**The Metaphysics of Looks**

Key questions:

* What are looks?
* What is it to have a look?
* Are looks, or the having of looks, subjective in some sense?

Kinds of looks:

* Viewpoint-relative
  + Dispositional vs. occurrent having of looks.
* Looks in the round

**Subjectivism**: facts about things having looks are explainable at least in part in terms of mental facts or phenomena. **Objectivism** denies this.

The subjectivism to beat: having a look consists in being disposed to look certain ways to certain sorts of perceivers.

***1. Two Objectivist Views***

Martin’s view: looks are complexes of familiar visible properties that do not vary with viewpoint and do not change with changes in situational factors.

The Jacksonian view: looks are Jacksonian complexes, i.e., complexes of Martin-style looks, along with properties concerning distance away, tilt, orientation, illumination, surrounding scene, medium (and shhh… other features needed to determine a viewpoint-relative look).

***2. Subjectivism***

Internecine disputes:

* what is the nature of perceptual experience?
* Where do the perceivers go – in the look or in the parameters of instantiation?

The subjectivist view to beat (more fully):

* The basic looks are properties of the form *looking way W to S*
* Viewpoint-relative looks are dispositions to have basic looks for perceivers of certain sorts who occupy the viewpoint.

Two problems:

* An object can occurrently have a look despite being unperceived, but this is not possible under subjectivism.
* We see the looks of things, but this is not possible under subjectivism.

***3. The Light Presentation View***

A look of a thing is a property concerning the character of the light it presents (reflects, emits, transmits) to the viewpoint.

For J.J. Gibson, we *pick up* the information in the ambient light, and we can *attend* to it, but we don’t see the shape, color, size, etc. of objects by *seeing* these informative features of the ambient light, nor by seeing what I call looks.

My recommended view: we do see the looks of things, and by virtue of this we can see their shape, color, size, edibility, graspability, etc.

Further refinements (a partial list)

* simultaneous contrast*:* two patches located in different scenes might be identical in the light they reflect to the viewpoint but one might look orange and the other brown.
  + relational features of the light matter as well to whether it is relevantly the same.
* can an object that does not reflect, emit or transmit any light still look dark?
  + perhaps an object can have a look by virtue of features of the light which mark off its contours.

*Is the light-presentation view just the occlusion properties view by another name?*

Noë:

“I propose that we interpret the ambient optic array as the structured space of appearances (e.g. the space of O-properties). The sense of the Gibsonian claim that the ambient optic array specifies the environment (unlike the pattern of irradiation on the retina), is that how things looks specifies how they are.” (2002, 62)

My answer: no.