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**First-Person-Based Genericity and Objects of Perception**

Friederike Moltman

CNRS – Université Côte d’Azur

**1. Introduction**

Structure of the talk:

- Recall standard semantics of sentences about taste

- Point out the role of first-person-based genericity in sentences about taste

- Distinguish between verbal and adjectival/nominal taste predicates

- Argue for a complex semantics of taste predicates involving an ontology of tastes:

‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ tastes:

genericity may be due to ‘objective’ tastes, which do not involve first-person-based genericity

- Generalize the point to other perceptual reports, motivating an ontology of tastes, looks, smells, sounds, feelings

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**2. Predicates of taste and first-person-based genericity**

**2.1. Standard views of predicates of taste**

The standard view about predicates of taste

(1) a. Coffee is tasty.

b. Coffee tastes good.

c. Coffee is not tasty.

*Tasty* denotes

- a relation between objects and judges

- a property of objects, with judges acting as parameters of evaluations

Contextualist and relativist views:

(2) a. tasty(coffee, jc)

b. [tasty(coffee)]w,tc

Problems explaining faultless disagreement:

How can speakers when aware of the relavization to a judge (taste parameter) find that they are both right while disagreeing?

Analysis of sentences about taste in terms of first-person-based genericity, involving simulation (Moltmann 2010, 2012):

(3) a. Everyone as someone the speaker identifies with has a good-tasting experience of

coffee.

b. λx[everyone as someone x identifies with: a tastes good to x]]

c. λx[Gn y qua x identifies with y, taste good to(a, x)]

The role of first-person genericity for faultless disagreement

What matters is whether agents can project themselves onto (or simulate) the same range of people on the basis of their first-person experience (or simulated experience).

Further support for the involvement of genericity

Co-variance of the judge or experiencer position with generic *one* and arbitrary PRO:

(4) a. When *one* drinks milk cold it tastes *pro* good.

b. It is pleasant *pro* PROarb to sit on the sofa.

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**3. Differences among taste predicates**

**3.1. Adjectives vs. verbs**

Pearson’s (2021) observations:

Verbal taste predicates permit non-generic readings as well as bound-variable readings:

they are ‘stage-level.

Adjectival taste predicates are always generic or individual-level.

(5) a. The tea tastes good in a China cup.

a’. ??? The tea is tasty in a China cup.

b. St Pauls’ looks beautiful today.

b’. ??? St Paul’s is beautiful today.

c. Pineapples always taste good. (in all situations)

c’. Pineapples are always tasty. (all of them)

e. When St Paul’s looks beautiful, …

e’. ??? When St Paul’s is beautiful, …

First-person covert indexical reading (Pearson 2021):

(6) a. When I am hungry, beans taste good.

b. ?? When I am hungry beans are tasty.

First-person generic bound-variable reading:

(7) a. When one is hungry, beans taste good.

b. ?? When one is hungry, beans are tasty.

Verbal taste predicates are ‘stage-level’:

allow for referential or bound variable construal of experiencer argument as well as generic construal.

Adjectival taste predicates are ‘individual level’:

they are always generic (Chierchia 1995).

Semantics based on position of generic operator:

(8) a. This cake tastes good

b. Gn y [tastes good (to)](this cake, y)

c. [tastes good (to)](this cake, speaker)

(9) a. This cake is tasty.

b. This cake [Gn [is tasty *pro*]

c. [Gn [is tasty *pro*](x) iff x is tasty to everyone in any (relevant) situation.

Some issues for the genericity account of adjectival taste predicates

- compositional semantics of *tastes good*

- explanation of stage-level/ individual-level correlation with verbal and adjectival predicates

- semantics of taste nouns and related nouns: *the taste of coffee, the look of St Paul’s*

- role of evaluative predicate (‘good’):

Taste predicates are not always subjective, giving rise to faultless disagreement

(10) a. Sugar tastes sweet.

b. ?? I find that the cake tastes sweet. (ok only when meant something like ‘too sweet’)

c. ?? I find that coffee tastes bitter. (ok only when meant something like ‘unusually

bitter’)

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**4. Taste nouns and the ontology of tastes**

The use of taste nouns

(11) a. Coffee has a good taste.

b. Coffee has a bitter taste.

c. The taste of coffee is bitter / good.

d. ??? Coffee has a good taste to me.

Tastes as objects of knowledge:

(12) a. John knows the taste of coffee.

b. Mary recognized the taste of coffee.

(13) a. I know how coffee tastes. (namely that it tastes bitter / ? good)

b. I know what taste coffee has.

c. I know how good coffee tastes.

(14) a. I find that the taste of the coffee is good.

b. I find that the coffee is tasty.

c. I know the taste of the coffee and I consider it good.

‘Subjective’ tastes vs ‘objective’ tastes

Response-dependent tropes

- of individuals occurrence independently, of kinds

- of individuals, occurrence-dependent

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**5. Parallel with looks**

(15) a. The statue looks great.

b. The status looks broken.

Faultless disagreement with (15a), not with (15b) as it relates to ‘broken’

Generic *one*:

(16) The statue looks great when *one* stands at the window.

McGrawth (2021):

*Viewpoint-relative looks* vs. ‘looks in the round’ or *overall looks*

(17) a. The statue has different looks, depending on the light and where one stands.

b. I like the look of the statue.

c. I know what the statue looks like.

The role of looks

- Looks as reasons for perceptual beliefs (McGrath 2017, 2018)

- Looks as part of the semantics of looks-reports

- Looks as denotations of the noun *look*

McGrawth (2020):

Against subjectivist and dispositionalist accounts of looks:

looks do not require experiences by agents; they are re public entities.

Both viewpoint-relative looks and overall looks are experiencer-independent:

(18) a. The statue would look the same even if no one had looked at it.

b. The statue would have the same looks from the different angles even if no one had

looked at it.

Against dispositionalist accounts of looks:

We do not ‘see’ or ‘recognize’ dispositions when we see or recognize a look.

The ontology of looks

Two options:

- as sets of sensible properties

- as kinds of (collections of) response-dependent tropes

McGrawth

View-point-relative looks:

properties of presenting light of a certain character to the viewpoint.

Looks on the round (overall looks):

what it is about an object that grounds the possibilities of its viewpoint-relative looks.

Do the arguments carry over to tastes?

Occurrence-independent tastes do not seem to require experiences:

(19) a. ? If one can no longer drink coffee, coffee can no longer taste bitter.

b. If no one had tasted coffee, coffee would still have a bitter taste.

(20) a. ? If no one had tasted coffee, coffee would still taste bitter.

b. If no one had tasted coffee, coffee would still have a bitter taste.

(21) a. ? If one can no longer drink coffee, coffee can no longer taste good.

b. (?) If one can lo longer drink coffee, coffee would still have a good taste.

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**6. Generalization to other forms of perception**

Sounds

(22) a. This flute sounds nice / unusual. (only ‘nice’ gives rise to faultless disagreement)

b. This flute has a nice / unusual sound. (only ‘nice’ gives rise to faultless disagreement)

c. The sound of the flute is nice / unusual. (only ‘nice’ gives rise to faultless

disagreement)

(23) a. I find that the flute sounds nice.

b. ? I find that the flute sounds unusual.

(24) a. I find that the sound of the flute is nice.

d. ? I find that the sound of the flute is unusual.

Smells

(25) a. The perfume smells fruity / nice.

b. The perfume has a fruity smell.

(26) a. I find that the perfume smells nice.

b. ? I find that the smell of the perfume is fruity.

On the ontology of tastes, looks, sounds, smells

Properties of looks: properties of shape, size: inherited from object

Properties of sounds, smells, tastes: not inherited from object

Summary

Distinguish:

1. subjective evaluation of subjective perceptual occurrence

2. first-person generic evaluation of subjective perceptual occurrence

3. subjective evaluation of a public perceptual object

4. first-person-based generic evaluation of a public perceptual object

Feelings: objective – subjective difference

(27) a. I don’t know what it feels *pro* like *PROarb* to be praised by everyone.

b. I know the pleasure of good company.

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**7. *As if*-clauses**

*As if*-clause complements of impersonal perception verbs give support for ‘public’ situation-relative perceptual objects

*As if*-clauses fill in the evaluative slot in impersonal perceptual reports:

First-person person-based genericity:

(28) a. This looks / tastes /smells / sounds as if it was very old.

b. The landscape looks as if it had not rained for weeks.

(29) The massage feels as if one was being tortured.

Semantics based on perceptual objects:

(30) a. x looks as if S

b. There is a perceptual occurrence with a as basis that is similar to the one that matches

the situational content of S.

c. ∃e(look(e, x, y) & e ~ f([S],x)

Certain sorts of situations come with particular, non-subjective perceptual objects

Mapping from situations and objects to perceptual objects

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**8. Implicit situations as objects of perceptual objects**

Agent-centered situations

(31) a. It was nice in Germany.

b. It smells nice here.

*As if-*clauses

(32) a. It looks as if no one had cleaned up.

b. There it looked like no one had cleaned up.

*Like*-clauses

(33) a. It looks like it is going to rain.

b. It sounds like there will be a tempest.

c. It smells like there is a fire nearby.

d. It felt liked it was going to rain.

e. It was as if the sky had quietly kissed the earth .. (Eichendorff)

*When*-clauses characterizing the situation:

(34) a. It is unbearable when one has just lost a parent.

b. It is like that when one is completely unprepared.

Projected situation:

(35) a. It looks like the TV presenter is distracted.

b. It sounds like you are exhausted.

c. There it looks like no one had cleaned up.

Epistemic situations:

(36) a. It seems as if there is no solution to the problem.

b. It looks as if John is innocent.

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**9. Conclusion**

- Recognize the individuation of non-situation-relative, ‘public’ perceptual objects as a source of genericity, distinct from first person-based genericity.

- Those same objects, however, may be the target of first person-based genericity involving their evaluation.

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