

Appearance & Expression

290-4

Handout 6



1. 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

- (A@) Every kind of Tonka toy Pearl owns, Dean does too; every kind of Tonka toy Dean owns, Pearl does too
- (B@) Pearl owns a Mini-Moke Tonka
- (C@) Dean does not own a Mini-Moke Tonka

(A)-(C) are consistent, (A*)-(C*), (A#)-(C#), (A@)-(C@) are all inconsistent, whence the difference?

Merely appealing to the idea that there are different senses of 'looks', say phenomenal, epistemic and comparative will not solve the problem on its own if we think that there is a semantic link between the different senses.

That is, the minimal assumptions to generate the puzzle:

- (1) Equivalence in truth of phenomenal look statement for two objects should entail equivalence in truth of comparative or epistemic look statements; (i.e. the comparative or epistemic sense are restrictions on the phenomenal sense);
- (2) ‘ x looks ill’ (in the relevant interpretation) is a predicate which holds or fails to hold of any given value of x

2. *Expanding Looks Statements*

(B) Pearl looks ill

(B1) Pearl has an ill look

(B2) Pearl has a look of being ill

What is the commitment here to looks?

(I)

One model following Higginbotham is to assume that English stative sentences involve quantification over individual states, just as Davidson supposed that action sentences involve quantification over individual actions.

Shem kicked Shaun

There is a kicking which is by Shem and which is of Shaun.

The kettle is boiling

There is a state which is a state of boiling and which is of the kettle

(II)

We can take looks to be universals, shared by different objects, and specified as ways of looking. This is parallel to supposing that we specify and qualify act-types in characterizing actions. (As with the case of events, one can commit to the existence of individual looks, but suppose that we characterize them always via act-type/way of looking.)

(B1) is the natural form to look at for option (I). With respect to it the question becomes: In what ways can a look be ill?

‘is ill’ might be true of a look in the same way as it is of a person

While not plausible for ‘ill’ might hold for ‘graceful’ or ‘blurry’.

Alternative: ‘ill’ in its normal sense generates a condition which ways of looking or individual looks states must meet to be attributed to Pearl. In this case (B2) reflects something more of appropriate form.

Simplest proposal: the way of looking is one (characteristically) possessed by those who are ill.

There is a way of looking characteristic of those who are ill and Pearl has a way of looking identical/relevantly similar to it

3. *Slippery Gerunds*

(D) Mary loves dancing

The gerundial object of 'loves' here seems to contain an additional syntactical element which is not part of the surface form, PRO. PRO in many contexts allows of distinct interpretations.

(Cf. also 'Mary remembers dancing' and 'Mary imagines dancing'.)

(Dext) Mary loves PRO dancing

= EITHER

(Dext1) Mary loves (some)ONE dancing

OR

(Dext2) Mary loves SHE HERSELF dancing

(Dext1) can be true without (Dext2) being true – Mary may like to go to the ballet or sit at home and watch endless reruns of *Dancing with the Stars* but loathe spending any time strutting her stuff.

Hypothesis: (B2) contains PRO as well

(B2ext) Pearl has a look of PRO being ill

=EITHER

(B2ext1) Pearl has a look of (some)ONE being ill

OR

(B2ext2) Pearl has a look of SHE HERSELF being ill

Inconsistency results when we read (B) as equivalent to (B2ext1) and take (C) to be the negation of (B') substituting 'Dean' for 'Pearl'.

On reading (B2ext2), (B') 'Dean looks ill' *cannot* be interpreted to say that Dean has a way of looking of *Pearl's* being ill. Given that reading, 'x looks ill' in (B) is not a predicate which holds or fails to hold of any given value of *x*.

4. *Different Senses*

Are there different *senses* as well as *uses* of looks statements?

Two salient options:

- i.) the verb ‘looks’ varies its interpretation across different uses;
- ii.) While the verb has a constant interpretation, simply introducing ways of looking, different conditions can be imposed on a way of looking to be attributed to a subject.

I.e. ‘of’ admits of multiple interpretations, so what it takes to be a way of looking of *F* might vary across different uses.

Most conservative hypothesis:

For ‘*S* looks Θ ’, the kind of condition introduced by Θ is constant across different uses.

In English, there is at least one exception to the mch, but most other uses can be explained consistent with mch. *Note: sentences containing ‘as’, ‘like’, ‘as if/though’, ‘to S’, ‘from l’ are all to be taken as more complex forms to be explained by reference to the base case.*

(D) This one looks red

Two scenarios:

- (A) Display of kitchen goods in plain view under normal daylight, manufacturers market them with primary colours across the surface;
- (B) Display of kettles in boxes, with the handles and spouts on view but the body hidden by the box; different colour of kettle is indicated on the box by a suitable symbol

Note that the two scenarios are not ‘Travis’-like in involving different interpretations of what counts as being red. Need we think that they involve different senses of ‘looks red’?

Take the property or kind red in respect of some domain (e.g. the appliances in the store; boxes in the warehouse): we single out for that domain a way of looking characteristic of that kind (i.e. a unique such way; the individuals of that kind in the domain may have many ways of looking in common with each other; there is a question here whether the combination of two ways of looking by an object is itself a way of looking). Note that the connection here is between properties – ways of looking and the properties they are characteristic of in specified circumstances – so there is no immediate implication that the properties in question need to be instantiated.

Given this, difference between (A) and (B) is a difference in the characteristic look selected in the conversational context. The variation in truth condition here can be understood in terms of contextual features of interpretation.

O looks red = *O* has a way of looking that is identical/similar to CHAR LOOK [red in *D*]

Is there a phenomenal sense distinct from this ‘comparative’ employment?

Jackson claims ‘Yes’:

We noted in §2 that comparative looks-statements need to be understood in terms of the schema ‘*X* looks like an *F* normally does in *C* to *S*.’ How might such a schema be employed to give an account of

(1) X looks red to me

Does (1) perhaps mean something like

(2) X looks the way red things normally look to me in normal circumstances...

I will now argue that (1) and (2) are not equivalent on the ground that (1) may be true when (2) is false, and on the ground that (2) may be true when (1) is false...

...there might be a disparity between the colours objects have and those they look to have. For example, there might be a shade of red which objects look to have at sunset but which no object actually has... It could even be the case that there were no red objects at all, although objects looked red on occasion. This shows that (1) may be true when (2) is false, for it shows that X may look red to me even though nothing is red; but then X cannot be looking the way red things normally do to me, or indeed, the way red things normally do to anyone...

The case for saying that (2) may be true when (1) is false is that someone might, like the totally colour-blind, see the world in shades of grey, but, unlike the totally colour-blind, have extremely good 'grey vision'; in particular, he might be able to make among the greys the same number of colour discriminations normal people make in the whole colour spectrum... Such a person might well see red objects as a unique shade of grey, and for such a person it might well be true that X looks the way red things normally look to him in normal circumstances, namely, that special shade of grey, without it being true that X looks red to him. (Jackson, pp.34-6.)

Three comments:

- (A) One of Jackson's concerns would seem to be that we know more of the looks of things than just the structural/relational feature that they are similar or different from other looks. This is reflected in the last sentence 'namely, that special shade of grey'. This gives one reason to reject any theory of the nature of looks which identifies them solely with nodes of similarity among ways in which objects are similar or different from each other with respect to looking. This is principally a point about the nature of looks and our knowledge of that nature. It doesn't in itself show that we have any vocabulary which explicitly talks about the looks of things other than in comparative terms. Our non-relational knowledge may be given, as in Jackson's own discussion, by use of other kinds of statements. This connects with the idea of the observational.
- (B) It is unclear how Jackson's thought experiments are supposed to test the equivalence of (1) and (2). Are we to consider whether in using those sentences in accordance with their actual meanings in those circumstances we would speak truly or falsely? Or are we to consider the embedding of these sentences within modal contexts? Either way, an opponent may argue intuition of difference here reflect the possibility of 'normal' taking narrow scope with respect to modal contexts in a way in which covert indexicals typically cannot.
- (C) Jackson's discussion seems to assume that sets of objects rather than relations among properties are basic in understanding generic claims or claims of typicality or normalcy. How would his tests fare for locutions other than those about 'looks'?