

## Appearance & Expression

290-4

Handout 4

### 1. Main Points of Last Week

- i. Cassam's strategy is to defend the possibility of *perceptual* knowledge of others' mental states as opposed merely to *inferential* knowledge of them. Unclear the importance of the contrast for him, unless inferential 'knowledge' is not knowledge at all;
- ii. The only plausible strategy to defend the perceptual knowledge claim is to demonstrate that the way others are psychologically does feature in the perceptual content which subjects come to accept;
- iii. Dretske's *S&K* account of epistemic seeing obscures that requirement by focusing on how we respond to how objects look to us – but Dretske's account at this stage gives an implausible category of epistemic seeing; and in particular does not show why the contrast between perceptual knowledge and inferential knowledge should be a significant one.

Two aspects of Dretske's discussion in *S&K* and *P&OM* to be explored further – a.) sceptical challenge to other minds knowledge typically appeals to a form of argument from illusion which does not distinguish between mental properties and non mental, non-observational properties; b.) capture the import of what is taken in perceptually other than by reference to a given propositional content of sense experience to be accepted by the subject.

*Coda:*

Cassam's argument for making mental properties feature in perceptual content:

...an argument for the view that in order to see that the Bursar is angry it's not necessary to see his anger has evolved into an argument for the view that it *is* possible, in a sense, to see his anger... What displays or manifestations of the Bursar's anger do is to *reveal* his state of mind without *being* his state of mind; one perceives his anger by perceiving displays of it. (PoK 164-5.)

Compare:

See the anger in his face

See his father in his smile

See the donkey in the photograph

(See one's neighbour in the mirror does seem to specify seeing one's neighbour)

## 2. Strategy for Second Part of Course: The Nature of Appearances

Q1: Is there a general condition on what properties or features can enter into the *content* of perceptual experience?

This, in turn, raises the question whether we have an understanding of ‘content of experience’ which is neutral among different views of the nature of experience (naïve realist/relational v. intentional/representational, for example).

Q2: How should we construe statements about appearances, and more specifically the looks of things? That is, are there uses of such sentences which introduce the content of experience in the sense required above?

a.) What is it to be visible?

b.) ‘Looks’ statements

c.) Observationality of properties

d.) The Sense-datum and the Proposition: What Propositionalism and Sense-Datum Theories have in common.

Hypothesis:

- a.) While there is a perfectly good notion of the observational, one we can formulate independently of the assumptions of s-d theories or intentionalism, there is good reason to deny that what can properly be said to be perceived is nothing more than the observational aspects of objects.
- b.) *And* it is also right to suppose that, with the field extended beyond the observational, there is no obvious criterion for what cannot be presented through having a characteristic appearance. If psychological properties of persons are taken to be imperceptible, that must be because of a special feature of them, or how we can come to know of them, rather than because of their failure to meet a general condition on perceptibility.

## 3. What is it to be invisible?

I do not believe that others’ mental states *can* be objects of my perception at all... note: One reason I would give for this denial is the following: while propositional perceptual reports sometimes seem natural in specifying my cognitive relation to the mental states of another, direct object perceptual reports (‘I saw the pain in his foot’) seem definitely wrong. This makes the case essentially different from my perception of material objects. (C. McGinn, ‘Consciousness and Other Minds’, *Proc. Arist Soc sv* 1984, p.123.)

- (1) John could see that the stock exchange was about to fall
- (2) John could hear that she was very upset
- (3) Mary could feel that Bill was in excruciating agony
- (4) Ellen could see that Henry had forgotten his mother’s birthday

- (5) Frederica saw Humphrey's kicking of the cat
- (6) Brian heard Elizabeth singing the national anthem
- (7) Julie just watched Griselda's solving of the chess puzzle

McGinn's observation is not of help because it is not in general natural to treat *any* property of an object as reportable as the direct object of see:

- (8) Elena saw John's size
- (9) Wilhelmina felt Brian's shape

Alternative strategy is to look to our locutions for reporting how things appear, or more narrowly look to a subject, since philosophers typically take these to report on psychological states, most notably visual experiences.

#### 4. *How Not to Understand Looks-Statements*

I agree with Chisholm and Jackson here and I take 'X looks *F* to *S*', given an appropriate '*F*', to be a paradigm of phenomenal talk. This locution is intensional in two ways. First, it can be true that X looks *F* to *S*, even if there is no X. Second, it can be true that X looks *F* to *S* without X's looking *G* to *S*, even if '*F*' and '*G*' are coextensive...

How then is the intensionality of 'looks' talk best explained? The obvious answer surely is that the 'looks' locution, in its phenomenal use, answers to the nonconceptual representational content of the relevant experience. For X looks *F* to *S*, in the phenomenal sense of 'looks', just in case *S* undergoes a visual experience with respect to *X* into whose content *F*-ness enters... the conclusion we naturally reach – given that identity (difference) of phenomenal look goes with identity (difference) of phenomenal character – is that phenomenal character is a species of nonconceptual representational content. (Tye, *Consciousness, Color & Content*, pp.54-55, 57.)

- (10) Fido looks hungry to Mary
- (11) Mary sees Fido

'Sees' is not an 'intentional transitive' verb: we do not have with 'X sees an *F*' the ambiguity of 'X is looking for an *F*', i.e. the reading where no particular *F* is specified. Given that (11) is entailed by (10), (10) seems existentially committed in subject position.

#### (A) *The Problem of Richness*

(R) Necessarily, visual experiences that are alike with respect to their representational contents are alike phenomenally...

strong representationalism [is] the thesis that phenomenal character is one and the same as representational content that meets further conditions. (Tye, p.69.)

Common assumption about the propositional attitudes that the content of a propositional attitude individuates the attitude: no two states with the same attitudinative force can differ if they are directed at the same content; nor be the same if they are related to different contents.

The way things look to a subject at a given time is far richer than any sentence we normally use to describe how things are perceptually with them at the time

- (1) It looks to Smith as though there is a tree outside the window;  
It looks to Smith as though the tree is roughly so big; It looks to Smith as though it is roughly so far away; It looks to him as though it is roughly in such-and-such a direction; It looks to him as though

it has leaves (or does not have leaves); it looks to him as though its branches are disposed in such-and such a way. And so on. (Pitcher, *A Theory of Vision*)

A typical ascription to someone of a looks state will not thereby offer the canonical condition for that state, if it is a propositional attitude. Contrast this with ascriptions of belief or factual knowledge.

Will experiences be more or less similar in virtue of the various conjunctions of property attributions within their content?

### 5. *A Puzzle About Looks Statements*

(A) Every way that Pearl looks, Dean looks too; and every way that Dean looks, Pearl looks also

(B) Pearl looks ill

(C) Dean does not look ill

(A\*) Every way that Pearl is, Dean is too; every way that Dean is, Pearl is also

(B\*) Pearl is ill

(C\*) Dean is not ill

(A#) Every colour that Pearl manifests, Dean does too; every colour that Dean manifests, Pearl does too

(B#) Pearl manifests a scarlet tinge

(C#) Dean does not manifest a scarlet tinge