

Colour Experiences and ‘Look’ Sentences

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Introduction

We have colour experiences. When you look at the patch below you have a colour experience of the patch (I will assume that grey is a colour). You also have a shape experience, and perhaps other kinds of experience, but in this chapter I am interested mainly in colour experiences.



We have ways of describing our colour experiences. One common way in English is to use a sentence whose main verb is ‘look’. For example, we might (correctly) describe your colour experience of the patch above by using the following ‘look’ sentence:

The patch looks grey to you

This description does not completely specify your colour experience, because ‘grey’ is too general a colour term – we would have to use a more specific one, such as ‘dark grey’, or something even more specific. Nevertheless, it is a true description.

There are other ‘look’ sentences that we might use. If it is understood that we are talking about *your* visual experience, rather than someone else’s, then we might drop ‘to you’ and simply say:

The patch looks grey

Care needs to be taken here – we might use this same sentence to talk about how the patch looks to people in general, not just to you on this occasion, so this use of the sentence might be misunderstood.

We might use a variety of other expressions in place of ‘grey’:

The patch looks to you the way grey things do

The patch looks to you like a grey thing

The patch looks to you as if it is grey

The patch looks to you to be grey

If we want to be non-committal about the presence of a patch, perhaps to allow that you are hallucinating, then we might use one of the following sentences (although each involves saying something slightly different from above):

It looks to you as if you are seeing a grey patch

There looks to you to be a grey patch in front of you

I’ve been interested for a while in what we mean by these sentences. More generally, in what we mean by ‘look’ sentences when we use them to describe our colour experiences. Even more generally, in what we mean by ‘look’ sentences when we use them to describe our visual experiences as a whole. I call these uses *visual experience* uses of ‘look’ sentences. Not all of our uses of ‘look’

sentences are visual experience uses. When I say, 'I looked out the window', I am using a 'look' sentence but it is not a visual experience use, because I am not describing a visual experience. I am interested just in our *visual experience* uses.

My aim in this chapter is not to develop a theory of what we mean by our visual experience uses of 'look' sentences – I have already done that, in Breckenridge (2018). Rather, my aim is to defend an assumption that that theory makes – that in our visual experience uses of 'look' sentences we use 'look' with just a single meaning. I will also argue that the theory gives a unified account of *all* of our visual experience uses of 'look' sentences (which, if the theory is right, are not as various as it might initially seem).

I will start by briefly illustrating the theory that I develop in Breckenridge (2018).

What we mean by 'look' sentences

To illustrate the theory that I develop in Breckenridge (2018) I'll work through an example – our use of 'The patch looks grey to you' to describe your visual experience of the patch at the start of this chapter.

We use each constituent of the sentence to express a property of events. We conjoin these properties to get a property of events that we express by the sentence as a whole. Then, when we assert the sentence we assert that there is an event that has this property. I'll work through this step-by-step.

First, by the verb 'look' we mean the property of being a looking event (i.e. an event in which things look some way to some one)(I am using 'things' non-referentially here, to allow that there might be no thing that looks anyway, as might be the case during a hallucination). We use 'look' because we are talking about a *visual* experience; had we been talking about a *tactile* experience then we might have used 'feel' instead.

Next, to the verb 'look' we add the present tense marker '-s', to get the tensed verb 'looks'. By '-s' we mean the property of occurring now. What we mean by 'looks' is the conjunction of what we mean by 'look' and what we mean by '-s'; that is, the conjunction of the property of being a looking event and the property of occurring now; that is, the property of being a looking event and occurring now. We use the present tense marker '-s' because we are talking about an event that is occurring in the present; had we been talking about an event that occurred in the past then we might have used the past tense marker '-ed' instead.

Next, to the tensed verb 'looks' we add the complement 'grey', to get the verb phrase 'looks grey'. By 'grey' we mean the property of occurring in a certain way. Looking events, like events of many other kinds, occur in various ways. What is it for a looking event to occur in a certain way? The kind *looking event* is a determinable kind – it has determinates. Each of these determinates is a way of looking. For a looking event to occur in a certain way is for it to be of one of these determinate kinds. Which way do mean by 'grey'? That's a bit complicated – I'll call it 'w' for now and come back to this. By 'looks grey' we mean the conjunction of the property that we mean by 'looks' and the property that we mean by 'grey'. That is, the conjunction of the property of being a looking event and occurring now and the property of occurring in way w. That is, the property of being a looking event and occurring now and occurring in way w. We use 'grey' because the patch looks to you the way it does; had it looked some other way then we might have used some other adjective ('red', for example).

Next, to the verb phrase 'looks grey' we add the modifier 'to you', to get the verb phrase 'looks grey to you'. By 'to you' we mean the property of having you as an *experiencer* (someone who is experiencing the event). By 'looks grey to you' we mean the conjunction of the property that we mean by 'looks grey' and the property that we mean by 'to you'. That is, the conjunction of the property of being a looking event and occurring now and occurring in way *w* and the property of having you as an experiencer. That is, the property of being a looking event and occurring now and occurring in way *w* and having you as an experiencer. We use 'to you' because we are talking about *your* visual experience of the patch; had we been talking about mine, for example, then we might have used 'to Wylie' instead.

Next, to the verb phrase 'looks grey to you' we add 'The patch', to get the sentence 'The patch looks grey to you'. By 'The patch' we mean the property of having the patch as a *stimulus* (something that is stimulating the event). By 'The patch looks grey to you' we mean the conjunction of the property that we mean by 'looks grey to you' and the property that we mean by 'The patch'. That is, the property of being a looking event and occurring now and occurring in way *w* and having you as an experiencer and the property of having the patch as a stimulus. That is, the property of being a looking event and occurring now and occurring in way *w* and having you as an experiencer and having the patch as a stimulus. We use 'The patch' because we are talking about your visual experience of *the patch*; had we been talking about your visual experience of, say, a cloud, then we might have used 'The cloud' instead.

Finally, what we mean by the sentence when we assert it is that there is an event which has this property. So we mean:

There is an event *e* such that *e* is a looking event and is occurring now and is occurring in way *w* and has you as an experiencer and has the patch as a stimulus

So which way do we mean by 'grey'. In short, it is: the way that grey things look. That is, the way *w* such that grey things look *w*. Here I intend 'grey things look *w*' to be understood *generically*. So, we might refer to it as: the way *w* such that it is generically true that grey things look *w*. Or, less ambiguously, as: the way *w* such that it is generically true that looking events whose stimulus is grey occur in way *w*. Actually, there are many such ways, varying in their degree of generality. By 'grey' we mean the *most specific* one of these. So, by 'grey' we mean:

The *maximally specific* way *w* such that it is generically true that looking events whose stimulus is grey occur in way *w*

So, adding this to the above, what we mean by 'The patch looks grey to you' is:

There is an event *e* such that *e* is a looking event and is occurring now and is occurring in the maximally specific way *w* such that it is generically true that looking events whose stimulus is grey occur in way *w* and has you as an experiencer and has the patch as a stimulus

Our use of 'grey' in 'The patch looks grey to you' to mean a way of looking is an application of a more general mechanism that we have for using adjectives to mean ways of occurring. We might use 'proud' in 'John walks proud', for example, to mean a certain way of walking (the maximally specific way *w* such that it is generically true that walking events by proud people occur in way *w*), or we might use 'American' in 'Brad talks American' to mean a certain way of talking (the maximally specific way *w* such that it is generically true that talking events by American people occur in way *w*), etc.

It is convenient to say that by 'grey' in 'The patch looks grey to you' we mean: the way that grey things look. But care needs to be taken here. One might wonder, given that grey things look all sorts

of ways in different conditions, whether there is such a thing as *the way* that grey things look. But ‘the way grey things look’ is shorthand for ‘the maximally specific way *w* such that it is generically true that looking events whose stimulus is grey occur in way *w*’, and if this is properly understood then it is quite plausible that there is such a way. First, whether it is *generically* true that grey things look *w* does not depend on how grey things *actually* look. Compare turtles: there is a generic reading of ‘turtles are long-lived’ on which it is *true*, even though the vast majority of turtles die just after birth. I intend ‘grey things look *w*’ to be understood generically in the same kind of way. Second, the way of looking *w* such that it is generically true that grey things look *w* might be a fairly *general* way – it need not be a very specific. This is another reason to think that there might be such a thing as *the way* that grey things look, even if there is some variation in the way that grey things actually look. Compare dogs: there is such a thing as *the way* that dogs swim, even though individual dogs swim in all kinds of ways. This way is not a very specific way – it some more general way. So too with *the way* that grey things look.

Do we mean anything else by ‘look’?

I have just briefly illustrated the theory that I develop in Breckenridge (2018), of what we mean by our visual experience uses of ‘look’ sentences. According to this theory we mean the same thing by ‘look’ in every case – the property of being a looking event. But is this right? It has been said that we have various uses of ‘look’, even when it comes to describing visual experiences. It is not always clear whether the claim is that we mean different things by ‘look’ itself or by ‘look’ sentences as a whole. I will consider both possibilities. In this section I consider the first possibility. I will look for evidence that we mean different things by ‘look’, and argue that there is no such evidence. In the next section I will consider the second possibility. I will look at a variety of things that we are purported to mean by ‘look’ sentences, and argue that they give us no good reason to think that we mean anything by our visual experience uses of ‘look’ sentences that is not accounted for by the theory that I have developed.

Various categories of complements

In our visual experience uses of ‘look’ sentences we use, as the complement of ‘look’, expressions from a variety of syntactic categories. Here are some that we might use to describe your colour experience of the patch at the start of this chapter:

The patch looks grey
The patch looks a grey thing
The patch looks of a grey colour
The patch looks like a grey thing
The patch looks greyer than the page
The patch looks how grey things look
The patch looks as if it is grey
The patch looks to be grey

Among the complements here are an adjective phrase (‘grey’), a noun phrase (‘a grey thing’), a preposition phrase (‘of a grey colour’), a comparative phrase (‘like a grey thing’, ‘greyer than the page’), a relative clause headed by ‘how’ (‘how grey things look’), a phrase headed by ‘as if’ (‘as if it is grey’), and a ‘to’-infinitive (‘to be grey’).

More carefully, I should say that surface form *suggests* that we use complements from a variety of syntactic categories. It could be, instead, that the complements include one or more constituents that are not visible on the surface, disguising the fact that they are actually all of the same syntactic category. If that’s so then the reason that I am about to consider, and reject, doesn’t even get started.

But even if we do use expressions from a variety of syntactic categories this does not show that we use 'look' with more than one meaning in these uses. For consider the 'live'-sentences below:

I live here
I live in Wagga Wagga
I live near Canberra
I live where my parents live
I live closer to Sydney than Melbourne

In these sentences we use complements from a variety of syntactic categories – a noun phrase ('here'), a preposition phrase ('in Wagga Wagga', 'near Canberra'), a relative clause headed by 'where' ('where My parents live'), and a comparative phrase ('closer to Sydney than Melbourne') (in these examples I am using 'live' in the sense of 'reside', rather than 'be alive'). But in these sentences we does not use 'live' with a variety of meanings – we use it with a single meaning (I take this to be clear). So the fact that we use a verb with complements from a variety of syntactic categories does not show that we use the verb with more than one meaning. (What's going on in the case of 'live', I suggest, is that we have various ways of specifying a location, more or less specifically. I would say the same of the 'look' case too.)

Paraphrasing

The verb 'pick' is ambiguous. What we (generally) mean by it in the first example below is different from what we (generally) mean by it in the second:

John picked some strawberries for dinner
John picked the door on the left

One way to see that what we mean is different in each case is to come up with a paraphrase of each and compare them. In the first example (but not the second) we mean something like 'pluck' – it is true of events which can (near enough) be described as 'plucking' events; in the second example (but not the first) we mean something like 'choose' – it is true of events which can (near enough) be described as 'choosing' events. Since plucking is not choosing, what we mean by 'pick' in each case is different. Call this *evidence from paraphrasing* that 'pick' is ambiguous.

Is there any evidence from paraphrasing that 'look' is ambiguous? There is, when we consider *all* uses of 'look' sentences (not restricting to visual experience uses). Consider the following:

John looked embarrassed
John looked at his mum

In the first example above (but not the second), 'look' means something like 'visually appear', whereas in the second example (but not the first) it means something like 'visually observe', or 'gaze'.

But there is not, as far as I can tell, any evidence from paraphrasing when we confine our attention to visual experience uses of 'look' sentences. I cannot see any way to show, by coming up with different paraphrases, that we mean different things by 'look' when we use them to describe visual experiences. Consider the following sample:

The patch looks grey
He looks a character
Those women look in love

She looks like a duck
The top line looks longer than the bottom line
John's mum looks how she always looks
It looks as if these tomatoes are ripe
They look to be tired

When trying to paraphrase 'look' in each case I keep coming up with more or less the same thing, something like 'visually appears'.

It is important that the task in each case is to paraphrase just the word 'look', not the whole sentence. We would expect there to be differences between the meanings of these sentences as a whole, differences that we might be able to bring out by paraphrasing the sentences. But we are looking for differences in the meaning of the word 'look' in these sentences, and evidence for that must come from paraphrasing just the word 'look'.

Non-contradiction

Coming up with evidence from paraphrasing that a word is ambiguous might require us to be *explicitly* aware of any ambiguity, so perhaps the reason why there is no evidence from paraphrasing that 'look' is ambiguous in visual experiences uses of 'look' sentences is *not* that it's not ambiguous, but that we are not explicitly aware of the ambiguity. The next kind of evidence does not require explicit awareness, just *implicit* awareness.

Another way to see that 'pick' is ambiguous is to see that there is a reading of the sentence below on which it expresses a non-contradictory proposition, a reading that is made more salient by emphasising the second occurrence of 'pick'.

John picked the door on the left, but he didn't *pick* the door on the left

Call this *evidence from non-contradiction* that 'pick' is ambiguous.

It is important that the reading in question is made more salient by emphasising the second occurrence of 'pick', rather than by emphasising some other expression in the sentence. If there were a non-contradictory reading of the sentence that is made more salient by emphasising the second occurrence of 'door' instead, then that might be evidence that 'door' is ambiguous, but it would not be evidence that 'pick' is ambiguous:

John picked the door on the left, but he didn't pick the *door* on the left

Is there evidence from non-contradiction that 'look' is ambiguous? There is, when we consider 'look' in *all* of its uses. Consider the sentence below:

John looked over the moon, but he didn't *look* over the moon

There is a reading of this sentence, one that is made more salient by emphasising the second occurrence of 'look', on which it expresses a non-contradictory proposition (a proposition that is true if John visually appeared over the moon but did not direct his gaze over the moon).

But there is no evidence, as far as I can tell, when we just consider visual experience uses of 'look' sentences. None of the sentences below has a non-contradictory reading that is made more salient by emphasising the second occurrence of 'look', and as far as I know the same is true for all visual experience uses of 'look' sentences.

The patch looks grey, but it doesn't *look* grey
He looks a character, but he doesn't *look* to be a character
Those women look in love, but they don't *look* to be in love
She looks like a duck, but she doesn't *look* like a duck
The top line looks longer than the bottom line, but it doesn't *look* longer than the bottom line
John's mum looks how she always looks, but she doesn't *look* how she always looks
It looks as if these tomatoes are ripe, but it doesn't *look* as if these tomatoes are ripe
They look to be tired, but they don't *look* to be tired

Conjunction reduction

Because 'pick' is ambiguous we have the following phenomenon. Suppose that John wants to give a flower to his girlfriend; he doesn't know much about flowers, so his mum chooses an appropriate one in the garden, which he then plucks; but he *does* know a lot about timing, so he chooses the best moment to give the flower. There is a reading of the first sentence below on which it expresses a proposition that is true in these circumstances. But any such reading of the conjunction-reduced second sentence requires understanding 'pick' in a certain kind of weird way, sometimes called a *zeugmatic* reading of 'pick' (see Quine (1960, p. 130)).

John picked a rose and John picked the ideal time to give it
John picked a rose and the ideal time to give it

Call this *evidence from conjunction reduction* that 'pick' is ambiguous.

We get the same phenomenon for 'look' when considered in all of its uses. If John appeared embarrassed while gazing out the window, then there is a true interpretation of the first sentence below, but any true interpretation of the second requires a *zeugmatic* reading of 'look'.

John looked out the window and John looked embarrassed
John looked out the window and embarrassed

But we do not get this phenomenon for 'look' in our visual experience uses of 'look' sentences. For any circumstances in which there is a true interpretation of the first sentences below, there is a true interpretation of the second sentence that does not require a *zeugmatic* reading of 'look'.

The patch looks grey and the patch looks a square thing
The patch looks grey and a square thing

John looks like a philosopher and John looks as if he thinks like one too
John looks like a philosopher and as if he thinks like one too

The sky looks how it usually looks but the sky looks slightly less cloudy
The sky looks how it usually looks but slightly less cloudy

Bill looks smarter than Ben but Bill looks to be less wise
Bill looks smarter than Ben but to be less wise

There may be pragmatic reasons why it is odd to use instances of some of these – it may, for example, be misleading to use 'and' rather than 'but'. But to be misleading in that kind of way is not to be *zeugmatic*.

Question formation

Because 'pick' is ambiguous there are contexts in which the conversation below would be perfectly felicitous (note the emphasis on 'pick' when A repeats her question):

A: What did John pick?

B: He picked a rose.

A: No, that's not what I meant. What did John *pick*?

If 'look' is ambiguous then there should be similarly felicitous conversations. And indeed there are, when we consider 'look' in *all* of its uses – there are contexts in which the conversation below is felicitous (take a context in which John looked through binoculars at the couple next door and what he saw made him look embarrassed).

A: How did John look?

B: He looked through binoculars.

A: No, that's not what I meant. How did John *look*?

If we use 'look' with more than one meaning in our visual experience uses of 'look' sentences then there should be similarly felicitous conversations. But as far as I can tell there are no such conversations. There is no context in which the conversation below, for example, is felicitous.

A: How does the patch look?

B: The patch looks as if it is grey.

A: No, that's not what I meant. How does the patch *look*?

The emphasis is important. There are felicitous conversations with different emphasis. For example, consider a context in which there are two patches. Then:

A: How does the patch look?

B: The patch looks as if it is grey.

A: No, that's not what I meant. How does *the patch* look?

A stronger conclusion?

I have argued that there is no evidence from syntactic variety, from paraphrasing, from non-contradiction, from conjunction reduction, or from question formation that we use 'look' with more than one meaning in our visual experience uses of 'look' sentences. Perhaps this can be made into an argument for a stronger conclusion, that we *don't* use 'look' with more than one meaning in our visual experience uses of 'look' sentences. The argument goes as follows: if we did then we would have evidence of at least one of these kinds; we don't have evidence of any of these kinds; therefore, we don't. I'm not sure whether the first premise of this argument is true.

Do we mean anything else by 'look' sentences?

In the previous section I argued that we have no good reason to think that we mean different things by 'look' in our visual experience uses of 'look' sentences. What about the sentences themselves? Do we mean anything by them that is not accounted for by the theory that I develop in Breckenridge (2018)?

I will consider a fairly exhaustive list of purported uses of 'look' sentences, and argue in each case that either (a) we have no such use, or (b) if we do have such a use then it is not a visual experience

use, or (c) if we do have such a use then it is already accounted for by the theory that I have developed. If this is right then we have no good reason to think that we mean anything by our visual experience uses of 'look' sentences that is not accounted for by the theory that I have developed.

I start by considering five purported uses that I think are of the second kind – if we do have such uses then they are not visual experience uses.

Tentative assertion use

It has been claimed (e.g. by Price (1932, 1941, 1964), Quinton (1955, 1973), and Ayer (1940, 1956)) that we sometimes use 'look' sentences to make tentative assertions. For example, we might use 'The patch looks grey' to tentatively assert that the patch is grey. If we use 'The patch looks grey' to *tentatively* assert that the patch is grey then we use it to *assert* that the patch is grey, because tentative assertion is assertion, in which case we must mean by the sentence that the patch is grey. So the view can be put as follows:

There is a use of 'O looks F' on which we mean that O is F

Non-visual use

Price (1932, 1941, 1964), Jackson (1977, pp. 30-1), and Leeds (1975, p. 199) have all claimed that we have a non-visual use of 'look' sentences. They would say something like this:

There is a use of 'It looks (to S) as if P' on which we mean that there is evidence (not necessarily visual) (for S) that P

Inclination-to-believe use

Price (1932, 1941, 1964), Chisholm (1957, 1965, 1966), and Travis (2004) all make something like the following claim:

There is a use of 'O looks F to S' on which we mean that S is inclined to believe, on the basis of her visual experience of O, that O is F

Chisholm calls this the 'epistemic' use of 'look' sentences; I shall follow Price in calling it the *inclination-to-believe* use.

What-would-be-judged use

Vesey (1956, 1971a, 1971b) and Dretske (1995) each make what amounts to the following claim:

There is a use of 'O looks F to S' on which we mean that if S were to judge, on the basis of how O looks to her, and with no reason to think otherwise, she would judge that O is F

Vesey calls this the 'epistemic' use of 'look'; Dretske calls it the 'doxastic' use. I will call it the *what-would-be-judged* use.

Visual evidence use

Jackson (1977) makes something like the following claim:

There is a use of 'It looks (to S) as if P' on which we mean that there is visually acquired evidence (for S) that P

He calls this the 'epistemic' use, but to avoid confusion with how others have used the 'epistemic' label I shall call this the *visual evidence* use.

I hope that it's clear enough that if there are these uses then none of them is a visual experience use, because none of them is a use on which we describe visual experience. We might be describing something that is somehow *connected* with a visual experience, but we are not describing visual experience itself.

Comparative use

Various people (for example Chisholm (1957, pp. 45-6), Vesey (1956, 1971a, 1971b), Jackson (1977, pp. 31-3), Travis (2004), Leeds (1975, p. 200), Dretske (1995, pp. 67-9) and Pettit (2003)) have claimed something like the following:

There is a use of 'O looks F (to S)' on which we mean that O looks (to S) the way F things look

Vesey calls this the 'resemblance' use of 'look' sentences; I will follow Chisholm and Jackson in calling it the *comparative* use.

None would agree that 'the way F things look' is the right definite description to use here – each would use a more qualified one. Chisholm would use 'the way F things ordinarily look', or 'the way F things might ordinarily be expected to look'. Jackson would use 'the way an F thing normally looks in C to S', for certain conditions C and observers S determined by the context of utterance. Leeds would prefer 'the way F things usually look in daylight', or 'the way F things usually look in standard conditions'. Dretske would add reference to an observer, and also his 'discriminatory clause': by 'O looks F to S' we mean that O looks to S the way F things normally look to S, and O looks different to S from certain other non-F things. Despite these differences, they all agree that once the definite description is suitably qualified, perhaps in a way that allows the meaning of 'O looks F (to S)' to vary across contexts of utterance, the claim above is true.

I agree that we do have such a use, and that it is a visual experience use. But it is already accounted for by the theory that I develop in Breckenridge (2018). I would formulate the claim as follows:

There is a use of 'O looks F (to S)' on which we mean that O looks (to S) the maximally specific way w such that it is generically true that F things look w

Phenomenal use

Price (1932, 1941, 1964), Quinton (1955, 1973), Vesey (1956, 1971a, 1971b), Chisholm (1957, 1965, 1966), and Jackson (1977) all claim that we sometimes use 'look' sentences to *directly describe* our visual experiences. I think we can understand the claim to be this:

There is a use of 'O looks F to S' on which we mean that S's visual experience of O, or some feature of the experience, is F

Price calls this the 'basic' use, Vesey calls it the 'optical' use, and Chisholm calls it the 'non-comparative' use. I will follow Jackson in calling it the *phenomenal* use.

I take it that if we do have such a use then it is with a restricted class of complements of 'look' – colour adjectives such as 'grey', and perhaps also shape adjectives such as 'square'. It would be implausible to extend it to adjectives such as 'heavy' – it is implausible that there is a use of 'The patch looks heavy to you' on which we mean that your visual experience of the patch, or some feature of it, is heavy, since visual experiences and their features are not the kinds of things that can be heavy. Jackson explicitly acknowledges this restriction: "The phenomenal use is characterized by being explicitly tied to terms for colour, shape and/or distance... That is, instead of terms like 'cow', 'house', 'happy', we have, in the phenomenal use, terms like 'red', 'square', and 'longer than'" (1977, p. 33).

If we do have such a use of 'look' sentences then it is clearly a visual experience use. But I don't see any reason to think that we have such a use. I will consider and reject the reasons that have been given for thinking that we do. Quinton and Vesey simply claim without argument that we have such a use. Chisholm, Price and Jackson each give arguments – I will consider their arguments in turn.

Chisholm

Chisholm (1965, pp. 50-3) discusses 'appear' rather than 'look'. I take it that he would be happy to say the same things about 'look', so I'll modify his discussion to 'look', to match the rest of this chapter.

Chisholm argues that we have a phenomenal use (he calls it the 'noncomparative' use) by appealing to something like the sentence below:

Things which are grey usually look grey in daylight

He claims that this sentence is ambiguous, between a reading on which it is 'analytic' and a reading on which it is 'synthetic'. On its analytic reading it can be paraphrased using the first sentence below, and on its synthetic reading it can be paraphrased using the second.

Things which are grey usually look in daylight the way things which are grey usually look in daylight

There is a certain way of looking, looking grey, such that things which are grey happen to usually appear that way in daylight

The reason why it has these two readings, Chisholm seems to think, is that 'look' itself has two readings – it can be read in the comparative sense, but also in a distinct phenomenal sense. When 'look' is read in its comparative sense, to look grey in daylight is to look the way things which are grey usually look in daylight, and this accounts for the analytic reading. When 'look' is read in its phenomenal sense, however, 'looks grey' is an unanalysable predicate, and it is this sense of 'look' that accounts for the synthetic reading.

Leeds (1975) argues, against Chisholm, that if there is such an ambiguity there is no need to think that it is due to an ambiguity in 'look'. I think that Leeds is right. Here I will present my own version of what is essentially Leeds' argument.

Leeds suggests, and I agree with him, that talk about the sentence being ambiguous between analytic and synthetic readings is unclear, and that the ambiguity Chisholm is pointing to is better brought out by embedding the sentence in a modal context. Thus, rather than the original sentence being ambiguous between analytic and synthetic readings, let's take the fact to be explained to be that the sentence below is ambiguous between true and false readings.

Necessarily: things which are grey usually look grey in daylight

Chisholm's claim then translates as this: this sentence is ambiguous, between a true reading and a false reading, and this is because 'look' is ambiguous, between a comparative sense and a phenomenal sense.

The problem for Chisholm is that if there is a comparative reading of 'look' which is as Chisholm claims it is, then it alone can account for the true and false readings of this sentence. On the comparative reading of 'look', it can be paraphrased as follows:

Necessarily: things which are grey usually look in daylight the way things which are grey usually look in daylight

This sentence is structurally ambiguous, between a reading on which the definite description 'the way things which are grey usually look in daylight' is within the scope of the operator 'necessarily', and a reading on which the operator 'necessarily' is within the scope of the definite description 'the way things which are grey usually look in daylight'. We can represent the two readings as follows:

Necessarily: the way w such that grey things usually look w in daylight is such that: grey things usually look w in daylight

The way w such that grey things usually look w in daylight is such that: necessarily: grey things usually look w in daylight

The first is true but the second is false (it might have been that grey things usually look w' in daylight, where w' is not the way grey things actually look in daylight). So the ambiguity here can be explained as a structural ambiguity in the sentence, rather than as a lexical ambiguity in the verb 'look'. There is, then, despite what Chisholm thinks, no good reason here to think that we have a use of 'look' sentences that is distinct from the comparative use.

Price

Here is an argument in the style of ones given by Price (1964, pp. 15-16):

If the patch looks grey in the comparative sense, then the patch looks the way grey things look. Why does the patch look the way grey things look? Because the patch looks grey. This is an informative answer. Since it is an informative answer, we cannot be using 'the patch looks grey' comparatively, because then it would amount to saying that the patch looks the way grey things look because the patch looks the way grey things look, and that is not informative. Thus, there is a use of 'The patch looks grey' which is not the comparative use.

If this argument is sound it does not show that the extra use is the phenomenal use, but it does at least show that there is an extra use of 'The patch looks grey', in addition to the comparative use.

Nevertheless, I do not think that the argument is sound, because it has a false premise. The argument goes as follows. Consider the following two sentences:

The patch looks the way grey things look, because the patch looks grey

The patch looks the way grey things look, because the patch looks the way grey things look

There is a reading of the first sentence above on which it is informative; but there is no reading of the second sentence on which it is informative; so there is a reading of 'The patch looks grey' on which it does not mean 'The patch looks the way grey things look', for otherwise there would be no

such difference between the two sentences; so there is a use of 'The patch looks grey' distinct from the comparative use.

But the second sentence *does* have a reading on which it is informative – at least one that is just as informative as any reading of the first. Consider the analogous sentence below:

John loves the prettiest girl in class, because John loves the prettiest girl in class

This has a reading on which it is not informative. But it also has a reading on which it is informative. The informative reading can be given as follows:

John loves the prettiest girl in class, because John loves x, and x is the prettiest girl in class

In the same way, the second sentence above has a reading on which it is informative, a reading which can be given as follows:

The patch looks the way grey things look, because the patch looks w, and w is the way grey things look

This reading is at least as informative as any reading of the first sentence on which it is informative. For the first to be informative we need to understand it as meaning something like 'The patch looks the way grey things look, because the patch looks grey (and that's the way grey things look)'. This is no more informative than the informative reading of the second sentence.

Jackson

Jackson (1977, ch. 2) argues that we have a use of 'look' sentences which is neither the comparative use nor the inclination-to-believe use (which he calls the 'epistemic' use). His argument is this:

We have a use of 'look' sentences on which what we mean by 'The patch looks grey' cannot be given by reference to the way grey things look to certain observers in certain conditions, nor by reference to beliefs; if this were the comparative use then what we mean by 'The patch looks grey' could be given by reference to the way grey things look to certain observers in certain conditions, so it is not the comparative use; if it were the inclination-to-believe use then what we mean by 'The patch looks grey' could be given by reference to beliefs, so it is not the inclination-to-believe use; thus, it is neither the comparative use nor the inclination-to-believe use.

He takes this additional use to be the phenomenal use.

I agree with Jackson that we have a use of 'look' sentences on which what we mean by 'The patch looks grey' cannot be given by reference to the way grey things look to certain observers in certain conditions, nor by reference to beliefs. But I disagree with Jackson that this use is not the comparative use, because, unlike Jackson, I think that what we mean by the comparative use need not (in fact, should not) be given by reference to certain observers in certain conditions.

Jackson takes it that the comparative use of 'look' sentences is such that there is some expression, S, which refers to or quantifies over certain people, and some expression, C, which refers to or quantifies over certain conditions, such that the following is true:

By 'The patch looks grey to you' we mean that the patch looks to you the way grey things look to S in C

I believe, contrary to this, that by 'The patch looks grey to you' we just mean that the patch looks to you the way grey things look, where 'the way grey things look' is to be understood generically. Jackson's arguments do not work against this account of the comparative use. I will consider Jackson's argument that what we mean by 'The patch looks grey to you' cannot be given by reference to the way grey things look to certain observers in certain conditions, and briefly explain how it does not show that what we mean cannot be given in terms of the way grey things look, understood generically.

Jackson argues that there are no expressions S and C which make the sentence above true but non-trivial.

He starts by considering the following account:

By 'The patch looks grey to you' we mean that the patch looks to you the way grey things look to *you in normal circumstances*

He points out that this cannot be right. Suppose that you see in shades of red, but with extremely good red vision – you can make amongst reds the same number of discriminations that a normal sighted person can make amongst colours in general. Then it might be true that the patch looks the way grey things look to you in normal circumstances, but false that the patch looks grey to you.

He next considers an account that refers to people other than you:

By 'The patch looks grey to you' we mean that the patch looks to you the way grey things look to *most people in normal circumstances*

He points out that how things look to you does not depend on the existence of other people – things might look grey to you, even if no one else did, does, or will exist. So it will not do to make reference to other people.

He also points out that there is a problem explaining what 'normal circumstances' are in a way that does not make these accounts trivial. What are normal circumstances? Perhaps circumstances in daylight:

By 'The patch looks grey to you' we mean that the patch looks to you the way grey things look to *you in daylight*

But your eyes might be dazzled in daylight in such a way that grey things do not look grey to you in daylight, but they do look grey to you under low intensity light instead.

He next considers explaining 'normal circumstances' as being circumstances which best facilitate colour discrimination. But, he points out, these are circumstances that exaggerate colour differences, so they are circumstances in which things look more different in colour than they really are, so do not look the colour they are.

The only way of correctly specifying what normal conditions are, he concludes, makes these accounts trivial: normal circumstances are those in which grey things look grey to you. But by 'The patch looks grey to you' we do not mean something trivial.

Jackson then argues that there is reason to think that the account cannot be right, for any actual observers or actual circumstances. There might be a shade of colour, call it *c*, such that the patch

looks c to you even though no object actually is c. Then it would be true that the patch looks c to you but not true that the patch looks the way c things look to you (or anyone else) in normal circumstances (or any other circumstances) – since there are no c things there is no such way. This will be case for any value of S that is an actual observer and for any value of C that is an actual condition.

Jackson considers a counterfactual fix:

By ‘The patch looks grey to you’ we mean that the patch looks to you the way grey things would look to you in normal circumstances if there were any

He argues (successfully, I think) that this cannot be right either.

Jackson concludes that by ‘The patch looks grey to you’ we do not mean that the patch looks to you the way grey things look to S in C, for any values of S and C.

I agree – we will not be able to find appropriate values for S and C. But I think that we don’t need to in order to state what we mean by the comparative use. According to the theory that I develop in Breckenridge (2018), by ‘The patch looks grey to you’ we mean that the patch looks to you the way w such that grey things look w. Here, ‘grey things look w’ is to be understood generically; it expresses a relation between the property of being an event in which a grey thing looks some way to someone, and the property of being an event that occurs in way w. A generic like this can be true even if there are no actual events in which a grey thing looks some way to someone. In particular, it can be true even if there are no actual grey things.

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