

The fixed component of relative predicates

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Dimensional, aesthetic and taste predicates (like *tall*, *beautiful*, *tasty*) differ in a number of respects. Most importantly, while dimensional predicates relate to a single metric dimension which is constant across contexts (*tall* constantly relates to height), aesthetic as well as taste predicates are multi-dimensional, with dimensions of various scale levels which may vary from context to context – the dimensions relevant for the beauty of a painting differ crucially from those relevant for the beauty of a landscape.

On the other hand, dimensional, aesthetic and taste predicates exhibit a number of parallels. First, and most importantly, they are relative predicates, that is, their denotation varies across comparison classes and speaker communities. Secondly, the properties they bear on are not inherent to the object but instead ascribed to the object by the speaker. This is obvious in the case of *beautiful* and *tasty*, but it also holds for *tall* – being tall is not a matter of fact (even though height can be measured). Thirdly, dimensional, aesthetic and taste predicates may occur (in their positive form) embedded under subjective attitude verbs like German *finden*.

In the talk, I will present a semantic interpretation for aesthetic predicates (and taste predicates) based on Hare (1952), distinguishing between a fixed evaluative meaning component – calling something *beautiful* means commending it – and a quasi-denotational meaning component given by criteria varying across comparison classes and speaker communities. The core claim will then be that the standard referred to in the interpretation of dimensional predicates (stating that from a certain degree on objects 'stand out' or are 'noteworthy' or 'significant') results from a bleached form of commending in the sense of Hare. Thus dimensional predicates include (a bleached form) of a fixed evaluative component.

From this perspective, the major difference between dimensional predicates on the one side and aesthetic and taste predicates on the other lies in the fact that the former are specialized in relating to one fixed metric dimension. This perspective will help to explain the parallels in behavior of the three predicate classes and, moreover, help to explain why languages may have predicates without a regular (constant) denotation (in a given world): Such predicates include a fixed evaluative component.