

Appearance & Expression

290-4

Handout 5

1. *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.

2. *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.

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?

3. The Phenomenalist Conception of Looks

Phenomenalism concerning shape and colour (and material objects in general) seeks to explain the facts about the existence of shapes, colours or objects in our environment in terms of facts about actual or possible experiences.

That is, facts about how things are experienced or would be experienced in certain circumstances are taken to constitute the facts about objects having colours or shapes.

Many now reject phenomenalism about material objects, shapes, and colours but affirm them about the looks or appearances of objects.

'X looks *F*' is to be explained in terms of:

'X looks *F* to *S*'

Alternatively, the following forms might be taken to be ultimately expressive of the underlying psychological facts:

'It looks to *S* as if something is *F*'

'It is to *S* as if something is *F*'

Sometimes it is suggested that we should find here a parallel with habitual or dispositional statements. For example, compare:

The tea is poisonous

The tea is poisonous to Mary

The tea is poisonous [to one]

The tea poisoned Mary

As a semantic thesis this would be to presuppose that ‘to *F*’ expresses a semantically required element in a statement about looks, even if it is not explicitly provided in the overt syntactic structure.

4. *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

5. *Can the Puzzle be Solved by Appealing to Different Senses of ‘Looks’?*

The comparative sense in (B) and (C) won’t help as long as we assume a semantic connectedness among the different uses of ‘looks *F*’.

Fundamental problem here concerns the assumption that we have a predicate matrix ‘looks *F*’ which may hold or fail to hold of a given object.

6. *Solving the Puzzle*

Pearl looks ill

Pearl has an ill look

Pearl has a look of being ill

Mary loves dancing

Mary loves PRO dancing =

EITHER

Mary loves (some)ONE dancing

OR

Mary loves SHE HERSELF dancing

Pearl has a look of PRO being ill =

Pearl has a look of (some)ONE being ill

OR

Pearl has a look of SHE HERSELF being ill

Dean looks ill CANNOT say that Dean has the look meeting the condition SHE HERSELF being ill, where SHE HERSELF is anaphoric on 'Pearl'.