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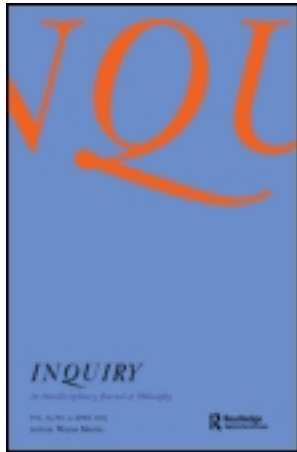
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It's Not What it Seems. A Semantic Account of 'Seems' and Seemings

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ABSTRACT *I start out by reviewing the semantics of 'seem'. As 'seem' is a subject-raising verb, 'it seems' can be treated as a sentential operator. I look at the semantic and logical properties of 'it seems'. I argue that 'it seems' is a hyperintensional and contextually flexible operator. The operator distributes over conjunction but not over disjunction, conditionals or semantic entailments. I further argue that 'it seems' does not commute with negation and does not agglomerate with conjunction. I then show that the mental states expressed by perceptual uses of 'seem' have non-conceptual, yet perspectival contents. In the final part of the paper I argue that while the content of the mental states expressed by perceptual uses of 'seem' are non-conceptual, having a mental state of this type requires possessing conceptual abilities corresponding to what the mental state represents.*

I. 'Seem' and 'Intuitive'

'Seem'-reports are utterances of sentences that contain the perceptual verb 'to seem'. Consider:

- (1)
 - (a) You seem to have lost weight.
 - (b) Her skin seemed very pale.
 - (c) She seemed more amused than shocked.
 - (d) It seems that Hurricane Sandy is not the scariest of them all.
 - (e) This hurricane seems worse than Hurricane Katrina.
 - (f) The Dewey school seems to have the best educational philosophy.
 - (g) She seemed like a fairy that, after playing its tricks for a while on the cottage floor, would flit away with a mocking smile.

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- (h) I always thought she seemed like a lazy pillow princess.
- (i) This election seems a lot like the election in 2000.

One way of dividing up 'seem'-reports is in terms of the mental state they purport to refer to in the conversational context. 'Seem'-reports can give off the sense that they report perceptual seemings, memory seemings, introspective seemings and intellectual seemings. The following are some illustrative examples:

Perceptual

- (2) (a) My chair seems to be on fire.
- (b) John seems to be in a bad mood.
- (c) Lisa seemed to really enjoy the party.

Memory-Based

- (3) (a) It seems to me that you wore a red shirt last Monday.
- (b) It seems that Barack Obama won the last election.
- (c) It seems that 'ranarian' means frog-like.

Introspective

- (4) (a) My headache seems to be getting worse.
- (b) My visual image doesn't seem to have any boundaries.
- (c) My thoughts seem to be in English.

Intellectual

- (5) (a) The theory of superstrings seems right.
- (b) It would seem that the shortest distance between two points in a Euclidean plane is a straight line.
- (c) It doesn't seem to me that all unmarried men are bachelors.

The hardest use of 'seem' to get a good grip on is the intellectual use. I take the following to be marks of intellectual uses:

Intellectual Use of 'Seem'

- (i) You can determine the truth-value of 'it seems that p ' from the armchair on the basis of available evidence (a priori knowledge as well as prior experience).
- (ii) 'Seem' does not express a mental state that is exclusively perception-, introspection- or memory-based.

As Herman Cappelen points out, ‘intuitive’ can be used in numerous ways.¹ We can say of computer programs, dances and people that they are intuitive. It can also mean ‘pre-theoretic’, as in ‘Intuitively, the speed of light is not a constant.’ However, I do believe the intellectual use of ‘seem’ can express intuition in a philosophically interesting sense. ‘Seem’, in the intellectual use, expresses intuition when it satisfies three further constraints:

Intuitively

- (iii) Either p is necessary or $\sim p$ is necessary
- (iv) ‘It seems that p ’ expresses a mental state that confers prima facie justification on the belief that p
- (v) ‘It seems that p ’ expresses a mental state that forms immediately upon considering p and not as a result of extensive reasoning

Only necessarily true or false propositions can be the operant clauses of ‘intuitively’. This may explain why it would be odd to say on the basis of a hunch: ‘Intuitively, it’s raining.’ Empirical propositions are not the sorts of thing that can be intuitively true or false. Some illustrative examples:

- (6) (a) Intuitively, a man with 50,000 hairs on his head isn’t *bald*.
- (b) Intuitively, the subject [in the Gettier case] doesn’t have *knowledge*.
- (c) Intuitively, proper names are *rigid*.²
- (d) Intuitively, the whole world is not *fundamental*.³
- (e) Intuitively, zombies are *conceivable*.⁴

At first glance it appears that there are some obvious counterexamples to (iii). Consider:

- (7) Intuitively, these line fragments [in the Müller–Lyer illusion] have the same length.

The operant clause does not express a necessary proposition. Upon further scrutiny, however, it becomes clear that (7) does not express intuition.

Even if I do happen to believe on the basis of how things seem that the line fragments in the Müller–Lyer illusion have the same length, intuition does not confer prima facie justification on that belief. If my belief is justified, its justification derives from a perceptual state.

(v) rules out cases in which ‘seem’ expresses an intellectual use based on reflection. When ‘seem’ expresses intuition, it is incompatible with careful reflection on available evidence. To borrow an example from Cappelen, after

¹Cappelen, *Philosophy without Intuition*.

²Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*.

³Sider, ‘Monism and Statespace Structure’.

⁴Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*.

carefully looking at and reflecting on the crime scene a detective may say: 'It seems he was killed in the bedroom and then moved to the bathroom.'⁵ It would be odd, however, to think the detective somehow based his judgment on intuition. In this case, the operant clauses express an empirical proposition. However, we can modify the example to involve a necessary proposition. Suppose you believe that you have just proven a new theorem. If you conclude with the remark 'So, it seems that T25 is true after all', your seeming state does not form immediately but is the result of extensive reasoning. In this case, it would be equally odd to say 'Intuitively, T25 is true'.

What sort of mental state does 'Intuitively, p ' express in the limited sense? The most straightforward answer is that it expresses a complex mental state the content of which consists at least partially in information retrieved from semantic memory. To rationally intuit p is in some cases to retrieve a term from semantic memory and apply it to an envisaged scenario.

When p is a priori, 'It seems that p ' and 'Intuitively, p ' can be awkward-sounding. Even if it is appropriate for you to say that $2 + 2 = 4$ in some context, claiming 'It seems to me that $2 + 2 = 4$ ' is odd. We can explain the infelicity on Gricean grounds. Since you could say something more succinct, viz. that $2 + 2 = 4$, your claim is violating Grice's maxim of quantity. So, your claim implicates, mistakenly, that you are not fully certain that $2 + 2 = 4$.

Cappelen holds that 'seem' often is used as a hedging verb. I think he is right about that. If you are explaining your philosophical position to a colleague who is opinionated about the opposite view, you may politely throw in a few *epistemic* 'seems' even when you do not find it strictly necessary. We can explain that along Gricean lines as well. By adding 'seems' your interlocutor will infer that the bare statement is too strong. As he takes you to be conversationally cooperative, your contribution implicates that your belief is probabilistic. Your credence on the evidence is somewhat lower than 1. This sort of hedging has a social function: you avoid upsetting your colleague. We act similarly when submitting papers to avoid offending referees who happen to have views strictly in opposition to our own.

II. Epistemic Versus Perceptual Sses of 'Seem'

Roderick Chisholm familiarly drew a distinction among three uses of 'appear words'—perceptual verbs such as 'seem', 'appear' and 'look'—that cuts across the aforementioned uses of 'seems'.⁶ He distinguished among epistemic, comparative and non-comparative uses of 'appear words'. The language of the report will reveal whether a use is (explicitly) comparative

⁵Cappelen, *Philosophy without Intuition*, 46.

⁶Chisholm, *Perceiving*, Ch. 4.

or non-comparative. For example, ‘John seemed pale’ is non-comparative, whereas ‘John looked like a ghost’ is comparative. Whether a use is epistemic cannot be read off of the language of the report. For example, if I utter the sentence ‘John seems to be worn out’, my use of ‘seem’ could be either epistemic or non-epistemic. If my utterance is based on John having a greyish complexion and dark circles under his eyes, then my use is non-epistemic. Call this the ‘perceptual use’. If, on the other hand, my utterance is based on a CNN reporter reporting that John did not land any film roles this year, then my use is epistemic. Whether a *use* of ‘seem’ is perceptual or epistemic depends on which mental state is expressed by the report. Here, ‘express’ is a technical word to be defined below.

A perceptual use of ‘seem’ expresses a perceptual seeming, a seeming based on experience. For example, ‘John seems to be stinking rich’, if used perceptually and if spoken sincerely, expresses a mental state that is based on the speaker’s experiences of John. ‘Experience’ here should be taken to include bodily experience, emotional experience, introspective experience and memory experience. So ‘perceptual’ should not be understood in the narrow sense in which it is often used in the philosophy of perception literature.

An epistemic use of ‘seem’ expresses a cognitive state concerning what is subjectively probable conditional on (total, total inner, total relevant, total relevant presented so far, . . .) evidence.⁷ If we hear on the radio that there will be flooding in our area, I might say ‘It seems we ought to evacuate.’ My statement expresses a cognitive state about what is subjectively probable, for example given my total inner evidence.

We can say that an epistemic use of ‘seem’ is evidence bearing for the speaker if the report correctly describes something that is subjectively probable for the speaker. It is in this sense that ‘seems’ functions as a (generic) evidential. I shall take it as a definitive mark of epistemic uses of ‘seem’ that when the use is evidence bearing, the cognitive state ceases to exist in the presence of a defeater, if the agent is rational. More on that below.

Comparative ‘seem’-reports can be either epistemic or perceptual. For example, your past visual acquaintance with Mary may lead you to conclude that Mary shares certain features in common with nice girls. In this case you could correctly utter the sentence ‘Mary seems like a nice girl.’ Here ‘seems’ presumably is perceptual. If, on the other hand, you hear on the radio that Hurricane Sandy will cause more damage than Hurricane Katrina, you may form a probabilistic belief in the proposition that Hurricane Sandy will cause more damage than Hurricane Katrina. You can now correctly utter the sentence ‘Hurricane Sandy seems worse than Hurricane Katrina.’ Here ‘seems’ presumably is epistemic.

⁷I owe this proposal to Hannes Leitgeb.

As comparative 'seems' reports have a distinctly comparative structure, it is likely that they are structurally related to more familiar comparative sentences. Consider:

- (8) (a) Kevin is taller than every girl is.
 (b) Krista dances like Hannah.
 (c) Chris eats like a bird.
 (d) Matt is as rich as his mother.

There is an extensive literature on the semantics of comparative sentences. The one I find most plausible is the degree account offered by Irene Heim.⁸ On this view, comparative sentences contain semantically vacuous 'wh'-items in the sentence structure. (8a) can be read as: 'Kevin is taller than every girl is wh.' To a first approximation, 'every girl is wh' can be understood as 'every girl x: x is this tall'. This item scopes out of the comparative clause, and the 'wh'-item raises to a wide-scope position. Hence, (7a) has the following underlying structure:

[wh1[every girl is t1]]2 [Kevin is taller than t2]

The truth-condition for (7a) can be articulated as follows: for every girl x, there is a height y such that x is y tall and Kevin's height is greater than y.

Similarly, (7b) can be cashed out as: 'Krista dances like Hannah does wh', where 'Krista does wh' is to be understood as 'Krista dances this way.' This item scopes out of the comparative clause and takes wide scope. So, (7b) is of the form: [wh1[Krista dances t1]]2 [Hannah dances t2]. We can assign the following truth-condition to 7(b): for some way w such that w is a way that Krista dances, Hannah dances that way too.

If we suppose that putatively comparative 'seems'-reports are truly comparative, which their grammar suggests, then it makes sense to apply Heim's analysis of comparative sentences to them too. The natural way to do so is as follows. Take 'X seems worse than Y'. This structure contains the implicit wh-clause 'wh1[Y seems t1 bad]', which takes wide scope. So we get: [wh1[Y seems t1 bad]]2 [X seems worse than t2]. For example, 'Hurricane Sandy seems worse than Hurricane Katrina' contains the implicit clause wh-clause: wh1[Hurricane Katrina seems t1]. This item takes wide scope, so the sentence is of the form: [wh1[Hurricane Katrina seems t1]]2 [Hurricane sandy seems worse t2]. We can assign the following truth-condition to this structure: there is an x such that x is how bad Katrina seems, and this hurricane seems worse than x.

As this analysis of comparative 'seem'-reports makes unreduced appeal to the notion of 'seem x', it is not meant to provide a complete answer to

⁸Heim, 'Remarks on Comparative Clauses'.

the question of how to assign truth-conditions to the underlying linguistic forms. Because ‘seem x’ can be perceptual or epistemic, the truth-conditions for comparative ‘seems’-reports are parasitic on the truth-conditions for non-comparative perceptual and epistemic ‘seems’-reports.

The question here arises how to categorize memory-derived, introspective and intellectual uses of ‘seem’. There is good reason to think that they could fall under either the perceptual or the epistemic uses, depending on the conversational context. Consider a dialogue between a counselor and her client.

Counselor: When you recall that episode from your childhood, what are you seeing?

Client: I am seeing a little girl walk down the stairs. She seems sad.

Despite the introspective or memory-derived nature of the report, ‘she seems sad’ here appears to be used perceptually. If, on the other hand, you tell me ‘Your colleagues seem to think you are a really strict teacher’, then the use of ‘seem’ probably is both memory-derived and epistemic.

Even intellectual uses of ‘seem’ can be used perceptually. Suppose a rational agent utters the following Moore sentences:

- (A) Your view is correct but it doesn’t seem correct to me.
- (B) Newton’s theory of gravity is incorrect, but it seems right to me.

Unlike analogous Moore paradoxes with belief and knowledge both instances are perfectly fine. But the propositions expressed by the initial conjuncts are defeaters of the operant clause of the second conjunct. So if the uses were epistemic, we should expect (A) and (B) to be awkward-sounding. The fact that they are not awkward-sounding suggests that the uses here are perceptual, despite being intellectual. Compare:

- (C) It seems like we ought to evacuate but we ought not to evacuate.
- (D) The Dewey school seems to have the best educational philosophy but it really doesn’t.

If I uttered (C) immediately after hearing on National Public Radio (NPR) that there will be flooding in my area, then my utterance would be awkward-sounding. Similarly, (D) would be odd if all the evidence I had supports the proposition that the Dewey school has the best educational philosophy. This is because my uses of ‘seem’ in these contexts are epistemic *and* all my evidence supports the embedded clause in the first conjunct. There are contexts that would render these sentences felicitous. For example, I might have evidence that supports the embedded clause in the first conjunct but overruling evidence that supports the second conjunct.

III. 'Seem' as a Raising Verb

Verbs such as 'to seem', 'to appear', 'to feel', 'to prove', 'to turn out' function as subject raising verbs. I will use 'raising verbs' as shorthand for 'subject raising verbs'. Raising verbs, like linking verbs (e.g., 'to grow' as in 'to grow stronger'), join the sentence subject with an adjectival or infinitive complement, as in:

- (9) (a) Lisa seemed angry.
 (b) John turned out to be a crook.
 (c) Publishing in the top journals proved to be difficult.
 (d) Paul's students were expected to turn in their papers on time.

Some raising verbs also function as transitive verbs, as in 'John looked (shy, shyly) at Mary', 'Tom (eagerly) expected the car crash' and 'Alice (enthusiastically) tasted the soup'. When they function as transitive verbs, they describe acts or actions of the referent of the semantic subject. When they function as intransitive raising verbs, they describe a passive experiential or epistemic state of an implicitly or explicitly mentioned perceiver. For example, 'Lisa seemed angry to Paul' describes a passive experiential or epistemic state of Paul, and 'The tomato seems rotten' describes a passive experiential or epistemic state of the speaker.

Raising verbs are followed by adjectives or infinitive clauses rather than adverbs. The 'to be' of the infinitive clauses takes an adjectival complement, not an adverbial one, as is apparent in 'John was found to be missing' and 'Susan turned out to be guilty'. Hence, while the complements of raising verbs can be modified by adverbs, as in 'extremely beautiful', they cannot themselves be adverbs or 'to be' plus adverbial clauses.

On the face of it, sentences with raising verbs have the same surface grammar as sentences containing intensional verbs, such as 'John wants to be happy'. However, this is not so. One of the big advances of transformational grammar was that it offered a way to distinguish between the different underlying forms of sentences like 'John wants to be happy' and 'John seems to be happy'. The 'want'- and the 'seem'-sentences may be taken to have the underlying forms:

John wants [John to be happy]⁹
 Seems [John to be happy]

The surface forms are produced by applying the transformation rules *Equi-NP-Deletion* and *Subject-to-Subject-Raising* to the sentences, respectively. *Equi-NP-Deletion* allows identical phrases, for example noun-phrases or

⁹On a more recent analysis, the subject of the infinitival clause is treated as some sort of hidden pronoun which is anaphoric to *John*, not a second occurrence of *John*. Thanks to Peter Lasnik here.

'for'-phrases, to be deleted, as in 'It's good for her for her to stay here' or 'It's good for her for her to stay here.'¹⁰ In Subject-to-Subject-Raising a subject that belongs semantically to a subordinate clause becomes realized in the surface-grammar as a constituent of a higher clause. In the case of 'John seems happy' the subject 'John' is the surface-grammatical subject of the raising verb 'seems' but it is the semantic subject of 'to be happy'. 'John seems happy' has the underlying derivational structure:

[e seems [John to be happy]]

In the transformation of deep grammar into surface grammar 'John' becomes raised to become the subject of 'seems'.

The subjects of raising verbs like 'seem', 'proven' and 'assumed' thus have no semantic relation to the raising verbs. Rather, they are associated with the infinitive predicate or the verb of the embedded clause. For example, in 'the apple seems red' the subject 'the apple' is associated with 'to be red' and in 'John seems to prefer red wine' the subject 'John' is associated with the verb 'prefers'. The formal way to put this is that raising verbs do not assign a theta-role to their subjects.

One test that a verb does not assign a theta-role to a subject is that we can express the same meaning by raising different elements in the derivational structure.¹¹ For example, 'John seems to be the first author of the article' and 'The first author seems to be John' have the same meaning. This shows that 'seem' does not assign a theta-role to 'John' or 'the main author of the article'. Rather, these semantic roles are assigned in the subordinate clause 'John to be the main author of the article'.

Raising is specified in the lexical entry of raising verbs. For example, 'seem' states in its lexical entry, among other things, that it does not assign a theta-role to its subject.

There are different theories of why raising happens. In Relational Grammar subject-to-subject-raising is driven by the rule that in English all clauses must ultimately have a subject, which can be either the expletive subject 'it' or the raised subject.¹² In Government and Binding Theory subject-raising it is an instance of determiner phrase (DP) movement.¹³

¹⁰Partee, 'Deletion and Variable Binding'.

¹¹The argument is somewhat problematic. Many speakers do not have the intuition that 'John appears to have passed the exam' is equivalent to 'The exam appears to have been passed by John', for example (since the conclusions one would draw based on John's appearance might be very different from the conclusions one would draw based on the exam's appearance). However, the argument is less problematic when the seeming involves identity. Thanks to Peter Lasnik here.

¹²Postal, *On Raising*.

¹³Chomsky, *Knowledge of Language*.

IV. Why the Semantics of 'Seem' Does Not Lend Support to Adverbialism

One might object to an account of 'seem' as a raising verb on the grounds that perceptual 'seem'-reports involve manner adverbials, that is, adverbials that occur in final position and describe the manner of the activity picked out by the verb. Consider:

- (9) (a) John spilled the beans clumsily.
 (b) John dances clumsily.

(9a) means 'John spilled the beans in a clumsy manner', and (9b) means 'John dances in a clumsy manner'. Adverbs that describe the manner of the activity picked out by the verb are also known as 'manner adverbials'. (9a–b) can be assigned the following truth-conditions using Davidsonian event semantics:

$\exists e[\text{spill}(e, \text{John}, \text{beans}) \ \& \ \text{clumsily}(e)]$
 $\exists e[\text{dance}(e, \text{John}) \ \& \ \text{clumsily}(e)]$

If perceptual 'seem'-reports involve manner adverbials, the truth-condition for 'X seems x' involves 'seems x-ly,' where 'x-ly' is a manner adverbial. Consider:

The tomato seems red to me.

On the adverbial reading, the truth-condition comes out as follows:

$\exists e[\text{seem}(e, \text{tomato}, \text{me}) \ \& \ \text{redly}(e)]$

In other words, there is a seeming event with the tomato and the speaker as participants (agent and patient, respectively), and the event takes place in a redly manner. This would be consistent with an adverbial theory of perception, according to which perceiving is an object acting upon a perceiver in a certain manner. Chisholm is a legendary defender of the adverbial theory. Wylie Breckenridge is one of its contemporary defenders.

However, the semantics of 'seem' does not support this view. Only verbs that assign structural case are true accusative (or agentive) verbs. For example, 'kick' as it occurs in 'John kicked her' assigns structural case to 'her' and hence is a true accusative. Verbs that assign inherent case are not true accusatives. For example, 'believe' as it occurs in 'John believed in her' assigns inherent case to 'her' and hence is not a true accusative. The same goes for 'good' in 'It's good for her [to be happy]', where 'good' presumably is used with a dative.¹⁴

¹⁴I am using the phrase 'dative' loosely here. It is pretty controversial whether modern English has a dative case.

Intransitive verbs do not allow manner adverbials and do not select affected objects. Consider:

- (11) (a) John dried the dishes enthusiastically.
 (b) *John resembled her carefully.
 (c) *John aggravated me revoltingly.
 (d) *Mary desired a raise slowly.
 (e) Mary walked to school quickly.

Sentences (11b–d) are clearly infelicitous. ‘John resembled her closely’ and ‘Mary desired a raise immensely’, of course, are felicitous. But ‘closely’ and ‘immensely’ are not manner adverbials. They do not specify a way of resembling or desiring but a quantity.

Unlike true agentive verbs such as ‘kick’ and ‘eat’, ‘seem’ does not assign structural case. ‘Methinks’ is a modern construction of an old English dative form: ‘It seems me’ [‘thyncan’ = ‘seem’]. ‘Me’ in ‘seems to me’ is thus a morphologically marked dative case rather than a true accusative. So, ‘seem’ does not allow an adverbial interpretation of the adjectival phrase in ‘seem [adjectival phrase]’.¹⁵

V. ‘Seem’ as a Contextually Flexible Expression

‘Seem’-reports express particular kinds of mental states. ‘Express’, as I shall use the word here, is a term of art. Let us say that a report attributing a seeming to S expresses mental state *m* iff if the report were true, then S would be in *m*. For example, my utterance of the sentence ‘the neighbors seem to be arguing’ expresses a seeming with the content [the neighbors are arguing]. Even if I am insincere when making my utterance, my utterance still expresses a seeming with the content [the neighbors are arguing] in this sense of ‘expresses’. I will say more about the content of seemings in subsequent sections.

Which type of mental state is expressed by ‘seem’ depends on what the report communicates about the grounds of the mental state in the conversational context. If I utter the sentence ‘My current thoughts seem to be in English’, my report likely communicates that the mental state expressed is based on introspection. So my utterance likely expresses an introspective seeming.

Whether my use of ‘seem’ is epistemic or perceptual depends on what is communicated about the would-be behavior of the expressed cognitive state in the presence of a defeater. If I say ‘The lines in the Müller–Lyer illusion

¹⁵*Seem* does permit manner adverbials in different types of position. Take a sentence like ‘John suddenly seemed a lot less attractive.’ Here, *suddenly* is a manner adverbial, and belongs to *seem*, not to *less attractive*. (That is, the sentence is paraphrasable as ‘It suddenly seemed that John was a lot less attractive’, rather than as ‘It seemed that John was suddenly a lot less attractive.’) Thanks to Peter Lasersohn here.

seem to have different lengths, even though I know that they have the exact same length', then my report communicates that the mental state expressed by 'seem' would not go away in the presence of a defeater. So, the use of 'seem' is perceptual. If, on the other hand, I say 'I am not totally sure but it seems to me that John is going to get tenure', then my report communicates that the mental state expressed by 'seem' would go away in the presence of a defeater. So the use of 'seem' is epistemic.

Whether 'seem'-reports are true or false turns on whether the mental state is correctly ascribed to the subject in question. If it seems to me that your shirt is green, then 'It seems to me that your shirt is green' is true. In some cases, the truth-value is not determinable. For example, knowing what I know about dichromats, I might say 'If I were a dichromat, this tomato would seem gray to me.' Though some dichromats do describe red things as gray, it is not clear that we can make any conclusions about how things would seem to me if I were a dichromat.

The question here arises whether 'seem'-reports have a contextual semantics. Bare uses of 'seem', of course, are context-sensitive. For example, 'It seems that John has arrived' can express the proposition that it seems to me that John has arrived when I utter it, and it can express the proposition that it seems to you that John has arrived when you utter it.

It is tempting to think that 'seem' is a flexible contextual expression, like 'local' and 'nearby'. On the standard treatment of these words, they are associated with a hidden variable at the level of logical form. Context can supply just about any value for the variable. 'John went to a local bar' need not be interpreted as 'John went to a bar that is local to the speaker', but may be interpreted as 'John went to a bar that is local to John', 'John went to a bar that is local to the hearer', 'John went to a bar that is local to his grandmother', and so on, depending on the conversational context. In this case, the speaker can more or less freely fix the value of the hidden indexical variable associated with 'local'.

'It seems', however, is not flexible in this liberal way. Suppose you are on the phone with your aunt in California. She tells you that it is raining. After you get off the phone, your girlfriend asks you: 'How is the weather there?' You reply with 'It seems that it's raining.' Even if the aunt did say that it seemed to her that it is raining, the hidden variable associated with 'seems' in your utterance can only take you as a value (or you and your girlfriend), not the aunt. If you had responded with 'It seems that it's raining. But it doesn't seem to me that it's raining', your response would have been infelicitous. So, 'seems' is not flexible in the same way as 'nearby' and 'local'.

However, despite not being as flexible as 'nearby' and 'local', 'seem' does have some similarities to these expressions. When I turn to you and say 'It seems that we need to evacuate', the hidden variable could be occupied by the speaker or the speaker and her audience (or group). Linguistic context

can also sometimes fix the value of the variable. Consider, for example, ‘John peered into the room. It seemed to be empty.’¹⁶

Furthermore, when epistemic uses of ‘seem’ are not evidence bearing for the speaker, the variable may take a third party as a value. Suppose after stating the usual antidote and Fink problems, I say ‘It seems, *prima facie*, like one cannot analyze dispositions in terms of conditionals.’ I then give a new more elaborate theory in which the proposal is in fact to analyze dispositions in terms of conditionals.¹⁷ Here, the report is not evidence bearing for the speaker because it makes implicit reference to the evidence of a person who is not acquainted with the new theory. So, ‘seem’ here is not semantically equivalent to ‘seem to me’. In this case, ‘seem’ is equivalent to ‘seem to you’ or ‘seem to someone not familiar with my theory’.

Here is another example.¹⁸ In the 2012 election, Republicans lost in the national race because they bet on the angry white male vote and disregarded the overall force of minority-trend voting in key states. So it is true to say: ‘It seems like Republicans got it all wrong on the demographics.’ The embedded claim is not absolutely certain as a claim but it is probable (given known data after the fact). Here, ‘seem’ likely is not equivalent to ‘seem to me’ but is probably equivalent to ‘seem to those who are rational and have the available evidence.’ So ‘seem’ is a special kind of flexible contextual expression.

Given that values other than the speaker can occupy the variable associated with ‘seem’, the question arises whether ‘seem’-reports have relativistic contents.¹⁹ One piece of evidence traditionally used to argue for relativistic contents in the case of taste predicates, knowledge and epistemic modals is the possibility of meaningful disagreement among interlocutors about discourse containing the relevant term. For example, the fact that you and I can disagree about whether Brian knows where his car is parked, despite having the same knowledge about Brian’s evidence has sometimes been taken to indicate that the truth-value of knowledge claims is relative to a perspective, or a judge. The thought is that, if the speakers commit no factual errors, then the difference in their assignment of truth-values must originate in the fact that the truth-values are relative to perspectives.

Another piece of information that has been used to argue for a relativistic framework for certain word groups is the felicity of retraction claims for relative terms. For example, John might say ‘I know where my car is parked.’ When told (perhaps wrongly) that car theft is prevalent in the area, he might retract his previous claim: ‘I guess I don’t know where my car is parked after

¹⁶Thanks to Peter Lasersohn here.

¹⁷I owe this example to Hannes Leitgeb

¹⁸I owe this example to Alan White.

¹⁹Kölbel, ‘Faultless Disagreement’, ‘How to Spell Out Genuine Relativism’, *Truth without Objectivity*; MacFarlane, ‘Assessment Sensitivity’, *Making Sense of Relative Truth*; Egan, Hawthorne, and Weatherson, ‘Epistemic Modals in Context’; López de Sa, ‘Many Relativisms’.

all. I was wrong in thinking that I did.' In the case of knowledge, the retraction claim sounds felicitous. This has been taken to indicate that the assignment of truth-value even to one's own earlier utterances is relative to one's perspective at the time.

There has been a lot of criticism of these tests for assessing whether a certain word class is relativistic or not.²⁰ Even if we grant the effectiveness of the tests, however, 'seem' does not appear to be relativistic verb.

Suppose we both hear on the radio that there will be a hurricane in our area. 'It seems that our home will be flooded,' I say. You reply that it does not seem that way. If we are equally rational, one of us has evidence not available to the other, for example, evidence that the radio station is notoriously unreliable. In this case, then, we disagree about facts about the situation.

Retraction data do not support a relativistic semantics for 'seems'-reports either. Consider the following dialogue:

John: It seems that we need to evacuate.

Radio host: The earlier announcement about flooding was a hoax.

John: It seems that we don't need to evacuate after all.

Mary: But earlier you said that it seemed that we ought to evacuate.

John: It seemed that way to me then. I didn't know that the announcement was a hoax.

Here John is not willing to retract this earlier claim that it seemed to him that they ought to evacuate. What he admits is that he did not have all the information that was needed for the complement clause turning out true. It would seem, then, that 'seem'-reports do not have a relativistic semantics.

VI. Semantic and Logical Properties of 'Seem'

As 'seem' is a raising verb, it can be treated as a kind of sentential operator when the sentence occurs in its un-raised form. For example, 'it seems' as it occurs in 'it seems that $2 + 2 = 4$ ' can be treated as a sentential operator on the operant clause 'that $2 + 2 = 4$ '. Like 'According to the Sherlock Holmes stories' and 'I believe', 'seem' is hyperintensional. An operator is hyperintensional just in case replacing a referring expression in the complement clause with a logically equivalent expression can affect the truth-value of the sentence in which the operator occurs. Consider, for example:

- (12) (a) It seems to John that $2 + 2 = 5$.
 (b) It seems to Lois Lane that Superman is not Clark Kent.
 (c) It seems to the person viewing the waterfall illusion that the waterfall is moving and not moving.
 (d) It seems to Mary that water is xyz.

²⁰See, e.g., Cappelen and Hawthorne, *Relativism and Monadic Truth*.

Substituting '4' for '2 + 2', 'Superman' for 'Clark Kent', '2 + 2 = 5' for 'the moving waterfall is moving and not moving' and 'H₂O' for 'water' could affect the truth-value of the sentences in (12). 'It seems' thus satisfies the criterion for hyperintensionality.

Logically, 'it seems' behaves in some respects like well-known quantifiers and sentential operators. Sentential operators such as the knowledge operator and the universal quantifier distribute over conjunction but do not distribute over disjunction. 'It seems' is similar in this respect. We can infer '(it seems that p) & (it seems that q)' from 'it seems that (p & q)' but we cannot infer '(it seems that p) or (it seems that q)' from 'it seems that (p or q)'. It seems to me that it is raining or it is not. But it does not follow that it seems to me that it is raining, or it seems to me that it is not.

Like the knowledge operator, 'it seems' does not commute with negation. Your shirt may not seem like anything to me, in which case it is not the case that it seems to me that your shirt is blue. So from 'It's not the case that it seems to that your shirt is blue', it does not follow that it seems to me that your shirt is not blue.

There is reason to think that 'it seems' does not agglomerate with conjunction (closure fails). Let p be: 'Ticket 1 will win.' And let q be: 'Ticket 2 will win.' There is 0.8 probability that 1 will win and 0.8 probability that 2 will win. It might seem to me that ticket 1 will win, and it might seem to me that ticket 2 will win. But it may not seem to me that (both ticket 1 & ticket 2 will win). The chance of both tickets winning is 0.64. The relatively low probability may not be high enough for it to seem to me that both will win. Alternatively, it may not seem that way to me because I know that only one ticket can win in this particular lottery.

Here is another example due to Mark Lance. It really does seem to Lance that the Axiom of Choice is true, and it seems to him that Well Ordering is false. But it does not seem to him that AC & ~WO because he realizes that AC and WO are equivalent.

It is a bit more difficult to determine whether 'it seems' distributes over indicative conditionals. It seems to X that if your argument is correct, then it is raining. Does it follow that if it seems to X that your argument is correct, then it seems to X that it is raining? In other words, is the following inference valid?

It seems to X that (if your argument is correct, then it's raining)
So, if it seems to X that your argument is correct, then it seems to X that
it's raining

I am inclined to think that it does not. Of course, we have to be careful not to equivocate on 'seems'. We cannot read some of the occurrences of 'seems' as perceptual and others as epistemic. But even on an unequivocal reading, the premise could be true, while the conclusion is false. The premise might be

true in virtue of X's belief that your argument is incorrect. As she knows that a conditional with a false antecedent is true, it seems to her that the conditional is true. Even if X believes that your argument is incorrect, it can still seem to her that it is correct. So the antecedent of the conclusion could be true. But it need not seem to X that it is raining (or that it is not). So, the antecedent of the conclusion could be false. Presumably 'seems' does not distribute over strict conditionals or semantic entailments either. Consider:

It seems to me that necessarily (if water exists, then there are H₂O molecules).

So, necessarily (if it seems to me that water exists, then it seems to me that there are H₂O molecules).

Assume that the premise is true on the grounds that in the actual world I have a probabilistic belief in the proposition that necessarily, water is H₂O. In a world in which the clear, potable liquid that fills oceans, rivers and lakes consists of XYZ and not H₂O, I probably will not have a probabilistic belief in the proposition that necessarily, water is H₂O or the proposition that there are H₂O molecules. However, it may seem to me that water exists.

The failure of distribution of 'seem' over generalized conditionals seems involved in the phenomenon of paradox. A paradox is an argument for which each of the premises seems true, and which seems valid, but in which the conclusion not only fails to seem true but positively seems false. Consider an instance of the sorites paradox.

A man with 50,000 hairs on his head is not bald

If a man with n hairs on his head is not bald, then a man with n-1 hairs on his head is not bald

So, a man with 0 hairs on his head is not bald

The argument seems valid and the premises seem true but the conclusion seems false. Since the argument is valid, this is a good example of a case in which 'seems' fails to distribute over semantic entailment.

The case also adds additional support to the view that 'it seems' does not agglomerate over conjunction.²¹ The premises seem true to me, the argument seems valid, but the conclusion seems false. It does not follow from this that it seems to me that (the argument is valid, the premises are true and the conclusion false). I know that a valid argument with true premises cannot have a false conclusion.

²¹I owe this observation to Mark Lance.

The preface paradox is another paradox that can illustrate the failure of ‘it seems’ to agglomerate over conjunction. Individually the sentences in a preface seem true but taken together they do not seem true.

VII. Perceptual Seemings Versus Other Kinds of Mental States

I turn now to the mental states expressed by ‘seem’-reports. Chisholm talked about *uses* of ‘appear words’. He did not say what makes a seeming epistemic as opposed to perceptual. However, as hinted at above, I suggest that a definitive mark of epistemic seemings is that they go away in the presence of a rebutting defeater if the agent is rational. According to John Pollock’s original distinction, an undercutting defeater is a reason for supposing that one’s ground for believing *p* is not sufficiently indicative of the truth of the belief that *p*.²² If the dean of the college informs you that they have just implemented rain machines on campus, then that might undercut your reasons for thinking that it is raining. A rebutting defeater, on the other hand, is a reason for holding the negation of *p* or for holding some proposition, *q*, incompatible with *p*. For example, you believe that it is raining but you hear on CNN that it is not raining. So you update your belief. In this case, the information from CNN is a rebutting defeater of your original belief.

Suppose again that you hear on the radio that a public healthcare reform has been accepted. You say ‘It would seem that I won’t need my private health insurance anymore.’ A minute later the radio host comes back on and announces that the previous statement was a hoax. This is a rebutting defeater of your probabilistic belief that you will not need your private health insurance. So, if you are rational it will no longer seem to you that you will not need your private health insurance.

Epistemic seemings can be captured fairly well in terms of probabilistic belief. Perceptual seemings, however, do not reduce to other more commonly discussed mental states, such as belief or perceptual experience. Perceptual seemings, I will argue, are derived from perceptual experience together with background beliefs. If you wish, you can think of them as high-level perceptual experiences, which are more conceptual than perceptual in nature. Though perceptual seemings are *derived* from perceptual experience, they are not beliefs. To see this, consider the Müller–Lyer illusion (shown in Figure 1).

I believe that the horizontal lines in the Müller–Lyer illusion have the same length but they perceptually seem to have different lengths. Another case in which beliefs and seemings come apart is the McGurk effect. The McGurk effect is an illusion that occurs when one sound is played while a person is shown uttering a different sound. For example, the speaker is mouthing the word /ba-ba/ while the audio is dubbed as /ga-ga/. What you end up hearing

²²Pollock, ‘Reliability and Justified Belief’.

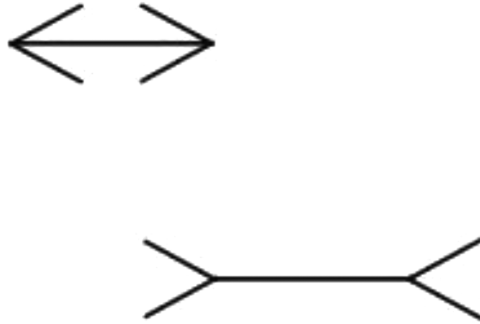


Figure 1. The Müller-Lyer illusion.

is /da-da/. The illusion occurs because the brain is attempting to bind visual information with conflicting auditory information and has to make a guess as to what the true sound is. In this case it perceptually seems that the speaker is mouthing the word /da-da/, even though you know that is not the case.

There is also good reason to think that perceptual seemings and perceptual experiences are distinct types of mental state. Cases of change blindness and intentional blindness give good evidence that we must distinguish between perceptual experiences and perceptual seemings. In change blindness cases, you consciously see a change (e.g., a change in clothing) but it does not seem to you that a change has taken place. You would be unable to report it. Inattention blindness cases are similar. When you are busy paying attention to a certain task, you do not pay much attention to what goes on elsewhere in your visual field. So things can occur in the off-zones without it seeming that way to you.

One could deny that we can have perceptual experiences of things we do not pay attention to. If consciousness requires attention, as Jesse Prinz has recently argued, then we do not perceptually experience changes or items we do not pay attention to.²³ The cases of change blindness and inattention blindness then do not lend support to the view that perceptual experiences and perceptual seemings are distinct types of mental state.

However, there are other reasons to think perceptual seemings and perceptual experience are distinct types of mental state. As I argued in a previous section of this paper, the sentential operator 'it seems' does not commute with negation. The main reason for this presumably is that it can seem to us that something is not the case, even in the perceptual case. For example, if I had a visual experience of your shirt as red, it would seem to me that your shirt is not blue. But it is doubtful that I can have a visual experience of your shirt lacking in blueness.

²³Prinz, *Consciousness Equals Attention*. For the view that conscious experience does not require attention, see e.g., Block, 'Consciousness, Accessibility'.

Just as we do not perceive the lack of certain properties, we do not perceptually experience certain high-level properties. Suppose it perceptually seems to me that there are more than five people in the seminar room in Lucas Hall. My perceptual experience presumably does not represent this sort of ‘high-level’ quantificational assumption.²⁴ At least that is not consistent with how the brain processes information. As different areas of the brain are activated bottom-up, what is represented changes.

Another, related, reason to think perceptual seemings and perceptual experience are distinct types of mental states is that perceptual seemings appear to require that we have certain beliefs. My experience that *that* is red, for example, can transmute into a seeming that your car is red only if I believe that *that* is your car, which suggests that perceptual seemings rest on interpretation of perceptual experience.

VIII. Preliminaries: Assumptions and Definitions

Let us turn now to the argument for the position that the contents of the mental states expressed by perceptual uses of ‘seem’ are both perspectival and non-conceptual. The argument assumes a weak version of representationalism, which we may articulate as follow:

Weak Representationalism

The contents of visual seemings supervene on phenomenology

The assumption seems fairly innocent for mental states that have a strong visual phenomenology. To account for the contents of subpersonal and dispositional mental states we would need to invoke behavioristic measures, as these states do not have a phenomenology. Behavioristic measures, however, are notoriously unreliable ways to determine the content of a mental state. One reason for this is that people can engage in pretense behavior and succeed in fooling us. For example, Mary may act afraid even when she is not. Attributing fear to her on the basis of her behavior would be mistaken. The behavioristic approach becomes more plausible if we look at the neurological bases of behavior before attributing mental states to people on the basis of their behavior. In the case of Mary, we could measure brain activity in areas of the brain that have been associated with fear processing, such as the ventromedial prefrontal cortex and the amygdala, and conclude that she is not really experiencing fear. Here I shall set aside the issue of whether there can be subpersonal and dispositional seemings.

²⁴Brogaard, ‘Natural Kind Properties’.

Before turning to the argument for the view that the content of perceptual seemings is non-conceptual yet perspectival, we will also need some definitions. I define 'object-dependent content' as follows.

Object-Dependent Content

To a first approximation: object-dependent content is content that supervenes on the individual essence of the objects denoted.

Following Saul Kripke, we can take the individual essence of people to be the zygote from which they came and the individual essence of artifacts to be the material from which they came.²⁵ Given this definition, descriptive content, $\exists x(Px \ \& \ \forall y(Py \rightarrow x = y) \ \& \ Dx)$, is not object-dependent. Take the content of 'The President is a democrat.' As indefinitely many individuals can be the President, the content of the description 'the President' is not object-dependent. One example of object-dependent content is content that has objects as constituent parts. As Russell put it, 'Mont Blanc and all its snow fields' may be a constituent of a proposition about Mont Blanc.²⁶ Another example of object-dependent content is content that consists of relational properties with an object as a relatum, for example, Jonathan Cohen's color properties (e.g., red-for-S).²⁷ A third example of object-dependent content is *sui generis* abstract content that is determined by its relations to external objects.²⁸

I will also need the notion of concept possession. The notion can be characterized as follows:

Concept Possession

To a first approximation: to possess ('grasp') a concept is to have a reliable ability to tell that items falling under the concept are of the same kind.

In this sense, I possess the concept of tomato but not the concept of Eucalyptus tree. We can imagine testing subjects on whether they possess a certain concept by showing them pairs of items, asking them questions such as 'Are those tomatoes?' If they respond reliably to cases in which the objects are of the same kind, we can say that they possess the concept in question. In certain persistent skeptical scenarios, it is not possible to possess concepts.

²⁵Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*.

²⁶Frege-Russell correspondence in Gabriel et al., *Gottlob Frege*.

²⁷Cohen, 'Color Properties', *Red and the Real*.

²⁸Bealer, 'Propositions'.

For example, if all Martini-looking and -tasting drinks, except for those you are drinking, are made of flavored water rather than gin, you do not possess the concept of Martini. We can safely assume, however, that the actual world does not contain persistent skeptical scenarios.

The characterization of ‘concept possession’ just provided should not be taken to imply that people who do not speak English do not possess concepts. One could use other symbolic devices or languages to test whether people possess the concept, including written language, baby sign language, American Sign Language and braille. The characterization does have the consequence that very young children and most non-human animals do not possess concepts. But that is how it should be.

The notion of concept possession, as cashed out, may not seem to extend to individual concepts. If, however, we allow that worldly stages can be the referents of proper names, then the definition on offer can be extended to this word class. When extended in this way, we can say that Lois Lane possesses the concept of Superman, despite the fact that she does not know that Superman is Clark Kent.

Some define ‘concept possession’ as being capable of having thoughts or beliefs involving the concept.²⁹ I shall not here discuss the relative virtues of these two definitions of concepts at any great length. Suffice it to say that I find this latter characterization either too strong or too weak. If ‘having thoughts or beliefs involving the concept’ is to be understood as having thoughts or beliefs with a conceptual content, then it is too strong. So understood, it presupposes a controversial view about belief content. If it is to be understood as having thoughts or beliefs whose constituents one grasps by possessing concepts, then it is circular and hence uninformative.

Following the literature we can draw a distinction between state and concept conceptualism as follows:³⁰

State Conceptualism

The content of a subject S’s perceptual experience R is limited by the concepts S possesses, i.e., S possesses concepts corresponding to what R represents (e.g., you can have a perceptual experience representing something red only if you possess the concept of red).

Content Conceptualism

All perceptual states have conceptual contents (e.g., Fregean contents as opposed to Russellian contents).

²⁹Crane, ‘Nonconceptual Content of Experience’; Heck, ‘Nonconceptual Content’; Speaks, ‘Problem about Nonconceptual Content’.

³⁰Heck, ‘Nonconceptual Content’; Speaks, ‘Problem about Nonconceptual Content’.



Figure 2. Illustration of the perspectival nature of perception. Some things are to the right, in front of you, etc.

The difference between state and content conceptualism comes down to a difference between whether your mental states can represent independently of your possessing certain concepts or your mental states involve concepts as constituents of their contents.

IX. The Perspectival Nature of Perceptual Seemings

Let us turn now to the argument for the view that the content of perceptual seemings is perspectival. Envisage that you are looking at a beautiful garden from a window in a tall tower. As you are looking out from your perspective in the tower, the image shown in Figure 2 is what fills your visual field. The first part of the argument that seemings have perspectival content is an argument for the position that the contents of seemings are object-independent.

The Content of Seemings is Not Object-Dependent

Scenario: Garden (see Figure 2)

- (1) My physical and functional twin and I can have perceptual seemings with the same phenomenology.

- (2) If seemings have object-dependent contents, they have different contents (e.g., ‘in front of me/you’).
- (3) Weak representationalism: the contents of seemings supervene on phenomenology.

Conclusion: The contents of seemings are not object-dependent.

The first premise follows from absurdity in assuming dualism about the mind upfront. Suppose for reduction that my physical and functional twin and I can have perceptual seemings with a different phenomenology. As we are physically and functionally identical, it follows that phenomenology does not supervene on our physical makeup. As my twin and I are distinct individuals with distinct individual essences or haecceities (this-nesses), the differences in phenomenology could supervene on our individual essences or our haecceities. If the differences supervene on our individual essences—the zygotes from which we derived, then phenomenology could supervene on physical facts. However, it is highly implausible that the differences in the phenomenology of our current experiences supervene on genetic differences that once were but no longer exist. So the differences must supervene on our haecceities. Haecceities are not physical. So if the differences supervene on our haecceities, then phenomenology does not supervene on physical facts. So dualism is true.

While dualism could be true for all I have said and will say here, the position is too controversial to take for granted. As premise (1) is consistent with both physicalism and dualism, it seems hard to challenge. Premise (2) follows from the fact that perceptual seemings are inherently perspectival. When I look at the garden, it seems to me that some things are in front of me or to the right of me, whereas other things are not. But if the content of the complement clause in the seeming is object-dependent, then the experiences of my physical and functional twin and I have different contents. Yet our assumption that weak representationalism is true yields that if we have the same phenomenology, we have the same content. So premise (2) is true. It follows that the contents of the visual seemings are not object-dependent.

Before moving onto the next step of my argument, we need the notion of a centered world. A centered world is a world with additional, marked parameters. Centered worlds used in semantics often are worlds with a marked time and a marked individual. But any world that has an additionally marked parameter is a centered world. So a world with a marked time is a centered world. If English contains tense operators, as I argue in my *Transient Truths*, then the content of the operant clauses has a truth-value only relative to a centered world.³¹

³¹Brogaard, *Transient Truths*.

Centered worlds serve as circumstances of evaluation (indices). They can also be rendered as n-tuples of parameters, as is more familiar from the work of Richard Montague and David Kaplan.³² Centered content is content that is assessable for truth only relative to a centered world. It is an interesting question whether centered contents are propositions (functionally defined). I deal with that question in my book *Transient Truths*.

Given these definitions and the previous argument, we can now show that the contents of visual seemings are centered. The argument is quite similar to the former.

Argument for Centered Content

Scenario: Garden from my perspective (some trees are further away than others)

- (1) If the content of my perceptual seeming that that tree is further away than that tree of the garden is non-centered (e.g., consisting of classical properties: functions from worlds to extensions), then it is object-dependent.
- (2) The content of perceptual seemings is not object-dependent.

Conclusion: The content of the experience is centered.

The argument for the first premise runs as follows. If the content of my perceptual seeming is not centered, then it has a truth-value relative to a possible world. No further parameters are needed to assess its truth. If this were the case, we would be able to assess the truth of the complement of a perceptual seeming like 'It seems that that tree is further away from *me* than that tree', but only by taking the content of the complement to depend on objects, like me and you. So, premise (1) is true: if the content is non-centered, then it is object-dependent. But I argued above that the contents of perceptual seemings are not object-dependent. It follows that the contents of perceptual seemings are centered.

There are two types of centered content. One type involves *de se* modes of presentation that pick out the individual (or the time) in the center of the world; the other does not. A *de se* mode of presentation (involving, e.g., /me/ and /now/) is identical to the intension of a description. For example, /me/ may be identical to the intension of the description 'The person who has a perceptual seeming on Russell Blvd, Monday, November 5, 2012.'

³²Montague, 'Proper Treatment of Quantification'; Kaplan, 'Demonstratives'.

Two Types of Centered Perceptual Content

- (1) With a *de se* mode of presentation (conceptual): content that involves a *de se* mode of presentation (e.g., that tree is further away from /me/ than that tree).
- (2) Without *de se* mode of presentation (non-conceptual): content that does not involve a *de se* mode of presentation but is (a) a set of centered worlds or (b) a structured entity consisting of centered properties (i.e., functions from centered worlds to extensions).

To decide between the two kinds of content I first argue that memory seemings do not involve *de se* modes of presentation. The argument then can be put as follows:

Against Modes, Memory Seemings

- (1) Mary, a war veteran, can have visual memory seemings with the same phenomenology one and two days/hours after the event.
- (2) If the seemings involve *de se* modes of presentation, they have different contents.
- (3) Weak representationalism: the content of visual seemings supervenes on phenomenology.

Conclusion: The contents of the visual memory seemings do not involve *de se* modes of presentation.

Premise (1) presumably could be partially confirmed on empirical grounds. If we make the time intervals for Mary's flashbacks short enough, it is likely that they involve the same phenomenology. The argument for premise (2) is a bit more complicated. It may be proposed that the content of Mary's flashbacks could be cashed out as follows:

It was the case /yesterday/ [that smoke is all around /me yesterday/]
 It was the case /the day before yesterday/ [that smoke is all around /me the day before yesterday/]

But this clearly will not work. If the seemings have different *de se* modes of presentation, then they have different contents. Suppose instead that we take it to be part of Mary's visual memory seeming that it was the case [that the smoke is all around /me/]. This will not do either. For /me/ is identical to the intension of a description, for example, 'The person who is recalling the memory on Russell Blvd on November 5, 2012.' But it is false that it was the case that the smoke is all around the person who is recalling the memory on

Russell Blvd on November 5, 2012. Given weak representationalism, then, it follows that the contents of the memory seemings do not involve *de se* modes of presentation.

It is now straightforward to show that not all perceptual seemings involve modes of presentations. Most of our perceptual seemings involve the seeming of things that move. If you look at a room full of people, it is hard to find a single one who is sitting completely still. Someone is playing with her pen, someone is taking notes, someone is reaching into his bag, and someone is nodding in agreement. But having perceptual seemings of things that move requires having memory seemings and hence involves seemings that do not contain modes of presentation. We can articulate the argument as follows:

Against Modes, Perceptual Seemings

- (1) We have perceptual seemings of motion.
- (2) If we have perceptual seemings of motion, we have perceptual seemings of the past.
- (3) Having a perceptual seeming of the past requires having a memory seeming that is part of the perceptual seeming.
- (4) The content of memory seemings do not involve modes of presentation.

Conclusion: The contents of perceptual seemings do not (always) involve modes of presentation.

This concludes my argument for the hypothesis that some perceptual seemings do not involve *de se* modes of presentation. So the contents of perceptual seemings are non-conceptual despite being perspectival.

X. Perceptual Seemings Require the Possession of Concepts

Though the content of perceptual seemings does not involve senses or modes of presentation, there is reason to think that you cannot have a perceptual seeming without possessing concepts corresponding to what the seeming represents. My argument for this view requires the familiar distinction between subjective and objective reasons, to use Mark Schroeder's terminology.³³ A subjective reason is a reason you *have* for believing something; an objective reason is a reason *there is* for believing something. Even if I am sitting in an office with no windows, there is a reason for me to believe that it is raining if indeed it is raining. But if I have no information about the weather, I do not have a reason to believe that it is raining. Given this distinction, the first part

³³Schroeder, 'Having Reasons'.

of the argument for the position that perceptual seemings can represent something only if the agent possesses corresponding concepts can be articulated as follows.

Subjective Reasons Require the Possession of Concepts

- (1) R is a subjective reason for S's empirical belief that p only if R is inferentially related to p.
- (2) R is a subjective reason for S's empirical belief that P only if S is able to recognize R as her reason for p.
- (3) R can be inferentially related to p and recognized as a reason for p only if S possesses concepts corresponding to what R represents.

Conclusion: Subjective reasons require possession of the relevant concepts.

The first premise follows from the notions of being inferentially related and subjective reason. I take two propositions p and q to be inferentially related for an agent S just in case S, if asked, could derive one proposition from the other proposition, together with her background beliefs. If I believe that it is raining and I also believe that the streets are wet, then my beliefs are inferentially related given my background belief that if the streets are wet, then it is raining. It seems that the ability to come to hold a belief by implicitly or explicitly deriving it from a reason is a minimal requirement on having a reason for one's belief.

The second premise follows even more straightforwardly from the notion of subjective reason. If S is unable to recognize that R is a reason for her belief that P, then R is not a reason she *has* for her belief but merely a reason *there is* for her belief.

The third premise follows from considerations of what it takes to be able to derive one proposition from another and being able to recognize a proposition as a reason. Both cognitive events are relatively cognitively difficult acts that involve being able to classify items into types. Given the definition of concept possession, it follows that these cognitive events require possessing concepts corresponding to what the reason represents.

We are now in a position to provide the final step of the argument for the position that concept possession is required for perceptual seemings to represent.

Perceptual Seemings Require the Possession of Concepts

- (1) The content of S's perceptual seeming can be a subjective reason R for S's empirical belief that p.

- (2) Subjective reasons require possession of concepts corresponding to what R represents.

Conclusion: The contents of perceptual seemings require possession of concepts corresponding to what R represent.

The first premise is in need of justification. Subjective reasons are sometimes assumed to be the contents of beliefs. If we assume this up front, then premise (1), of course, is false. However, the main reason for denying that the contents of perceptual seemings can be reasons appears to be that it can give rise to bootstrapping. Here is an example of this phenomenon, inspired by Susanna Siegel's argument against taking perceptual experiences to provide immediate justification of belief.³⁴

Many first users of microscopes claimed to see embryos in sperm cells that they examined using a microscope. They held this belief prior to the invention of microscopes. So it seemed to them that the sperm cells contained embryos because of their beliefs that the cells contained embryos. While they had no reason for their initial belief, once the belief is based on their seeming, they suddenly had a reason for their belief. But it would be odd if a belief that had no initial reason generated a reason for that very belief.

My reply to this sort of argument is that the seemings in this case are epistemic, not perceptual. If someone convinces a first microscope user M that sperm cells do not contain embryos prior to the invention of the microscope, then M will not believe that the cells contain embryos. So if M is rational, it will not seem to her as if the cells contain embryos when she finally looks in the microscope. So, the seemings in question are epistemic. But epistemic seemings, in general, do not provide us with a reason for our empirical beliefs. So the main argument for denying that perceptual seemings can serve as subjective reasons is unsound. Together with my previous argument, it follows that perceptual seemings represent only if the agent possesses the relevant concepts.

XI. Conclusion

I have argued that 'seem' functions semantically as a subject-raising verb. As 'seem' is a raising verb, 'it seems' can be treated as a sentential operator. I have argued that 'it seems' is a hyperintensional and contextually flexible operator. The operator distributes over conjunction but not over disjunction, conditionals or semantic entailments. I have also argued that the operator does not commute with negation and does not agglomerate with conjunction.

³⁴Siegel, 'Cognitive Penetrability'.

In the second part of the paper I offered reasons for thinking that the mental states expressed by perceptual uses of ‘seem’ have contents that are non-conceptual despite being perspectival: Their contents have a truth-value only relative to a centered world, i.e., a world in which an individual and a time are marked. But the contents do not involve a *de se* mode of presentation picking out the individual in the center. Finally, I argued that the mental states expressed by perceptual uses of ‘seem’ represent only if the agent possesses concepts corresponding to what is represented.

Unlike perceptual experiences, perceptual seemings can represent only once we have the requisite conceptual tools in our possession. The idea that we can sometimes store perceptual experience for later interpretation when we have acquired the right conceptual tools is familiar. Madeleine Ransom, a student at University of British Columbia, told me the following story from her childhood. In her hometown they occasionally had fairs with pony rides. As she was standing in line waiting for her five-minute turn on a pony, she suddenly realized that one of the ponies appeared to be giving birth. Furiously she jumped the line and grabbed the organizer’s sleeve. ‘Mister! Look. Look,’ she shouted with her tiny voice, ‘one of the ponies is about to give birth. It looks like the baby is stuck; its leg is hanging out.’ The organizer looked at her in disbelief. ‘Go back to your mom,’ he said calmly. Only years later did it all click for Madeleine.

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