



Observational Properties as Superficial Properties

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Observational Properties



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The color, the shape, the taste and smell of a lemon, the coarseness of its skin and the freshness of its juice.

AIM: give an account of them compatible with scientific understanding of world.

Trilemma

- (a) Observational properties belong to the world we live in.
- (b) The world we live in is a physical world.
- (c) There is no space for qualitative observational properties in the physical world.

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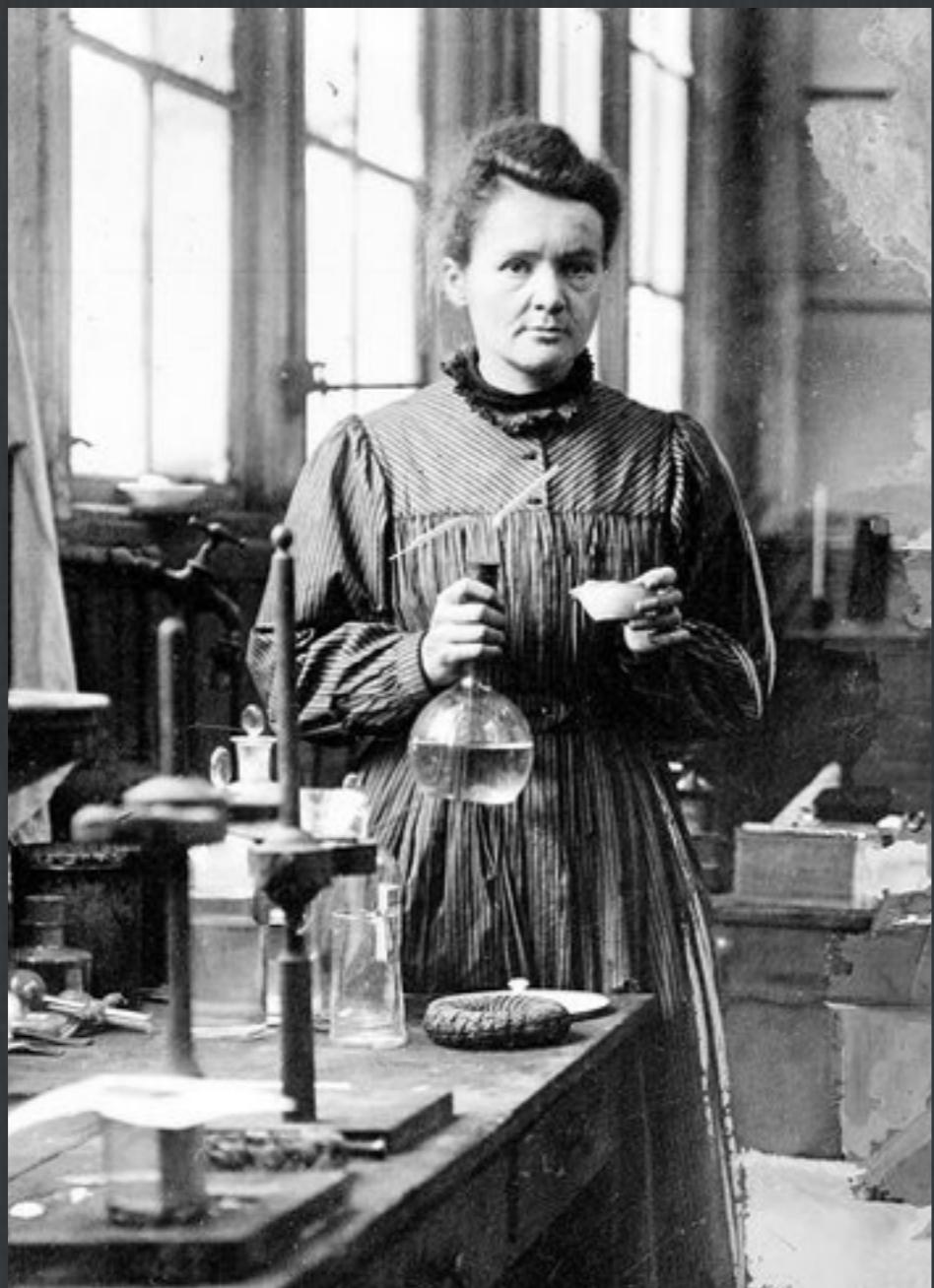
Standard responses

- 1. Reductive Physicalism:** reduce observational properties to physical properties.
- 2. Subjectivism/Projectivism:** identify observational properties with subjective mental properties of the experience, that our mind illusorily project onto the physical world.

My Proposal

- (a) Observational properties belong to the world we live in.
- (b) The world we live in is a physical world.
- ~~(c) There is no space for qualitative observational properties in the physical world.~~

Superficiality of Observational Properties



- knowledge of colours and other observational properties is tied to a specific source of information (in this case visual perception)

- PROJECT: formalise this intuition about superficiality in epistemic terms: certain properties are such that the ultimate ground for claims about them is perceptual.

Proposed account of superficiality:

A range of properties P is superficial relative to a source of information S if judgments about properties in P can only be authoritatively confirmed or disconfirmed through the source of information S (be it sight for colours, smell for odours, introspection for phenomenal characters).

Common Assumption: there is no seem/is distinction for superficial properties (infallibility claim)



Reductionist: denies infallibility for observational properties, but ends up denying that they are superficial.

Projectivist: wants to maintain that they are superficial, but then is compelled to accept we are infallible about them. So she identifies them with mental properties.

> Does indistinguishability entail identity for superficial properties?

My account:



- Explains what makes colours superficial, without accepting the infallibility claim.
- Accommodate simultaneously both intuitions driving (one-sidedly) the reductionist and the subjectivist:
 - they are properties of the physical objects around us;
 - they are subjective: in the sense that how we experience them depend on facts about our biology, the context in which we experience them etc.

Applications:

- use this account to solve certain puzzle re. metaphysics of colour and sound**
- consider how my account accommodates data on colour perception from neurosciences**

Thanks