

That these things have, in practice, to be tried empirically is largely due to the fact that the popular ideas of colours in their variability are inadequate and uncertain, and that the usual nomenclature is not only very incomplete but in many cases absolutely illogical. The scientific nomenclature is too simple; for all the qualities between green and blue we have no other designation than blue-green, green-blue, bluish green, etc. On the other hand the names used in commerce are almost too numerous. Certainly they are inconsistent in so far as the "colour" does not refer only to the light impression, but very often also to the texture and other qualities of the material. This is so with regard to intensities; we call the slate of a blackboard "black" though it is scarcely as dark as some medium grey papers, if it is slate it is black, while if it is paper it is grey. We speak of black cloth, but a piece of silk or velvet which shows exactly the same intensity and light quality is called not black but grey, these materials in order to be termed black must be very much darker than cloth. Some of the colour designations can be applied only to material which has a lustre, such as silk and satin, others are dependent on the nature, roughness, or grain of the texture, others again refer only to reflected light, never to luminous bodies.

Gladstone and some German scientists once advocated the theory that the ancient Hebrews and ancient Greeks had not the fully developed colour sense, and especially did not perceive blue and violet. This inference was drawn from the seeming poverty of the Greek and Semitic languages in regard to colour designations. Some hundreds of years hence it may be that our successors will not be able to understand how the colour terminology of our own day could have been arrived at, and how people could speak of red hair and tan shoes or ignore the difference in the light quality of snow and the complexion of part of the human race, both of which are called white. But these are only comparatively insignificant examples of the inconsistency of our present nomenclature of