qualifications before endorsing the account.

First, we should emphasise that selection is determined by states of the linguistic system, rather than by the grammatical experiences suffered by the occupants of those states.²⁰ Second, we need not hold that the core grammatical systems play an autonomous role in determining the range of grammatical properties. Rather, there is room for slippage of various sorts, so that other factors—including other systems responsible for personal level judgement and relations between systems and the environment—may play a role in determining whether a putative presentation of grammatical properties is genuine.

¹⁹ Compare Chomsky, 2000: 27.

²⁰ The main point of this qualification is that it makes clear how selection can be seen as exploiting the different causal powers of selected properties, in determining efficacious differences in the configuration of the selecting system. See below §2.4.

Third, we are not yet in a position to allocate central responsibility for selection to a particular type of system. In particular, we must leave open whether selection is centrally the responsibility of the universal initial state-type or is rather the responsibility of its particular configurations—e.g., specific types of stable, adult competence. A fourth, related point, is that we should for the present leave open the precise account to be given of differential selection, by particular speakers, of a range of grammatical properties. With respect to Case 2, at least three broad forms of account of this are available. First, an account might be provided in line with the proposed response to Case 1, according to which one property, or range of properties, can serve to occlude other properties. It might be held, for instance, that the same range of grammatical properties is in principle accessible to the possessor of every humanly possible grammatical system, but that the appearance through a particular type of system of one grammatical property can block the availability, to the possessor of that type of system, of other grammatical properties. The second and third forms of account agree in holding that the range of properties available to each specific type of system differ in their causal powers, so that there is not a universally accessible range of properties. The accounts then differ as follows. The second form of account holds that the differences in causal power are differences at the level of grammatical classification, so that there are no grammatical properties that are available to the possessor of any humanly possible grammatical system. The third form of account holds that the same grammatical property can be instanced in causally different ways, so that although the same grammatical property can be accessible to the possessors of different grammatical systems, particular instances of that property may be only accessible to some grammatical systems.

Finally, fifth, we need not view the selected properties as, in any restrictive sense, *physical*. Although it is plausible that selected properties will supervene on basic physical properties, so that the plurality of grammatical properties instanced by a string should not change from presentation to presentation, we may wish to allow that grammatical properties involve relations to abstracta of various sorts. That is, we should not rule out that our awareness of the instancing of grammatical properties is akin to our awareness of the instancing of shape properties.²¹

It may now appear that the selection model makes it too easy to find environmental correlates for operations of the selecting system. As a consequence, it might be felt that selected properties are mere shadows cast by system configurations. It may then be helpful to consider a third view, Charles Travis' minimal account of property selection:

[s]uppose that some indefinitely extendable group of thinkers take themselves to discern some way for things to be, 'F', and agree, or would do, non-collusively, and productively (that is, in an indefinitely extendable range of cases) as to what is, and what is not, 'F'. Then they are marking a genuine distinction.... That idea is not an explanatory hypothesis, not a piece of psychology. It is rather an

²¹ See Fiengo, 2003; Higginbotham, 1991; Katz, 1981. It is also worth noting that (seeming) recognition of a shape instanced by a material object can depend upon special psychological design. That is one message of Austin's famous example of France's being hexagonal, 1962: 143. Compare Chomsky's discussion of Descartes, Chomsky, 1972: 83ff. It is also worth noting that we need not view recognition as a purely perceptual achievement. It may involve the integrated exercise of perceptual powers with intellectual powers. See relevant discussion, see my msa.

idea about what it is for there to be a distinction in nature. Given such productive agreement...in how to treat things, what more could one want for a genuine distinction (at least of some sort)? (Travis, 2002: 328)²²

According to Travis, the imposition of any more exigent standard on the genuineness of a distinction would be arbitrary. And from the perspective articulated by Wiggins and Shoemaker, we can see that the condition as stated clearly leaves open the possibility of genuine distinctions—in our terms, mind-independent properties—that are accessible from only a limited range of cognitive perspectives. Although Travis offers only a sufficient condition on the selection of a genuine property, that condition can provide the basis for a plausible necessary condition on the genuineness of distinctions a group of thinkers purports to discern.²³ Suppose, for instance, that members offer *contrary* verdicts, in what seem to them to be the same circumstances and where neither they, nor anyone else, are in a position to find independent fault with either judgement. In such cases, we would have at least a *defeasible* reason for doubting that the group of thinkers, or its individual members, have discerned a genuine, mind-independent property.²⁴ Even though properties are cheap, there is no reason to suppose that special psychological design guarantees access to genuine environmental features.

2.3. Third Case

Even if the naïve account of the first two cases is acceptable, that does not yet decide in favour of naivety. There is a third sort of case to be considered, a sort that mixes central features of the first two sorts of case and adds something special of its own. The added feature is that the conflict appears to arise from a genuine incompatibility between apparent grammatical properties, so that those involved in the conflict appear not to meet the very minimal necessary condition on presentation-independence that we derived from Travis.

Consider first Jo, a monolingual speaker of English. When presented with (6), Jo is willing to judge that it can be construed as per (7), with the subscripting indicating referential dependence of ‘himself’ upon ‘John’.

(6) John shaved himself

(7) John_i shaved himself_i

Jo is also willing to make judgements about how (6) *cannot* be construed, so judging that the referentially independent construal of ‘himself’ in (8) is ruled out.

²² Compare Grice and Strawson, 1956; Putnam, 1962.

²³ To suppose that it could provide a necessary condition on genuine distinctions *simpliciter* would be to adopt a form of Nominalism.

²⁴ The question whether an individual or group meets Travis’ condition may be the subject of empirical inquiry. Compare the disputes over the status of distinctions drawn by speakers of African American English, as discussed by Pullum, 1997 and Rickford, 1999.

(8) #John_i shaved himself_j²⁵

Plausibly, Jo's judgement is based upon its appearing to her that such a construal is excluded. Indeed, explaining the basis for this sort of negative judgement appears to be a central aim of linguistics.

Now consider Jo and Kim's respective judgements about (9).

(9) A politician tried to address every rally

According to Jo, (9) can be construed only as in (10)—with 'a politician' taking scope over 'every rally'—and *cannot* be construed as in (11)—with the converse assignment of scope.

(10) [A politician *x*] [every rally *y*] [*x* tried to address *y*]

(11) [Every rally *y*] [a politician *x*] [*x* tried to address *y*]

By contrast, according to Kim, (9) can be construed as per either (10) or (11).²⁶

We now have the basis for another argument from conflicting appearances:

1'. A single environmental element, the string in (9), presented in a particular circumstance at a time, appears to Kim to have construal as per (10) and appears to Jo to be incompatible with construal as per (11).

2'. A single environmental feature, the string in (9), cannot both have the construal in (11) and be incompatible with that construal.

3'. From 2', the appearance made available to Kim—the (11) appearance—and the appearance made available to Jo—the anti-(11) appearance—cannot both be veridical, or both be supportive of correct judgement made solely on their basis.

4'. Thus either the (11) appearance is illusory, or the anti-(11) appearance is illusory, or both appearances are illusory.

5'. There is no non-arbitrary means of deciding in favour of one appearance over the other as being uniquely veridical, or as uniquely supporting correct judgement.

6'. From 4' and 5', both the (11) appearance and the anti-(11) appearance must be illusory.

7'. Thus, the environmental element, the string in (9), is neither as it appears to Kim—it fails to have a (11) construal—nor as it appears to Jo—it is not incompatible with a (11) construal.

²⁵ I use '#' to mark the string as unacceptable to a speaker (where the identity of the speaker in question is to be determined by context).

²⁶ Here, Jo agrees with Burzio, 1986: 201–4, and Kim agrees with Kennedy, 1997.

It is important to see that the conclusion in 7' involves the denial that (9) carries contrary, rather than contradictory, grammatical properties. According to Kim, (9) carries grammatical properties that determine (11) as a construal. According to Jo, (9) carries grammatical properties that determine that (11) is not a construal. It is therefore possible for them both to be wrong, just in case (9) neither carries grammatical properties that determine that (11) is a construal nor carries grammatical properties that determine that (11) is not a construal—that is, if (9) either fails to carry grammatical properties, or carries grammatical properties that leave open whether or not (11) is a construal.

The most significant feature of the latest argument is that it is impervious to the basic manoeuvre deployed earlier in defence of the environmental view. Since the properties in question are, not simply different, but also contrary properties, the option of allowing that (9) carries both properties is foreclosed. It would be natural at this point to consider the option of rejecting 5', and attempting to argue that there is a non-arbitrary way of finding one of the troublesome appearances mistaken. Although I do not wish to rule out such a manoeuvre across the board, there are at least three reasons for thinking that it will not serve as a universal salve. The first reason is that the structure of the linguistic system more or less ensures that at least some cases of this sort will arise through systematic differences in the setting of parameters. It will therefore be impossible to appeal to distinctions made available within theoretical linguistics—say, some amongst the distinctions between competence and performance, that is, between the various sub-systems responsible for the availability of the grammatical appearances—in order to underwrite a differential treatment of divergent appearances. Consider, for example, a different case that is more clearly based upon parametric variation. Jo is a speaker of Standard English, whilst Máire speaks a dialect local to West Ulster. Both are presented with (12).

- (12) What did he say that he wanted all to buy?

At a stretch, Jo and Máire can make out the reading indicated in the gloss on (13).

- (13) What did he say that he wanted all_i [all/pro_i to buy]?
 “What did he say that he wanted *everyone* to buy?”

Máire can more easily make out the reading indicated in the gloss on (14) (where underlining indicates that elements are construed together).

- (14) What did he say that he wanted all to buy?
 “What are *all the things* that he said he wanted to buy?”

By contrast, it appears to Jo that the construal in (14) is excluded by the grammatical properties she can find in (12). In this case, there is good reason to suppose that the different appearances are made available through different configurations of core grammatical systems.²⁷

The second reason is that the sort of system external considerations that might play a role in supporting differential treatment of appearances—including, for example, systematic reflection upon cases and subjects' willingness to defer to others—play only limited role with respect to many grammatical properties. A major

²⁷ For discussion, see McCloskey, 2000.

reason for this is that speakers' consciousness of, or control over, the precise grammatical details of their linguistic issue is minimal. Plausibly, some responsibility for the limited reach of consciousness and control in this area lies with the system controlled productivity of the grammatical system, a feature typically absent from areas where anti-individualist considerations can get a serious grip. But whatever its sources, speakers' lack of clear recognition of, or influence over, fine details of grammatical structure will tend to reduce the force of anti-individualist considerations in this area. However willing speakers are to bend their usage to that of perceived experts, their failure clearly to recognise many aspects of that usage, and their inability to affect their own, is bound drastically to reduce the role of that willingness in sustaining anti-individualist norms. That is not to say that there is no room for anti-individualist considerations to impact on which grammatical properties an individual exploits. Perhaps the comparative plasticity of non-core aspects of adult grammar, and of the language faculty as a whole during its development, affords some space for differential treatment of systematic grammatical appearances.²⁸ But it is implausible that anti-individualism will sustain differential treatment of at least one appearance in every case of apparent conflict.

The third reason for pessimism—a corollary of the first two reasons—is the systematic nature of the appearances involved. We are assuming that some divergences between speakers are due to stable differences in their language faculties, turning on different settings for parameters. We can therefore assume that those differences will have a productive impact on the outputs of the faculty, and that that impact will be replicable by any speaker instantiating the same faculty configurations. It is therefore plausible that both parties involved in a conflict of appearances are equally well placed to meet Travis' condition. It is plausible, therefore, that if either fails to count as discerning a genuine grammatical property, then neither so counts.

2.4. Family Dissimilitude

Consonant with the treatment of earlier cases, the obvious weak point in the argument is the assumption, enshrined from the first premise, that the way that (9) appears to Kim and the way that it appears to Jo are genuine contraries. As the appearances are characterised in the argument, through appeal to (11), the assumption is correct. But there appears to be an alternative to that characterisation. The characterisation assumes, in effect, that the range of grammatical properties available, respectively, to Jo and Kim, form a single *family*. Following Kalderon, we can characterise a family of properties as

...a plurality of properties that are related in a certain way—there are conditions that unite these properties. The unity conditions of properties that constitute a family include similarity, difference, and exclusion relations and the structure of determinables and determinates in which they stand. While exclusion relations hold within these families—nothing is both unique green [in one family] and yellowish green [in the same family], ...colors from distinct families are compatible with one another—an object can be unique green [in one family] and yellowish green [in a different family] all over at the same time (Kalderon, forthcoming: 7).

²⁸ For discussion, see Burge, 1989; George, 1990; Higginbotham, 2006; Wiggins, 1997.

Difficulties of the sort presented by the latest case arise when a range of experiences, or judgements, appear, when viewed as the issue of a single system, or family, of such—so putatively discerning a single system, or family, of mind-independent properties—to be unstable or to impose conflicting demands on the environment. Hence, we can get past the difficulty by rejecting the view. Rather, we should see the experiences or judgements as members of different families, so as discerning different families of properties.²⁹

A first shot at applying Kalderon's model to the case of grammatical properties would be the following. Each stable configuration of the initial state-type—each specific adult human language system—fixes one or more³⁰ families of properties. That is, each such system selects one or more multi-dimensioned spaces of properties, so that each specific grammatical property available to the possessor of the system occurs within a particular area in one of the spaces. Assuming that there is no overlap between the specific properties selected by each of the spaces, each specific grammatical property will exclude every other grammatical property from within its space. But, unless the specific dimensions of different spaces overlap, no specific grammatical property will exclude specific grammatical properties from other spaces. Hence, the specific grammatical property that Jo appears to find in (9) can exclude the specific grammatical property that she cannot find there, a reading as in (11). But it does not exclude the different property Kim can find there—a reading of the string as in (11)—since that property is located within a different property space, the space selected by Kim's language system.

As well as allowing for the required combination of intra-personal exclusion and inter-personal compatibility, the proposed application of Kalderon's model has two main benefits. First, it provides a clear conception of how grammatical properties can be instanced plurally by particular strings. Since each property is fixed by its location within a space of distinctive dimensions, and since a string can fit the dimensions of a plurality of spaces, each string can instance a plurality of properties. And, second, the way in which the model distinguishes the properties available to different language systems can underwrite a satisfying explanation for why only a limited range of grammatical properties is accessible to each system: it is because the properties available to each system differ in their causal powers. But the proposed application also faces a critical difficulty.

The critical difficulty is that there appear to be genuinely cross-linguistic grammatical properties—that is, properties that are available through the operations of more than one type of specific language system.³¹ First, there appear to be aspects of specific grammatical properties that are selected through features that appear in a variety of language systems, for two instances, the tense feature '+Pres' and the reading of strings characterised via (11). And, second, there appear to be very general properties that are selected by all systems, for instance the properties of (comparative)

²⁹ For further discussion, see Allen, ms; Funkhouser, 2006; Kalderon, forthcoming, ms; Mizrahi, 2006.

³⁰ From the perspective currently being developed, the availability to a single subject of different readings for a presented string is naturally construed as depending upon each reading being located within a different property space.

³¹ If we allow that a single system can select more than one property space through its different configurations, then there will also appear to be grammatical properties that are available through more than one such configuration.

acceptability or unacceptability that correspond with convergence or crash at the phonetic-articulatory interfaces. Moreover, appeal to properties that are available through a variety of specific systems appears to be essential to both the ordinary and the scientific perspectives. First, both sorts of property appear to be potential objects of ordinary awareness and judgement. For example, there is no reason, independent of the difficulty presented by Kim and Jo's divergent judgements, for denying that their judgements concern the same grammatical properties, as per their representation through (11). And, second, scientific explanations make appeal to system properties that are determined by a universal initial state type, and so available in principle to a variety of specific configurations of that state type. But the proposed application of Kalderon's model makes no space for such properties, since it identifies grammatical properties through their locations in system-specific spaces. Hence, that application of Kalderon's model should not be accepted.

Development of an adequate selectionist model of our awareness of manifest grammatical properties requires an answer, then, to the following two questions. First, how can a single range of grammatical properties be available to systems whose responses to those properties conflict? Second, how can manifest grammatical properties be available to the possessors of a variety of types of specific language systems, and yet have instances that are only available to the possessors of a single type specific language system? I shall leave it to future work to determine whether satisfactory answers to those questions are available, either through a different application of Kalderon's model or via a different route.

3. Conclusion

Is the manifest image of grammatical properties compatible with the scientific image of grammatical properties? We are not yet in a position to answer that question. Before we get to that point, more work will be required in order to expose the full content of both images and the ways in which they are related. My aim here has been limited to providing a preliminary characterisation of one potential source of conflict—the modal dependence of the range of manifest grammatical properties available to a subject on the scientific grammatical properties accessible to their language system—and to sketching a general strategy for alleviating the appearance of conflict it gives rise to. I have not explained or defended the claim that manifest grammatical properties appear to us to be mind-independent or the claim that the grammatical properties that appear in the scientific image are properties of cognitive systems. And I have not mounted a serious defence of the strategy sketched here, or developed the strategy to deal with all objections. Finally, I have not attempted to deal with any other putative sources of conflict.³² All that must be postponed for other occasions.³³ However, I hope to have shown that there are no immediate grounds for pessimism. As things stand, it is an open question whether theoretical linguistics will

³² In particular, I have not engaged with a variety of issues about the metaphysics and epistemology of grammatical properties that arise due to the apparent involvement of abstracta in their constitution. For discussion, see Higginbotham, 1991; Katz, 1981; Rey, 2005, 2006, 2007. In the first instance, such general issues are best pursued with respect to number and shape, rather than with respect to (even) less well-understood cases.

³³ I attempt the first three tasks in some more detail in a longer work from which the present paper is excerpted. See my msb.

help to explain, rather than overturn, our naïve view of grammatical properties. It may be that the properties through which we find sense in our own and others' words must, in Kant's terms, conform to the contingent forms of our cognition; but that is consistent with their conforming through selection, rather than through constitution.

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