

Showing, Sensing, and Seeming, Dominic Gregory. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xii + 230. H/b ???.

Dominic Gregory's *Showing, Sensing, and Seeming* offers an intriguing theory of "distinctively sensory representations" --- a category which Gregory takes to include photographs, pictures, audio recordings, films, mental images (e.g. a mental image of a red cube), and sensory memories (e.g. an auditory memory of hearing a loud screeching noise). The book's main thesis, articulated in the Introduction and Chapter 1, is that these diverse specimens are distinguished by their intimate connection with our sensory states. For example, a picture shows things as looking a certain way, an auditory memory show things as sounding a certain way, and an olfactory mental image shows things as smelling a certain way. More generally, sensory representations "show things as standing sensorily certain ways" (p. 10). In contrast, the sentence "A red cube is resting on a round table" may accurately *describe* a scene, but it does not *show* how things look when one perceives the scene.

Chapter 3 develops this idea into a theory of *distinctively sensory contents*. A distinctively sensory content is *subjectively informative*: it specifies a class of sensory states by identifying *what it is like* to instantiate those states. To illustrate, suppose I encounter a photograph of a red cube. The photograph specifies a class of visual states in which I seem to see, from a suitable spatial perspective, a red cube with suitable visual properties. It specifies these states by specifying qualitative characteristics shared by the states. Thus, the photograph has a content that divides all possible visual states into two classes: states in which things look the way the photograph shows them as looking, and states in which things do not look that way.

Subsequent chapters apply Chapter 3's theory to an impressive range of phenomena within philosophy of mind, aesthetics, and epistemology. Chapters 6 and 7 discuss pictorial representation. Chapter 8 addresses the epistemic status of distinctively sensory records (e.g. photographs, audiotape recordings, or sensory memories). Philosophers of mind will take particular interest in Chapter 5, which discusses the *imagery debate* from cognitive science. The main issue is whether we should recognize "mental images" with a pictorial format that differs significantly from the propositional format of high-level propositional attitudes. Stephen Kosslyn (*Image and Mind*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980) advocates a pictorialist position, while Zenon Pylyshyn ("Mental Imagery: In Search of a Theory," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 25 (2002), pp. 157-238) advocates an anti-pictorialist position. Gregory favors anti-pictorialism. He agrees with Pylyshyn that we can explain relevant behavioral and phenomenological aspects of mental imagery by citing distinctively sensory *contents*, without positing a special pictorial *format* that encodes those contents.

At every stage, Gregory offers a fresh viewpoint. Rather than borrow a framework developed by previous authors, he builds his account from scratch. Each page exudes a spirit of intrepid exploration, tempered by judicious assessment of the ensuing complexities.

One issue raised by Gregory's view is how it connects with the literature on *qualitative* versus *representational* aspects of mentality. Philosophers vigorously debate how these two aspects relate to one another, especially for perceptual states. Does the representational content of a perceptual state supervene upon its qualitative character? Does the qualitative character of a perceptual state (*what it is like* to be in that state) supervene upon its representational content? Gregory tends to move rather freely between qualitative and representational concerns. For example, he repeatedly mentions "visual sensations." I often felt unsure whether this phrase was

meant to denote visual states, the contents of visual states, qualitative aspects of visual states, some combination thereof, or something else altogether.

On Gregory's approach, sensory content and qualitative character are tightly linked. Most fundamentally, a distinctively sensory content specifies what it is like to instantiate associated sensory states. Moreover, distinctively sensory representations frequently specify representational contents of associated sensory states *by way of* specifying those states' qualitative aspects (pp. 56-57). For example, a photograph of a red cube specifies what it is like to be in certain visual states that represent presence of a red cube, and the photograph thereby specifies representational contents that represent presence of a red cube.

Yet one might question how closely qualitative and representational aspects of mentality are linked. Many philosophers invoke *spectrum inversion* to argue that qualitative character does not supervene upon representational content or that representational content does not supervene upon qualitative character. Ned Block's Inverted Earth thought experiment ("Inverted Earth," *Philosophical Perspectives* 4 (1990), pp. 53-79) purports to describe twins who associate the distal color red with different qualia. When the twins see a red fire truck, then (according to Block) they instantiate perceptual states with the same representational content but different qualitative characters. When the twins observe two suitably different distal scenes, then (according to Block) they instantiate perceptual states with the same qualitative character but different representational contents. If Block is correct, then categorization of perceptual states through representational content is orthogonal to categorization through qualitative character. Hence, it is not clear that one should link sensory content and qualitative character as tightly as Gregory's approach requires. In particular, it is not clear that anything worthy of the name "sensory content" suffices to fix qualitative aspects of perceptual states. Nor is it clear that one

specifies the representational contents of perceptual states by specifying what it is like to be in those states. Now, the literature suggests many maneuvers through which one might try to preserve a tight link between sensory content and qualitative character. I would be curious to hear which such maneuvers Gregory favors and how those maneuvers relate to his overall agenda.

A related issue concerns how exactly we should construe talk about “sensory content” in the first place. It is common nowadays to elucidate content by citing *correctness* or *veridicality conditions*, i.e. conditions for correct or veridical representation of the world. In Chapter 2, Gregory expresses sympathy for the widespread *representationalist* view that perceptual states have correctness or veridicality conditions. However, he seems reluctant to place as much weight on this representationalist view as one might have expected. Certain passages (p. 29, fn. 3; p. 30, fn. 4) indicate that Gregory downplays representationalism so as to appeal to *relationalists*, such as Bill Brewer (“Perception and Content,” *Philosophical Review* 102 (2006), pp. 457-488) and Charles Travis (“The Silence of the Senses,” *Mind* 113 (2004), pp. 57-94), who deny that perceptual states have representational content. In my opinion, relationalism is an implausible position that conflicts with both common sense and contemporary perceptual psychology (see e.g. Tyler Burge, 2005, “Disjunctivism and Perceptual Psychology,” *Philosophical Topics* 33 (2005), pp. 1-78). Thus, Gregory could have adopted a firmer representationalist stance without any qualms. Doing so might have proved fruitful, allowing him to enrich his treatment with useful resources from the literature on representational content.

Finally, it is not evident that all the phenomena discussed by Gregory involve representational content in any robust sense. Do pictures, photographs, and mental images *taken on their own* represent the world as being a certain way? Jerry Fodor argues otherwise, drawing

on themes from Ludwig Wittgenstein. As Wittgenstein notes (*Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, New York: Macmillan, 1958, §139), a picture of a man climbing up a hill could also be a picture of a man sliding down the hill. So the picture on its own does not seem to place determinate conditions on the world for its truth or falsity. Citing examples of this kind, Fodor concludes (*The Language of Thought*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1975, p. 181): “Pictures aren’t the kind of things that can have truth-values.” Fodor’s analysis might lead one to question Gregory’s central claim that the diverse specimens examined in his book instantiate a unitary representational phenomenon.

Despite my criticisms, *Showing, Sensing, and Seeming* is a wonderfully engaging investigation of diverse topics. All philosophers interested in the divide between sensory and non-sensory representation will want to read this book.

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