

ROSEN ON JOHNSTON VIA FOX TERRIERS

It now seems to me that Rosen's objection to Johnston on p. 293 is simply fallacious.

Johnston has suggested that color concepts are subjective in that they are response-dependent. Sounds good at first, says Rosen, but won't work, because of the fox terrier example (9).

Well, let's look at the background. A naïve realist about color may instinctively feel that colors are just robust properties of physical objects, like shapes. But then people notice all the shifty ways in which perceived color changes with perceivers and conditions, to a far greater degree than perceived shape does. To explain this, someone offers an analysis like (5) on p. 291. "So you see, color is really response-dependent, while shape isn't."

(9) is not parallel to (5), because it has the parameter already built into the analysandum. *Of course* being annoying to fox terriers isn't subjective; but (with parameter thus built in) it isn't response-dependent either. Similarly, if we analyze the concept of being *red for us in conditions C*, it doesn't turn out to be subjective, but (with parameter thus built in) isn't response-dependent either.

In the fox terrier example, suppose there were a parallel background of naïve realists who think that something is either "annoying" or not, period. Others would note a relativity, and say, "The concept of being *annoying* is really that of being disposed to annoy creatures of type T under conditions C." Thus they show that contra the naïve realists, the concept of being annoying is subjective rather than objective.

(The relevant difference between redness and annoyingness is mainly that few would ever have been naïve realists about annoyingness or taken it to be objective, in the first place.)

So: that being annoying to fox terriers is not subjective does not even begin to show contra Johnston that being red is not subjective in virtue of being response-dependent.

Someone might contest my claim that being annoying to fox terriers isn't response-dependent. (Thomas suggested this in conversation.) But suppose tail-pulling is annoying to fox terriers. There's nothing response-dependent about *that fact* itself, even though it (obviously) incorporates reference to a response. I.e., it's

not that the annoyingness of tail-pulling to fox terriers depends on a response from some further party such as us.

Now, *maybe* I am missing Rosen's intended point, and what he actually meant was that with (9) there *is* response-dependence but no subjectivity; hence (9) would be a counterexample to Johnston. To that I'd reply that as before we must distinguish between *annoyingness* and *annoyingness to fox terriers*; but then we must also distinguish between two kinds of "response-dependence": As noted above, with the concept of annoyingness to fox terriers, there's only response-*involvement* or something like that, but for that of annoyingness period, there's real dependence. And it is real dependence, not merely involvement, that Johnston claims goes with subjectivity.